

Story 10

ROCKET LIFE SAVING GEAR

This apparatus was part of the equipment brought to the Third by Joe Haliwell from St. Gabriels back in 1939 at the start of hostilities. It's all there in the "Woggle" Gabriels horns.

The equipment consisted

A 16'0 mast with hounds bolted on at the 7'0 position plus three rope 'turks heads' nailed at two foot intervals to aid climbing.

A tripod consisting three round legs 7'0 long with a stout triangular head stock securing the legs. There was provision beneath this plate to hang a snatch block to receive the Hawse

100'0 Stout hemp Hawse 4" circumference (1.25 inches diam), with a longish Eyesplice in one end and whipped the other.

1 No Breeches Buoy The seat to carry each rescued crew

1 No traveller , the pulley arrangement to ride on the hawse.

1 No Whip An endless line fitted with a swivel, so that the whip can un-knot, from the twists. To haul the Traveller and Breeches buoy along the Hawse and a double box to aid it's deployment. The "Whip" also has a single sheave block. Called a "Luff". This Luff is fitted with a short tail with a stout spike attached and a longer tail to secure the block close to the mast.

1 No Rocket line box with two cod lines installed on the retractable pegs

1 No rocket launcher and a box to carry the spare rockets

1 No Threefold purchase (block & tackle). To tension the Hawse

6 No stout pegs for the two ground anchors. The ground anchors are needed either end of the rig.

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2 No pegs for the shrouds stabilising the mast

A quantity of rope for the back brace of the mast

Rope, for two shrouds to secure the mast.

Ropes to lash the ground anchors pegs

2 No Strops

2No sledge hammers to erect the apparatus.

2No sets signalling semaphore flags.

The kit when deployed needed Fireworks . We found that Standard Fireworks in Half Moon Street Huddersfield would supply "Coast Guard" Maroons and No 8 rockets. It needs No 8's to carry the line 30 metres or so.

It helps considerably if you remove the star burst from the line carrying rockets, it aids the safety and confidence of the mast crew, not to be overwhelmed by burning

When you arrive at the function site, before the people assemble to watch. Mark out the position of the various items; mast; tripod; ground anchors.

The whole rig, from end to end must be in one exact straight line.

Knock the stout pegs in for the two ground anchors. Properly finish the mast Ground Anchors. with lashings and strop. Erect the mast and shrouds, and back stay, to hold it upright or slightly leaning away from the tripod end. Mark with soil or sand the positions where the Ground Anchor. pegs have been driven in and remove them.

Retire from the site and wait your turn event.

When your time to demonstrate this apparatus the commentary runs thus:-

After the usual introductions of who we are, a general thanks to the guests and hosts, you explain that in the days before helicopters were so popular and well organised. In reasonably recent days the regular method of rescuing sea bound people in distress, close in to a rocky shore, or under cliffs, was by the method being demonstrated here this afternoon.

Explain that the mast in the Arena represents a ship that has run aground on a rocky coast. To show that the crew needs assistance. They fire distress rockets and or making red smoke. The boys and girls enjoy his bit. Plus it makes good theatre.

This call is answered by the Coastguard with a rocket with stars, for the mast crews benefit, and a single maroon to call the Coastguard team from their homes

A vehicle arrives with Shore crew, and the trailer carrying the Shore Gear. Tripod; Hawse; Rockets and line etc.

The commentary explains what is unfolding on the field, describing each part of the apparatus.

The round anchor pegs are knocked into the ground in the preformed holes

The strop is placed on the peg nearest the tripod and the ground anchor pegs lashed together in the tie honoured way

The Tripod is erected on it's spot making sure everything is in line

The snatch block opened to receive the hawse and hung under the tripod.

The Hawse flaked down in front of the tripod with the Eye Slice towards the mast.

The Whip in it's double box, the Luff block and spike hanging out of the box in readiness, are placed just to the right of the tripod

The threefold block and tackle is hooked onto the strop surrounding the first peg of the Ground Anchor. The block needs to be extended out ready to strain the hawse taut.

Lastly the Rockets, launcher plus the two rocket lines in their special box are placed one side of the tripod. This box has a false bottom holding a pattern of wooden pegs. This has to be carefully removed releasing the lines for use. The box then is mounted on it's lid at an angle facing the mast.

You carry on explaining each item when it is lifted from the trailer and placed in position

The rocket line is attached to the rocket trailing wire, The wire is necessary to avoid the flame burning through the line. We don't want another Patsull Park event, when the line burned through although we had wetted it for the first 5'0". The rocket flew off leaving the line behind and heading directly for the Cycling Crowd on a slight bank. As the rocket approached them he crowd parted and the rocket sailed through the gap. From the Tripod the scene was very symmetrical the "VEE" formed in the spectators and the rocket passed dead center.

The end of the rocket line still in the box, is tied of on the Luff Block and Whip

The distressed crew receive the successful line and haul it in, wrapping it onto a jig made for the job. This pulls the Luff bloc spike and Whip to the mast. Secure the Luff Block close to the top of the mast making sure the Block is tight to the mast and the spike hanging free.

The Eye Splice of the Hawse is tied to the swivel of the whip and with this endless rope, "The Whip", the crew of the mast and the shore crew can pull the hawse to the mast.

The ship's crew untie the whip from the hawse, Take the eye splice of the hawse to top of the mast , passing the hawse twice round the mast fold the eye splice over the hawse and cotter it into position.

The Shore group thread the traveller onto the hawse. They then pull the Whip until they receive the swivel and tie the whip off on the traveller with the swivel on the tripod side. This to avoid the swivel jamming in the Luff block

Hook the Breeches Buoy onto the Traveller

Pass the hawse onto the snatch block, make fast the side plate and cotter in position.

Take the end of the hawse and, with a "Black Wall Hitch " tie off on the hook of the Threefold block and tackle.

Haul the Hawse taut. When it is tight enough, the block can be jammed by passing the hauling rope through and between the sheaves, on the correct side; otherwise it will not jam. This handy method allows the hawse to be re-tensioned at a moment's notice.

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The traveller and Breeches Buoy are hauled along the hawse to the mast head. Each member of the ship wreck crew sit in the breeches buoy and pulled to the tripod.

The Captain of the wrecked ship is rescued last . Before the Capt leaves the mast the long tail of the luff block needs to be untied. This leaves the luff block hanging on the sort rope secured to the spike, which is threaded through the eye splice. All the tension in the whip is direct from the tripod end onto the traveller. Be most aware that no-one is standing on the loose end of the whip.

Once the Capt has safely been brought ashore the tension is released in the hawse, this enables the spike in the eye splice to be withdrawn by pulling on both ends of the whip. The eye splice un-folds from the mast head, dropping the hawse and whip to the ground.

All the equipment is recovered back to the shore end to be loaded on the trailer.

The commentary needs to be slow, just coving each aspect of the action, there enough to see without being mind numbed by boring commentary. Place particular emphasis on the last part.

The recovery of the, hawse, whip, rocket line, breeches buoy, only the mast is left standing, very neat, very tidy.

Don't forget to fill the holes left by the ground anchor pegs when you clear up. It's the tiny detail that gets noticed, where the re- invites come from.

Two Rocket lines in the line box?. You will find out.