MAIB
MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Ronan Orla: accident leading to a fatality on 30 March 2014

Narrative

At about 1100 on 30 March 2014, the owner/skipper of the 9.98m scallop dredger *Ronan Orla* **(Figure 1)** was fatally injured when he became entangled on the starboard warping drum of the vessel's winch. The skipper was operating the vessel single-handedly and was attempting to recover his dredge gear on board when the accident happened **(Figure 2)**. About 4 hours later, the crew of another scallop dredger noticed that *Ronan Orla* appeared to be in trouble. They came alongside *Ronan Orla* and a crewman climbed on board and stopped the winch. It was apparent that *Ronan Orla*'s skipper was deceased.

Figure 1

It is most likely that one of the shoulder straps on the skipper's bib-and-brace trousers became snagged/trapped by the rotating warping drum, and he was unable to free himself or stop the winch before succumbing to his injuries.

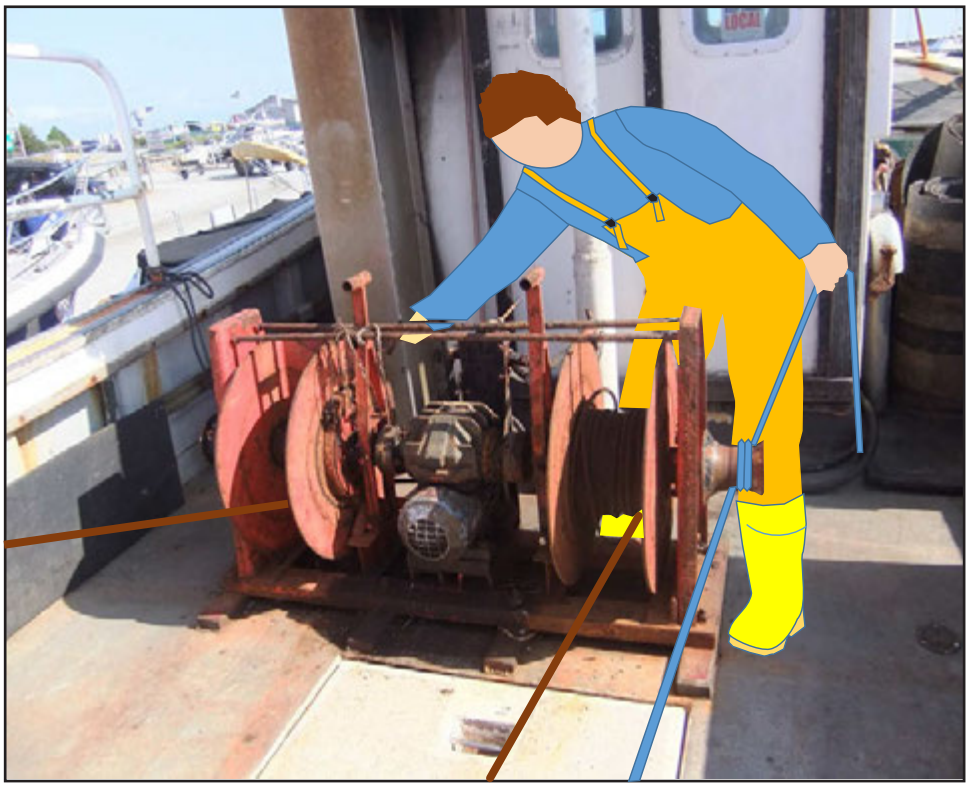
Figure 2
Simultaneous tensioning of pull-down rope and release of hoisting drum band brake

The resulting MAIB investigation found that it was unsafe to operate *Ronan Orla* as a scallop dredger single-handedly. Specifically:

- The skipper had modified the vessel, from a potter, by adding a high A-frame gantry at the stern and a second-hand winch. These modifications resulted in a complex system for shooting and hauling the gear.

- *Ronan Orla* and its equipment had not been adequately maintained, and its winch was in a dangerously poor condition **(Figure 3)**.

- The winch had not been fitted with the safety devices required by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations.

- As the skipper was working alone, there was no-one on board able to stop the winch, raise the alarm or provide first-aid once he became trapped.

Safety Lessons

The dangers of single-handed operation in an already hazardous industry are well known, and the consequences when something goes wrong are regularly highlighted in MAIB reports.

- Careful consideration of the tasks to be conducted during the day to day operation of a vessel, and the hazards associated with them, can help to identify safe systems of work that considerably reduce or even remove many of the risks faced by the crew.

Figure 3: Chunk of cast steel broken from the rim of the starboard warping drum

- Many hazards can be removed or reduced by engineered controls such as safety guards and emergency stops. Had an emergency stop been fitted to *Ronan Orla*'s winch, the skipper might have been able to stop it; had the winch control lever been designed to return to its stopped position when released, this tragic accident would have been prevented.

- The material condition of the winch was probably a contributing factor in the accident. Equipment that is allowed to deteriorate becomes unreliable and difficult to use, and may fail when least expected and least wanted. Maintenance is an investment to ensure costly breakdowns are rare, but it also provides the crew with a safer working environment and will improve vessel safety overall.

- Working in close proximity to unguarded rotating or moving equipment, such as deck winches and warping drums is hazardous. Ill-fitting or incorrectly worn clothing can introduce an extremely dangerous snagging hazard. The consequences can be fatal. Always ensure you wear appropriate personal protective equipment, avoid loose fitting clothing and tuck away or cover up any loose straps, tie cords and jewellery.

This flyer and the MAIB's investigation report are posted on our website: www.gov.uk/maib

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