

GBR 42 Melita and the Lock-Keepers Bicycle

Melita is a William Fife designed 6 metre commissioned by the 'King of Whisky' Mr Ronald Teacher which he hoped would be selected for the British-American Cup team challenge of 1934. Melita was built at the William Fife and Son yard at Fairlie in Scotland and was build number 804. At the same time, another 6 metre Saskia II was also commissioned to be built in the Fife yard for a Mr ASL Young as build number 807, also a contender for the British-American Cup Team. The races were to be held off Oyster Bay in Long Island Sound in September that year, with four boats to be shipped over from Clyde. At the same time, the Royal Northern Yacht Club issued a challenge for the Seawanhaka Cup, to be carried out immediately after the team racing had finished, to be competed for by one of the four Clyde boats selected for the team. Melita for heavier winds and Kyla for lighter airs were the favoured boats.

During the trials in June/July 1934, Melita competed with Vorsa, Kyla, Susette, Volga, Saskia II, Fintra and Piccolo. Melita did well in the trials and was selected for the team along with Saskia II, Kyla and Vorsa . Despite the intensive preparations by the British team, the Americans ably assisted by Bob Kat, retained overwhelmingly and retained the British-American Cup. Bobkat beat Kyla to retain the Seawanhaka Cup too.

During the 1930's Melita went on to be one of the most successful boats in the 6 Metre class on the Clyde and usually topped the prize-winners list. A Melita trophy is said to exist but little more about this is known

Little is know about the boat during the war except that in 1945, the Teacher's sold Melita and it was purchased on Cobh, Cork in the south of Ireland. It is possible that she spent the whole war in Ireland maybe as an 'evacuee' from the Clyde. The new owner George 'Van' Baird sailed Melita in Belfast Lough with great success in the Cruiser/Handicap Class. She was kept at the Royal Ulster Yacht Club at Bangor and was often collecting the silverware.

Melita was bought in 1951 by Noel Evan-Burns who sailed out of Donaghadee, and subsequently by a Colonel Grove-Raines. At some time a cabin and engine were fitted. Melita was sailed across the Irish Sea and whilst passing through the Crinan Canal, the chain drive from the engine's starting handle to the crank became inoperable. It is alleged that one of the crew solved the problem by pinching the chain off the lock-keepers bicycle enabling Melita to make a speedy exit from the lock!

Melita now back in Scotland, appeared in the Clyde International Regatta in 1972 and little seems to be known about her until she was sold by a Peter Strenger in 1978 to Kent Persson in Sweden who spent a considerable effort to get her back in racing shape. No longer K42, but S93, Melita won the Nordic Championship in 1985 and 1989, came second in the 1988 Europeans and fifth place at the Worlds in Sandhamn in 1995 under the guidance of Kent Persson.

The current owner, David Roberts bought Melita in Stockholm in 2003 and took part in local club racing in and around Stockholm, as well as the 2005 World Championships where Melita came 13th out of 28 classics, now reverting to sail no. GBR 42. During the winter of 2006, Melita had a beautiful new deck and a considerable amount of restoration work undertaken in Sweden by the yard Thomas Larsson and Jonas Lorensen, before returning to the UK after an absence of more than thirty years to participate in the 2007 WC at Cowes.