

Steering damage delays return of ill-fated yacht

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SEA JADE, the yacht owned by missing Cape Town yachtsman Nic Robinson, is limping to St Helena and the islanders are hoping it will arrive early today.

St Helena residents had put out a distress call to the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) in Cape Town because the yacht was overdue. But the distress call was cancelled yesterday afternoon after the yacht made radio contact with the island.

There has still been no sign of Robinson, 47, who is believed to have gone overboard last month while doing repairs up the mast on his trip home to Cape Town from St Helena. Robinson's brother-in-law, Otto Holicki, said yes-

terday: "When St Helena put out the distress call to the MRCC I was going through round two of being afraid. I'm quite relieved."

Last week a three-man crew was dropped on board the Sea Jade by a British naval vessel, the RFA Gold Rover. The yacht was found drifting a few hundred miles south of St Helena.

South African Michael van Rensburg, and Graham Sim and Paul Ellick from St Helena, discovered that the Sea Jade's engines and satellite phone were not working, but they were able to raise the sails and get under way while the Gold Rover stood by.

"There has been quite a lot of damage to the yacht while it was drifting, and there are steering problems. They were

doing something like three knots," Holicki said.

Robinson left Cape Town with his girlfriend, Wendy Meyer, 30, around April last year and arrived in St Helena last November.

Meyer, who was bipolar and suffered from depression, took an overdose of medication while living on the yacht in St Helena. She was taken to the local hospital but died a few days later.

Robinson had to wait until the inquest was over in April, and then left the island for Cape Town.

Crown counsel for the St Helena government Frank Wastell told the Cape Times that the inquest had heard evidence that Meyer had taken "a cocktail of prescribed drugs" and had to be

resuscitated twice before reaching the hospital. She was put on a ventilator.

"On the morning of January 2 the alarm sounded on the ventilator and manual resuscitation was required but Ms Meyer did not survive," he said.

Wastell said there was conflicting evidence that at the start of the resuscitation a tube to the oxygen may have been left unconnected for a very short time.

"Even if this did occur, there is no evidence that this either caused or even contributed to her death," he said.

Meyer's body was brought back to Cape Town on the HMS St Helena and has been cremated.

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