

ANCHOR HOLDS

OUR ATTENTION

BY
KEITH
INGRAM

Many sailors will remember Peter Smith as the founding partner of Cavalier Yachts from the days when New Zealand was still building production yachts.

In the 20 or so years since then he has delivered yachts and built boats all over the world. An issue that always arose was the choice of anchor, with both clients and friends complaining about each anchor's peculiarities.

"Having used every type of anchor known to man, I decided to develop the ideas I had for a new design," says Peter.

The result is the Rocna anchor, which Peter says does not waste energy with extra lead and cast iron weights, and always attains its setting attitude, regardless of how it hits the bottom. This means weight is more efficiently used in extra blade area and structural strength. It digs straight in, offers exceptional holding power, and will not easily trip out on load reversal, he says.

The anchor is available in sizes from 4Kg to 110Kg and is suitable for vessels of up to 50 tonnes. The main features include instant setting, as it buries in less than 1m on most bottoms, up to twice the

While similar in size to other new anchor designs, the Rocna carries no extra lead or cast iron ballast. Our ground tackle consists of 20m of 5/16th short-link chain, and 220m of 20mm hawser-laid nylon.

When bottom fishing, one of the key aspects to success is being able to anchor on a small feeding school of fish after finding the spot on the fishfinder. This invariably means doing a loop, returning back over the spot and, if the fish are still present, anchoring accurately above them.

The trick is to judge the distance ahead of the school, drop anchor, drift back and, by the time the anchor grabs and holds, hope to be in a position where the fishing lines will catch the all-important feed.

On our first anchoring shots over semi-foul ground, we found the Rocna promptly grabbed and pulled us up far too short. We had to let more warp and thus increase our arc of swing.

Clearly the anchor was living up to its manufacturer's claims of instant setting, as during our trials the anchor consistently gained the correct attitude for penetration, burying itself in a short distance to bring our head in to the wind and stationary quickly.

This was excellent in both sand and soft mud bottoms, although we found, particularly after riding at anchor overnight in a bit of a blow, that the anchor carried the extra load of mud and sand to the surface, requiring a bit of extra effort to clean before securing it home. It's not a bad fault, as it gives added comfort at night when the wind starts whistling in the rigging. When anchoring over soft muds, sand and shell, the anchor once again brought us up quickly, providing a secure attachment to the bottom.

On recovery, breaking out was difficult on occasions over both mud and foul. Although the chain had wound itself on rocks, we managed to recover the anchor safely each time, even if we had gathered some seaweed or kelp. When on the mud just keep taking in the slack and once vertical the anchor would reluctantly tumble out.

Our trials included anchoring with a short rode and using power ahead to slowly break the anchor out, and then continue to see how long it took to pull our head down and back around towards the anchor.

This is a tough test of any anchor, especially in the confines of a small bay, where the vessel's aspect in relation to distance traveled can be monitored. We were surprised how quickly the Rocna can reset after breaking free.

This is a comforting thought to sailors who wish to sleep at night when conditions may change unexpectedly. We have all experienced that moment when the tide turns, the wind gets up and for no apparent reason the anchor starts to drag, which can be very disconcerting. While not suggesting that this anchor is foolproof, we would be amiss if we did not admit that we had some problems anchoring on hard sand and sandstone substrate. This only reinforced the prudence of watching your transits and giving the anchor a nudge and time to take effect.

Many people choose their anchor based on personal preference, historic use, and cost. After our evaluation, we are confident that seafarers who choose a Rocna can remain comfortable with their decision. Pricewise there is not much in it to argue about. For our part, we are confident to leave the anchor shackled to our ground tackle and get a good night's sleep.



stopping power of other equivalent anchors in soft sand or mud, and roll stability, as it will not roll out if the loading is reversed.

The anchor is made of steel alloy that has been hot-dipped galvanised. The shank has a slotted attachment hole so the head of a shackle can fit through, so only one shackle is needed. There is a hole in the shank for attaching a tandem anchor and one in the blade for attaching a buoyed retrieval line.

During sea trials of the anchor, we were mindful of the two principal characteristics which are critical in any anchor's behaviour – setting performance, and the subsequent holding power once set.

We have operated a wide variety of vessels and used most anchors, including the local Kawene, Danforth, CQR, Plough, Bruce, Admiralty picks, and more recently the SARCA. We trialed the Rocna on our former crayfisher, a semi-displacement hard-chine vessel weighing some 11.5 tonnes.

At first glance, the Rocna looks similar to other new-generation anchors. Modern anchors are designed to be carried in self-launching spare men or bowsprits, in much the same way as the ploughs, Bruce, and spade-type anchors. But it's the Rocna we have shackled to our ground tackle to evaluate.

Fitting the anchor to our spare man required no extra modification.

