

THIS MONTH HAMBLE SCHOOL OF YACHTING'S **JAMES PEARSON** LOOKS AT A COUPLE OF COMMON MARINA HANDLING SCENARIOS THAT A CRUISING SKIPPER AND CREW MIGHT FIND THEMSELVES CONFRONTED WITH. THERE ARE NO 'RIGHT ANSWERS' TO THESE KIND OF QUESTIONS, BUT HERE'S WHAT WE DISCOVERED.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? **SCENARIO 1**

TURN OR REVERSE?

John and Christine have spent an enjoyable early season long weekend meandering from their river Hamble Berth to Swanage and back. Returning to their finger pontoon on the Sunday evening should be a piece of cake, as John has even deliberately dallied on the way back by popping into West Cowes for a lunch stop, to ensure the evening ebb is well underway when mooring up at his berth. This will guarantee that berthing onto his quite tight and tricky finger pontoon will be an up-tide manoeuvre; allowing

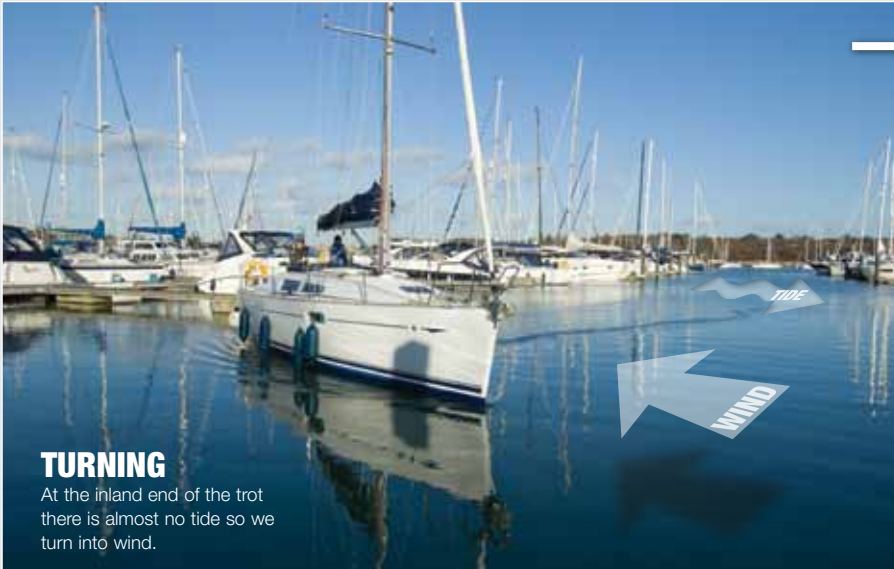


minimum speed with maximum control. While approaching up the trots with fenders and lines ready, Christine spots that another boat

has taken their berth. There are no other berths free up this trot so it is going to be necessary to either turn the boat around and head out or reverse back out into open water so they can contact the marina office and arrange an alternative berth or get the intruder removed. There is about 15kn of wind directly against the tide where he is, so John is unsure of the extent to which it will counteract the tide.

What would you do? Have a look at the diagram above that shows the variables before you turn the page and read our findings. »

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? SCENARIO 1 ANSWERS EXPERIMENTATION AND SOLUTIONS



TURNING

At the inland end of the trot there is almost no tide so we turn into wind.



Looking at the diagram on the last page and knowing what we know about tidal flow and how it reduces in shallower water further in towards the bank, we can be fairly certain that there will be markedly less tidal flow up towards the end wall of the trots. While it might at first feel like we are putting our boat further up a dead end towards trouble, we can make turning very much easier to predict by removing one of our variables (wind and tide) which are fighting against each other further out where our berth is. So our first solution was to continue up the trots at minimum operating speed. Remember, minimum operating speed is the minimum speed through the water that allows us to maintain steerage in the given circumstances. We then turned the boat using prop wash and steerage astern to head back out into open water again. The very reduced tidal flow up by the wall made deciding which way to turn easier for us. The tidal flow was so weak up there we were able to discount it. So we made our turn bows into the wind first; remember we turn our bows into the strongest influence on our boat (between wind and tide), which is most often into the tide if there is any tide of much significance going on. Otherwise, as in this case, we can be sure that turning into wind (in this case to port) will enable a more compact turn.

Of course, in real life there aren't handy numbers and arrows stating tidal flow in knots! In certain cases a wall at the edge of a channel, especially if it's on the outside of a bend can be scoured out deep and have relatively strong tidal flow. This is where we can use nature's markers, such as how far



the pontoons' beards of weed stream down tide as suggested by the diagram.

