

# Crewless yacht adrift off coast

By ROGER WILLIAMS

A 13,7-metre yacht is adrift off the Cape West coast after being abandoned by its crew of two.

The yacht, Fiji, also known as Strike One, spent part of last year "under arrest" at Saldanha Bay.

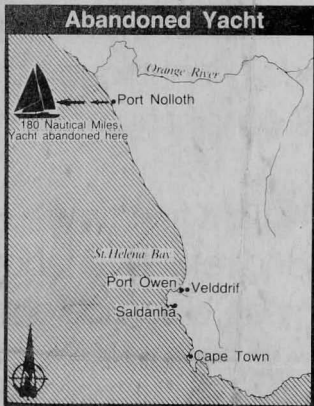
The crew — one of them a Cape Town woman known only as Shireen — were picked up at the weekend by a passing northbound merchantman about 180 nautical miles west of Port Nolloth, after transmitting a distress call by radio.

It was established yesterday that the ferro-cement yacht, recently renamed Fiji, was bought by its Dutch skipper, Mr Leo van Lent, at Hout Bay about 18 months ago.

He sailed it to Saldanha Bay where, on arrival on May 19 last year, the boat and Mr Van Lent were placed under arrest immediately.

He then appeared in the local magistrate's court on a fraud charge and was given a suspended sentence after monies had been repaid to a bank.

Captain John Woodend, the



port captain at Saldanha Bay, said yesterday Strike One had been released from the court's attachment order on October 24, and the yacht had been given clearance to sail five days later, after Mr Van Lent had settled his port bills.

Strike One had sailed for Port Owen on November 1.

Captain Woodend said the yacht had been painted white at the time. Inquiries reveal the yacht arrived in Port Owen painted red and named Fiji.