





GEAR-UP
FOR

Spring

GETTING SET FOR ANCHORING

Refresh your anchoring routine with these tips and tricks.
Plus, four challenging anchorages to test your skills.

STORY & PHOTOS BY WILLIAM KELLY



The Vulcan is a scoop-type anchor with above average holding power.

Anchors have come a long way from the days when rope and a rock were tossed overboard to hold a vessel against the weather. Although navy and fisherman's anchors were effective for hundreds of years, in the last 80 years the advancements in holding power and setting ability of anchors has greatly benefited recreational boaters.

THE FIRST TIME I really needed an anchor to hold was at the entrance to a bay during a strong northwesterly when the outboard on my Thunderbird stalled. In my panic the only thing I could think of doing was throwing the danforth anchor over the side. As the boat fell back to a lee shore I anxiously wondered: would the anchor set in time? In the soft mud of Semiahmoo Bay, the danforth did its job and stopped the boat immediately. With the Thunder-

bird now bobbing peacefully in the chop, I set to fixing the outboard and it soon roared back to life. But it was then that my appreciation for anchors began.

CQR In time Anne and I moved to a bigger boat and, after pondering several anchors, we settled on a 45-pound CQR for our 35-foot sailboat. This venerated anchor was patented in 1934 by Geoffrey Taylor and was revolutionary in concept when ▶



FOUR CHALLENGING ANCHORAGES TO TEST YOUR SKILLS

1

Wahkana Bay, Gilford Island

This pretty anchorage in Blackfish Sound is also a challenge for boaters because of the narrowness of holding ground along the south shore. This turned out to be a real test for the Vulcan because of the very limited room to anchor along the strip between fairly deep water (about 30 metres or 100 feet) and Gilford Island. When we arrived last summer it was a little busy with half a dozen boats anchored along the south shore bobbing in a northwest breeze. We found a good spot near the west side of the bay just far enough away from a shoal patch. We powered up to ensure we were well anchored and shortened scope to three-to-one for a comfortable night. It was a convincing display of the fast setting of the anchor and kept our boat well anchored and safely away from the shoal water along the shore.

it came out. It is a stockless anchor, plow shaped, with very good holding power. The design of this anchor, with its weighted sharp tip and flared flukes, helps the point of the anchor dig into the seabed for effective penetration. For decades many cruisers viewed it as the best all-round choice for offshore cruising, and our CQR served us well for 30 years on the waters from the Gulf Islands to Alaska. Only once did it drag, when it got hooked on a crab trap.

When we moved onto our new 48-foot boat, however, things changed. The Tayana came with a 65-pound CQR and it certainly held once set. We rode out a couple of 25 to 35 knot winds with the anchor holding us firmly in place. But the CQR comes with a few issues, one of which is the top-heavy aspect of its design with its forged knuckle

hinge. This weight above the flukes usually results in the anchor lying on its side and although Taylor anticipated this (with the purpose of the hinge allowing the tip to easily swivel and dig into the substrate), the anchor can go some distance along the bottom before the tip does its job and sets.

THE NEW GENERATION In the 1980s Simpson Lawrence came out with the Delta anchor, a variation of the CQR, with a *convex* fluke shape but without the hinge. The holding tests of this anchor are similar to the CQR but the Delta sets quicker. In the last 20 years, a new generation of anchors has appeared and been touted as quick setting in various bottoms with excellent holding power. These new-generation anchors are concave shaped, often referred to as scoop-type anchors and they include Manson, Rocna, Spade and the Vulcan (a new product by Rocna). This scoop shape is a key reason these new anchors set so quickly and hold so well. Other improvements have resulted in an anchor that can set quickly in

a range of bottoms and hold well.

“The Rocna and Vulcan are both designed with chisel-shaped tips and high tip weight to ensure quick penetration, even in hard or weedy bottoms,” says Mark Pocock of Canada Metal Pacific, makers of the two anchors. “Once set, these anchors have the geometry to ensure that they continue to dig deeper with higher loads.”

Classification societies such as Lloyds Registry have rated older generation anchors such as the CQR and the Delta as High Holding Power (HHP)—twice the holding power of the Navy Stockless anchor. The newer generation of anchors, such as the Rocna and Spade, are ranked Super High Holding Power (SHHP) at four times the holding power of the stockless. This may not mean much to boaters other than an official recognition of the improved holding of the newer anchors.