The turning room is considerably longer than our boat, but if we are not confident with turning her in an enclosed area, we might still opt to reverse out. We tried both and turning in the slacker shallower water was our preferred option. When turning in close quarters, the way our boat handles due to prop walk needs to be thought about. If, as in our case, the prop walk is hindering the turn, slow the approach speed into the turn right down; this reduces slide and tightens the turn. Slowly applying astern while the

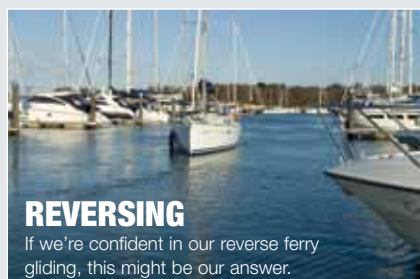
bow is still turning from the last propwash burst will help the pivoting momentum of the boat to counteract the prop walk. While astern, do not turn the helm in the opposite direction until the bow has stopped moving in the desired direction, then turn the wheel well over in the opposite direction. As the yacht picks up steerage astern, you can select neutral, (to remove the undesired prop walk) While reversing also worked, we made the following observations:

Initially going into reverse was the time we had to be most sensitive to the balance between wind and tide. Once underway in reverse it was much easier to adjust our position and angle.

As we reversed out into the stronger tide, we had to be confident with our reverse ferry gliding. This would certainly not be the time to try it for the first time.

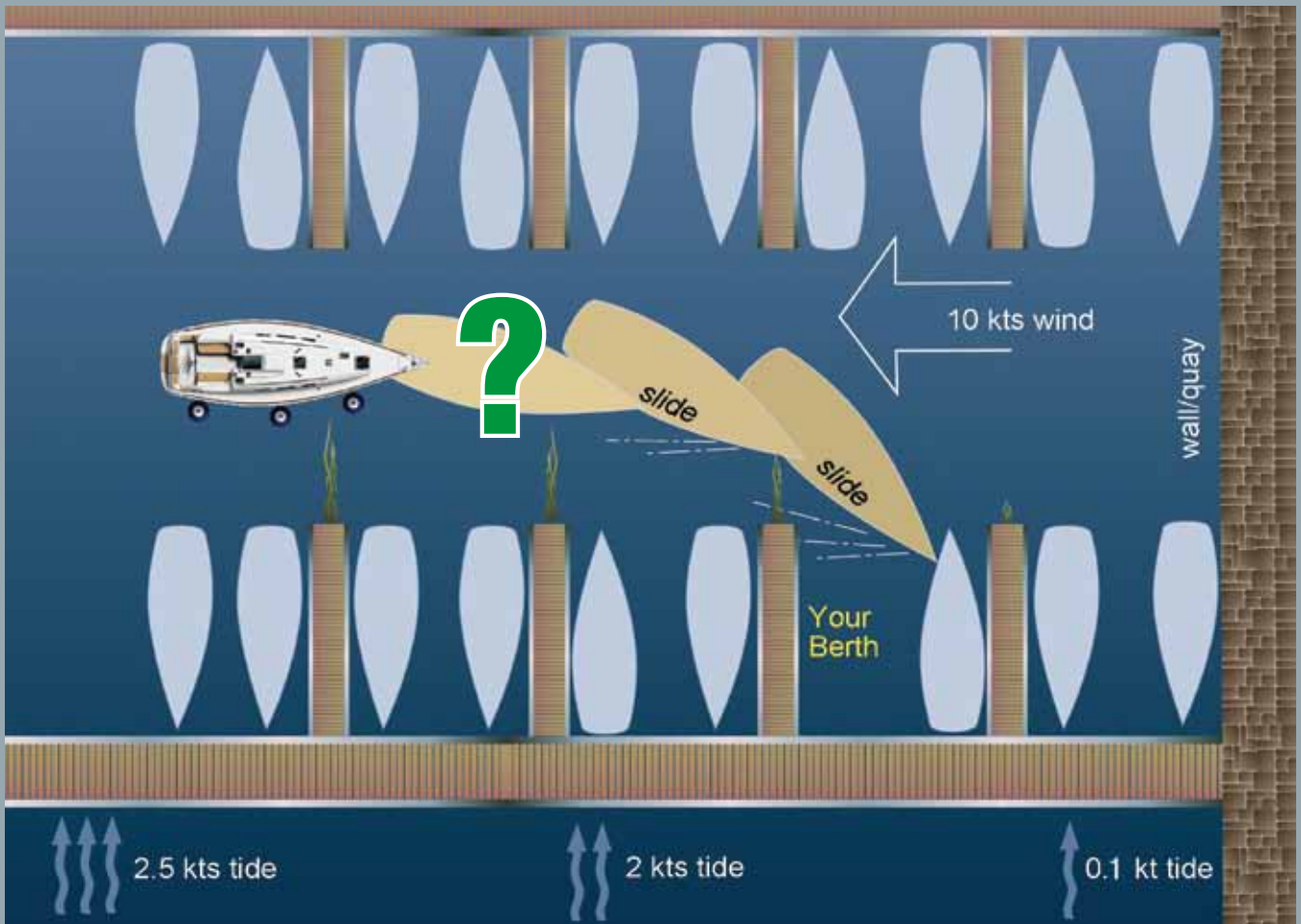
Observing a transit over the bow while reversing enabled us to gauge our angle.

