

SCUTTLEBUTT

SUSSEX POLICE OFFSHORE SAILING CLUB
& DINGHY SAILING CLUB



NEWSLETTER

Special Edition

A Dramatic Rescue at Sea, Demonstrating Good Seamanship and VHF Radio Procedure:

*Had Graham's 'Ruby Tuesday' not been in that location, had the crew been inattentive or had their involvement been less efficient this story could have ended in a very different way. Well done to those concerned and a valuable lesson to us all. **The Editor***

Pages 1 to 4

RESCUE WITH SPOSC ASSISTANCE

A spokesman for Selsey RNLI said: "Whilst at the station the Mechanic overheard a radio call from the Yacht Ruby Tuesday reporting an explosion and fire on the 44ft motorboat **Honeymoon**."

He and the coxswain could clearly see the smoke after looking out of the crew room window so informed HM Coastguard while at the same time setting off the crew pagers from the boathouse at 1.06pm.

Selsey's Shannon class lifeboat launched with its volunteers at 1.16pm and proceeded at best speed to the position of the plume of smoke seven miles south east of Selsey which was clearly visible. The Coastguard Helicopter Rescue 175 had also been scrambled to the incident. The weather on scene was wind force 4 sea state moderate in rain showers.

The yacht had heard the explosion and saw the plume of smoke before hearing the Mayday call. The two men aboard the motorboat had called a Mayday distress using the handheld radio they had managed to grab before jumping overboard. They then managed to get into the tender and release it from the yacht. They reported one man had flash burns and a head injury.

The lifeboat and helicopter arrived on scene together at 1.30pm and it was decided to lower the helicopter winchman/paramedic to the lifeboat before closing on the small tender to recover the two casualties.

At 1.45pm the two men were recovered to the lifeboat and assessed. The head wound was dressed and both men warmed up before they were winched up to the helicopter for immediate transfer to Hospital. The helicopter departed the scene at 2.15pm..



Editorial Note

Please remember that this is your magazine and should reflect your views and experiences for the benefit of other members. If you have any comment, articles or photographs you feel are appropriate for inclusion then please forward them to me, terryclothier@hotmail.com for publication.

The opinions expressed in articles within Scuttlebutt are those of the individual only and not necessarily those of the Sussex Police Offshore or Dinghy Sailing Clubs. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies or omissions.



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Story of a Dramatic Rescue at Sea Told and Aided by Graham Castell

I had heard that there was to be a large commemorative event for the 70th anniversary of D Day 6th June to be held at Portsmouth with a lot of naval activity and fly pasts etc. This was broadcast live and was watched by many on TV .

Therefore I assembled my crew and booked a berth at Gosport Marina in good time anticipating that it may well be full for the event. We left our home port of Eastbourne on the 3rd June, 2019 staying overnight at Brighton largely because of the unexpectedly strong winds on rounding Beachy Head which had slowed our progress west. So it was only by chance that we were approaching the Loo Channel at Selsey Bill at around 1pm on the 4th June.



We were in a slight sea heading due west in good weather conditions i.e. warm and sunny, and about 2 miles away from the Loo Channel. I was actually buttering a roll in very relaxed circumstances when my helm called out that there was smoke on the horizon out to sea. I turned to see an enormous column of smoke rising from a single point some 5 or so miles further south of our position. It was immediately obvious that this was not some “coastal steamer making smoke”.

Without further ado I went to the VHF – and whilst not calling a Mayday, immediately reported what I could see to the Solent Coastguard on the Emergency Channel 16. The Coastguard of course asked for my lat and long and an estimate of the distance of the smoke from my vessel. Even whilst I was speaking I could suddenly hear a voice on the radio saying “Mayday – Mayday.” I stopped talking and waited for the Solent Cg to answer but it soon became obvious that they could hear nothing.

Instead Solent asked me to continue with my information. I queried if they had heard the

Mayday and the reply was negative. I asked the Cg to stand by and spoke to the Mayday myself. I quickly established that the Mayday was connected with the smoke and advised the Cg to that effect. After a few moments I realised that whilst I could hear and talk to the Mayday the Cg was unable to communicate with the Mayday itself. Which left me as Piggy in the middle. So from then on I spoke to the Mayday and relayed the information on to the Cg. It transpired that the Mayday – two male casualties were in a small dinghy with just a hand held radio which was had insufficient power to reach the Cg. I established that there had been a gas explosion when one of the crew simply went below to make a cup of tea or similar and that one male had a head injury and flash burns.



