

EXPERT ON BOARD

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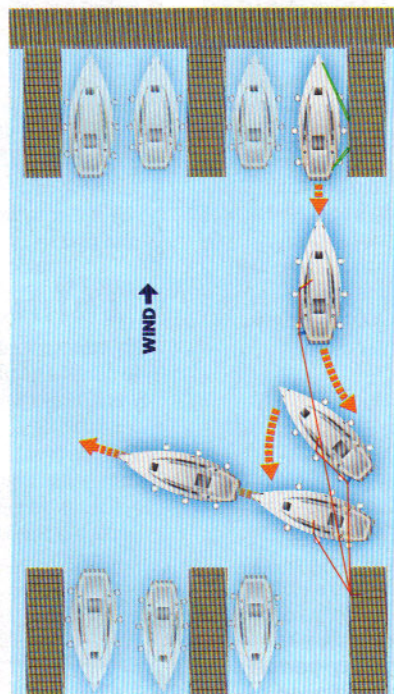
Kicking off a monthly new addition to our Expert on board series on practical seamanship, Simon Jinks looks at manoeuvring a yacht in a marina in high winds

Warping off

We were faced with an unusual dilemma of 40-50 knots blowing through the marina, but 20 knots and good sailing if we made it just one mile offshore. Surrounding hills accelerated the blustery east wind as it blasted through Largs Marina, making the rigging on the 700-odd boats scream like banshees. Were it not for the fact that I was running an RYA Yachtmaster Instructor course, I'd have probably bought a paper and relaxed with a glass of Scottish west coast hospitality.

The decision was made to leave, but the next problem was how to get out. The wind was blowing right onto our stern in the finger pontoon. While the boat would have willingly reversed out of the berth stern-to-wind, it would be a brave move to spin the 41ft Hanse beam-to-wind while not drifting onto the waiting davits and anchors of the boats beckoning us from downwind. Prudence called for a more belt and braces approach. We decided to use a line from the pontoon to windward, connected to our yacht's beam, to help us manoeuvre. I do not promote going out when it is blowing hard but this technique could be used to get a boat out of a tricky berth, especially when there is a strong tide or wind from astern. If you're shorthanded, it could still be done, using winches to position the boat. ▲

Our marina exit strategy



GRAPHIC: MAXINE HEATH



1 ABOVE: We hatched a plan and ensured everyone knew what they were doing. This was vitally important, because the 40 knots whistling through the marina made it hard to hear each other

2 RIGHT: Bow spring and stern slip lines would make for a quick getaway and stopped the boat moving forward in the berth. Superfluous lines were removed





3 ABOVE: To pre-rig the line we'd use to turn the boat, a crew member floated the throwing line connected to a warp and fender across the marina aisle to the boat

4 RIGHT: The initial thought was to rig a long slip line from the boat to the windward pontoon and back again. However, our antics had attracted a crowd, so we enlisted the help of an owner, who stood by to slip our windward cleat. Simple figure-of-eights were used, which could be released easily under load



5 ABOVE: We released our stern line and bow spring and reversed out. As the boat moved astern, slack in the line was taken up onboard to keep it clear of the prop and rudder



6 RIGHT: The line was led from the beam cleat, but we'd rigged a small slipping loop on the port quarter to act as a fairlead. This enabled us to keep control of the stern when motoring out of the berth and also when tethered over on the windward pontoon

7 BELOW: About three metres from the windward side, the line was made fast. Whilst the boat hung stern to wind, excess lines and fenders were tidied, and we re-briefed for the next crucial stage. The temporary rope fairlead was released to make the stern line become a beam spring. The stern drifted downwind and the boat swung beam to wind

8 RIGHT: Motoring on the beam spring brought the boat even closer to the windward side and increased our safety margin away from the downwind dangers



9 ABOVE: When positioned to windward, the beam line was released ashore – retrieved on board – and the engine powered up once again to gain steerage way. Heart rates began to fall once we'd gained momentum. With lines and fenders stowed, we headed for the lumpy stuff with a scrap of jib. Fifteen minutes later the engine was on again, as the wind had died completely!

Many thanks to: 1st Scotsail Training and our crew Deborah, Rebecca, Drew and Nick, plus the helpful chap who slipped our line.