Both the Rocna and Vulcan are sold by Canada Metal Pacific (located in Delta), which manufactures both these anchors at their factory in China. The Vulcan is similar to the Spade but is a one-piece anchor. The Vulcan’s solid shank is welded to the fluke without being attached with a bolt, as is the case with the Spade that allows the anchor to be taken apart and stowed. The Vulcan’s clean lines and curved shank (which also help it launch quickly) seemed to minimize weed collection in several weed-infested anchorages we visited such Kendrick Island and Port Neville. Perhaps more to the point, the anchor had absolutely no trouble setting in this sort of bottom. The inner curve of the shank is also tapered to a fine edge to help the anchor bury itself quickly through any weed-infested bottom material. The downside to these new scoop type anchors are the loads of muck that come up with the anchor. But that is a problem most boaters won’t mind dealing with if the trade-off is a good night’s sleep in a windy anchorage.

ON TEST Although I loved the CQR, the slow setting issue made me take a serious look at the new generation of anchors. I eventually used a 73-pound Vulcan anchor on a test in several tight anchorages and others with difficult holding ground. I found the Vulcan outperformed my CQR in setting quicker and, at least in engine tests, seemed to hold better also. The anchor set very quickly and firmly especially in thick mud—so quickly at times I had to be sure to have a snubber in place and hold on. And, in holding power (by my not-very-scientific measure) the Vulcan did the full run-up in reverse test to 2,500 rpm that, according to published tests, is a pull similar to about a 30-knot breeze. My level of confidence in the anchor ▶



Montague Harbour

Although this anchorage has several dozen mooring buoys, I often anchor somewhere south of the buoys. However, the holding is only fair and my CQR would sometimes take a while to hold and couldn’t stand too much reverse power—much over 1,000 rpms and it would drag. The Vulcan dug in well and held and only started to drag at higher revs—over 2,000 rpms.



3


Port Neville

This anchorage across from the public dock receives constant current from Johnstone Strait with kelp thriving on both sides of the inlet. The challenge in summer months is trying to find a spot clear of weeds when dropping the hook. I never had a problem with the CQR setting here and that was also the case with the Vulcan. It penetrated easily into the bottom and held with the full run-up of the engine. However, unlike the CQR that often came up with clumps of weed, the Vulcan shed most of the kelp to just a few tendrils.

holding was certainly improved when the wind really came up a couple of times over the summer.

THE ART OF ANCHORING Most boaters have their own opinion about anchoring but as I've outlined in our book, *Best Anchorages of the Inside Passage*, the most important factor is making sure your anchor is large enough for your boat size. In general, the anchor weight should be about one-and-a-half to two pounds for each foot of waterline length. On our Spencer 35 (with a 25-foot waterline length) we used a 45-pound CQR. Our 48-foot Tayana (with a 40-foot waterline length) came with a 65-pound CQR that we replaced with the 33-kilogram Vulcan—about 73 pounds.

The art of anchoring comes in setting the hook and the most important word here is patience. Once you have picked a spot to anchor and have lowered the hook, let your boat drift slowly back as the rode is being let out to at least three-to-one scope and then carefully begin to set the anchor with low revs in reverse. It doesn't hurt, whatever anchor you are using, to let the anchor settle for a few minutes before applying power.

MOST BOATERS, THROUGH trial and error, have an anchoring setup and method that works well for them in most situations. But if you are not happy with your anchoring setup, the new scoop-type anchors should be given a close look. There may be one in your future. 

4

Cutter Cove, Blackfish Sound

This is a good anchorage in quiet conditions near Minstrel Island but if a northwest breeze pipes up in Knight Inlet (very common on summer days) the cove becomes a wind tunnel. The other problem here, discussed in our book, is the dicey holding ground. On the north side I had assumed the material to be soft mud and rock as the anchor often seemed to slide and bump along the bottom and I never got a decent set. But I did get a great set here with the Vulcan that held us in 20-knot gusts blasting through the anchorage. After raising the anchor with a chunk of bottom material, I discovered the bottom was not soft mud but hard clay—difficult for most anchors to penetrate. Closer to the head of the cove, where it is windier, the mud is softer—offering a better substrate for most anchors.



William Kelly and Anne Vipond are authors of the bestselling guidebook, *Best Anchorages of the Inside Passage* available at bookstores and chandleries throughout B.C.