Skipper Graham Castell

(continued)

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The crew had abandoned ship to their dinghy. The boat itself was obviously well alight, with the crew standing off some 500 yards or so in a white 2.5 m dinghy in what for them was a substantial sea. I continued to relay all possible information to the Cg including the injuries and that I felt a helicopter would be required and then soon found myself talking to the Selsey Lifeboat and shortly after, to the Rescue helicopter, Helo 175. By this time the smoke was subsiding and the actual location of the Mayday was difficult to establish as my vessel was too far away to assist in any physical manner. In addition I thought there may be a danger that I could have lost contact with the Cg myself had I gone further out to sea. So we maintained position and continued to act as a Relay station. In total I remained on the VHF for some 40 – 45 minutes occupied in almost constant conversation with the Cg, Lifeboat, Helicopter and the Casualties themselves. A large part of the time

was spent by me giving the casualty reassurance that help was indeed on its way. The lifeboat passed us at speed but then had considerable difficulty in identifying the dinghy in the increasing troughs of the waves and only spotted their location when about 200 yards away from the dinghy. The lifeboat then recovered both casualties and initiated first aid. The air sea rescue helicopter arrived on the scene and hoisted both casualties aloft and flew them to the local hospital.

As a yacht sailor what can be learned from this near tragic experience?

First: of course to maintain your on board gas system. To have suitable alarms and make sure they function. I do not know the actual circumstances leading up to the explosion so I am not in a position to comment.

Second: have the VHF permanently switched on and audible – on Channel 16 !

Third: Keeping a good lookout at all times. The value of this proved itself here although not in the usual manner – i.e. looking out for approaching vessels, obstructions etc.

Fourth: Know where you are – Of course I had the plotter on and from experience did know exactly where I was and was able to give not only lat and long but also mention the approx. distance of the East Borough Head buoy and the casualty's bearing from that buoy and ourselves. Although the smoke did give a pinpoint position at first – the boat itself soon sank and the smoke virtually disappeared quite rapidly. **(continued)**



Ruby Tuesday

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**Ruby Tuesday
moored up**

As regards the VHF procedure, I was in the fortunate position of having been a police radio operator and controller for many years but that was eighteen years ago. I have taken the RYA VHF course and found that very useful but that was also some years ago. It was not at all apparent initially that the CG was unable to hear the casualty's broadcast and I had to think quickly and virtually take control of the situation as clearly the casualty was becoming increasingly

stressed and suffering from shock and hypothermia as both men had been in the sea for a while. The main thing is simply to keep a cool head – Listen and think before speaking – engage brain before talking etc.

The fact that the casualty was only in possession, whilst in the dinghy, of a hand held radio – and his low position at sea level obviously meant that he would never have been heard by the Coastguard even though he was on channel 16.

In a postscript to the whole incident I was later approached at Gosport marina by a Dutch yacht skipper and asked if we were the Ruby Tuesday involved in the operation? The Dutch yacht had been approaching from France towards Gosport and had been a good way south of the casualty when he too saw the explosion. Even with a normal, on board, full power VHF he had also been unable to raise the Coastguard but had managed to approach the sinking vessel and to take a photograph albeit from some distance away. The photo illustrates the catastrophic nature of the incident and when enlarged shows three “seats of fire” two at either end of the vessel and one in the middle of the hull. Shortly after the photo was taken the vessel had sunk.



**Ruby Tuesday
gets a polish**

Chichester OBSERVER

“Ruby Tuesday had heard the explosion and saw the plume of smoke before hearing the Mayday call. The two men aboard the 44’ Yacht Honeymoon had called a Mayday distress using the handheld radio they had managed to grab before jumping overboard.

”They then managed to get into the tender and release it from the Honeymoon. They reported one man had flash burns and a head injury. The lifeboat and helicopter arrived on scene together at 1.30pm and it was decided to lower the helicopter winchman/Paramedic to the lifeboat before closing the small tender to recover the two casualties.