A further downside was that we would be reversing out into a busy river channel.



REVERSING

If we're confident in our reverse ferry gliding, this might be our answer.



WHAT WOULD YOU DO? SCENARIO 2

BEATING THE SLIDE?

Once again, our plucky cruisers have returned to their berth, which from seaward is a closed berth. In a previous issue (ST 172) we looked at how our boat slides out of a turn and how this defines closed and open berths. To recap, when we turn to starboard into a berth in which we need to be starboard side to, our momentum slides our boat away from the pontoon (to port, out of our turn), making for a potential stretch to get our crew and lines ashore. As shown by our diagram (above), John's largest concern however is touching his neighbour's boat in the adjacent berth. Even if well fendered, touching another boat is just not good seamanship in John's book, if it can possibly be avoided.

The 10kn of breeze off the land should, to an extent, counter the slide, but how much? Our skipper looks at the variables and can see three choices open to him:

Fender both sides of his boat, especially the port bow and hope that careful driving and the 10kn of breeze will counter the



slide enough to prevent contact with his neighbour's boat. His crew would of course be stationed on the port bow with a chunky roving fender as an insurance policy.

Continue forwards up the trots, turning the boat 180° somewhere past his berth, then

berth forwards from the direction that will make his berth an open berth.

Reverse all the way up the trots until well past his berth, then, once again park forwards into an open berth.

What would you do?

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WHAT WOULD YOU DO? SCENARIO 2 ANSWERS EXPERIMENTATION AND SOLUTIONS



OPEN BERTH

From this direction the slide, the wind and tidal ferry gliding all conspire to land us snugly in our berth.



Looking at the 'turn to starboard and chance driving straight in' option, it does not stand close scrutiny. In the marina, especially when in the lee of the moored boat to port (which has a slightly higher freeboard than our boat) the breeze acting on our boat's topsides could be anything from 10 to zero kn, and probably gusty, so we ruled out this first possibility. We had no way of knowing what sort of effect the sidewind would have on our boat until some way into our berth and somewhat committed.

We tried both the turn and reverse options that both would result in the open berth parking manoeuvre shown in the photos above. The close proximity of the bow of the boat to port meant that ensuring the yacht was fully within the pontoon before fenders touched was not quite as easy as it would be if there had been room for a steeper approach. This meant that we would be passing fairly closely to the moored boat, but in a controlled fashion as in this turn all three variables; wind, slide, and our ferry gliding in the tide were conspiring together

to move us away from this other boat. There was never any rush for our crewmember to actually handle the lines and step ashore, as our operating speed over the ground into this head tide could be brought down to near standstill. As we learnt in a previous issue (ST 177), with leeward berthing, securing our stern line first will prevent our bow from being pivoted into the pontoon and our stern from pivoting out toward the other boat.

A possible pitfall could be to underestimate the wind boosted slide, perhaps with too much angle on the boat into the tide, leading us to contact the pontoon harder than we wish, perhaps planting our bow on the end of the pontoon with ignominious results. We found that the ready availability of transits all around (pontoon cleats, piles, other boats' masts) meant that it was easy to judge our movement and to a large extent ferry glide into our berth safely every time, providing we made our approach from the open berth direction. In terms of whether to turn or reverse to provide us with this favourable berth entry direction, most of the same logic

applies as in the last example:

If we can make our turn out of the tide, by going further up the trots, thus removing a variable, we should do so, and this would probably make the turn option preferable.

If we are not confident when it comes to reversing in a cross tide, or in an unfamiliar boat, this confined area is probably not the place to learn these skills so this would remove the long reverse in from the main channel as a viable option.

If we opt to turn, as we are head to a maximum of 10kn of wind we can discount the wind favouring a turn in either direction, so we can be secure in the knowledge that a turn into the two knots of tide would be the most effective way to go. If we are not confident with turning around in this relatively confined area, or reversing in from seaward, a final option could always be to think about berthing somewhere else.

A further option could be to reverse in leaving the boat stern-to. We found that the tendency for the bow to fall off the headwind in reverse made it a difficult manoeuvre.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Pearson is an RYA Yachtmaster Instructor and Chief Instructor at Hamble School of Yachting. He has been a keen sailor since the age of seven, sailing on a variety of craft ranging from racing dinghies to tall ships. He became a professional instructor at 18 and has sailed tens of thousands of miles since and taught hundreds of people at various levels through the RYA schemes.

HAMBLE SCHOOL OF YACHTING



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