

# Marlinspike Seamanship

By Ted Walsh

## Mast Hoops and Seizings

*Seizing: Nautical, archaic fasten or attach (someone or something) to something by binding with turns of rope. \**

Nautical archaic does describe the gaff rig and what holds the rig together is often seizing. It's certainly the case when it comes to attaching the mainsail to mast hoops. Seizing the luff of the main to mast hoops looks like a flimsy way to connect the two but it is simple, practical and not likely to fail.

Like so much about the gaff rig, there is not one right way to do anything, but this is the method that I was taught and it works well.

The seizing itself is best explained though the diagrams.

The process for us involves the following steps:

First lash the sail to the boom and gaff, typically with lace lines.

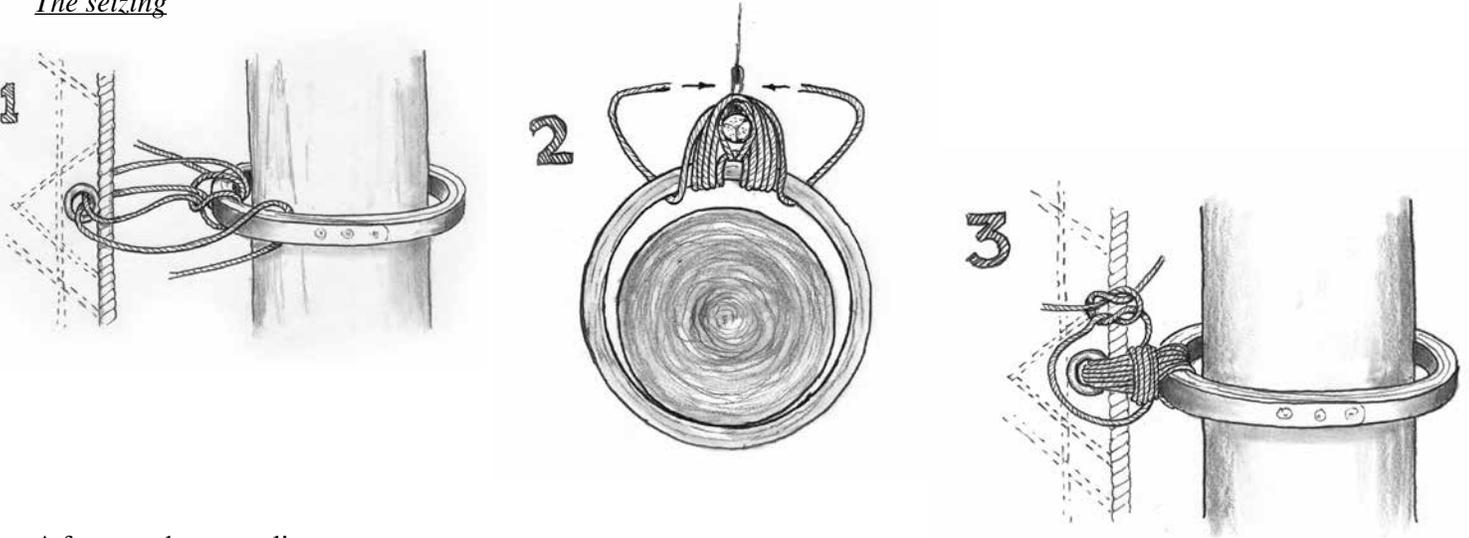
Next raise the gaff a couple of feet off the boom and make the halyards fast.

Using a sail tie or a piece of marline, tie one end to the second to lowest mast hoop, lift it and the hoops above it up out of your way and tie them off temporarily to the gaff jaws.

Now you can work on the bottom most hoop without the other hoops in the way.

Start with about two fathoms of marline for each lashing. You will probably reduce this to a fathom and a yard with practice, but for a start too much line is better than not enough. When you have completed the first hoop, repeat the process now tying the third hoop from the bottom and the above hoops out of your way. Keep this up until all the hoops are seized to the sail.

### The seizing



A few words on marline:

A lot of what is sold as tarred marline isn't even marline. The worst stuff is made of braided nylon with a coating that is part wax and part tar. The resulting product is sticky to handle and the tar and wax will get all over you, your sails, your clothes and adds nothing to the mix since the nylon is waterproof anyway. Good marline is made up of twine, either cotton, or better yet hemp. The line is treated with tar and is dry to the touch or has just enough softness to the tar that it sticks to itself but not to your hands.

The best stuff I have come across is sold by American Rope and Tar, <http://tarsmell.com/>, nice to the touch, strong and flexible, it is not cheap but I think the extra cost is worth it.

\* *New Oxford American Dictionary*