

# Basic Detail Report

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## Mele Bilo (2nd)

### Vessel number

HV000619

### Date

1922

### Primary Maker

James Hall

### Description

MELE BILO (2nd) was built by James Hall at Claremont in Perth in 1922, using moulds supplied by William Dunn the experienced and successful builder of champion 18-foot skiffs in Sydney. It was built for Chris Garland, and raced with the Perth Flying Squadron. It is planked in Queensland red cedar and rigged as a gaff sloop. It is 5.48m long (18 feet) and 2.4 m wide. 'Mele Bilo' is the local Aboriginal name for the Swan River. MELE BILO (2nd) was the second WA 18-foot skiff to carry that name, and whilst it reflects in the glory of its predecessor, it is worthy of its own respect with a long career in 18-foot racing. The first MELE BILO and the moulds used to build the hull were tragically burnt in the 1922 Barrack Street boatshed fire which claimed Sutton and Olsen's shed where the skiff was stored. Garland then commissioned the second MELE BILO from Dunn and Hall, and it was built that year. It won the WA state championships and represented the state at the national event but was unable to repeat the success of its namesake. In later years, MELE BILO (2nd) was used as a fishing boat. In the mid-1970s it was finally taken out of the water and remained in the back yard of Chris Garland's home. His son Harry donated MELE BILO (2nd) to the WA Museum in July 1982, where it was restored to its original configuration. In 2013 it is on display at the Western Australian Maritime Museum, Victoria Quay Fremantle. The first MELE BILO was built in 1921 by Hall from moulds supplied by Dunn for Chris Garland and it won the Australian 18-Foot Championship on the Swan River in 1922. Garland was already a champion skipper having won the Australian Championships in 1912 with WESTANA, becoming the second WA skiff to win the championship after Ted Tomlinson won it with AEOLUS in 1907. MELE BILO beat the New South Wales skiff NIMROD by two feet to secure the championship. Garland received national accolades at the 1913 18-foot Championship when WESTANA was the only boat to weather a 62-knot gale during a handicap event, which began with 22 competitors. The Sydney Flying Squadron made Chris Garland a life-member in recognition of his sailing abilities. The 18-foot skiff class originated in Sydney with organised racing from 1892 and the Perth Flying Squadron was formed in 1897. The American inspired rater class racing on the Swan rivalled the 18-foot class and restricted its growth, but the success of local sailor, Chris Garland and his crew, boosted interest in the 18-footers when they won the national championship. In the post-World War I era Western Australia was blighted by a recession that preceded the onset of the 1929 Great Depression. MELE BILO and Chris Garland became state heroes at a time when state morale was low. Local companies produced postcards and memorabilia in honour of the skiff, and renowned artist Archibald B Webb produced artworks with

MELE BILO as his subject. The Melbourne Steamship Company's liner, SS DIMBOOLA produced a menu featuring 'Potage Oyster a la Mele Bilo'. Poems and songs also lauded MELE BILO'S feat. Meanwhile Perth Flying Squadron still holds its functions in the MELE BILO Room. Prepared from research provided by Western Australian Maritime Museum

### **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 5.48 m x 2.4 m (17.98 ft x 7.87 ft)