



A Different Type Of Anchor

Over many years of boating, one of the aspects of my boating was the problem of anchoring. Because I liked to stay out sometimes for a number of days, I liked to carry enough anchoring equipment to have spares for everything and this meant that there were invariably a couple of various sized reef anchors.

These anchors were important as much of our fishing is done around coral reefs and they generally were a couple of grapnel type reef anchors with bendable tynes to facilitate extraction from the coral.

As most boaties who use these reef anchors know, they are a real pain to stow because of their awkward shape, especially if one carries more than one; even if one anchor is stowed in the anchor tube up forward, there is still the spare to find a site for. This is an extra problem in a small boat such as my 530 Barcrusher, as by the time I stow all the gear aboard

Ebb & Flow

with Neil Dunstan



for an extended trip, there is not a lot of spare space.

For overnight anchoring I usually try to find a spot with a soft bottom such as sand, mud or shale and then deploy my Danforth anchor, as anchoring over reefs using a mud anchor means that the retrieval is likely to be a major problem. I have tried many Danforth type anchors and found that a lot of them are not reliable for overnighting but the alternatives such as a CQR are also a problem as they are

usually too big, too heavy, too expensive and take up too much room in a small boat.

Some years ago I was fishing over a local rocky reef when I noticed a length of rope floating on the surface and went over to grab it, as extra ropes are always handy on a boat. When I tried to pull it on board it was stuck in the reef and after a lot of jiggling I managed to get it on board and discovered that it had a large Danforth attached.

I have since been using this anchor on all my overnight anchorages as it is one of the few that is totally reliable and has never let go in a reasonable bottom and has allowed me to ride out a cyclone which came down the coast only fifty miles offshore.

The problem of reef anchors was always with us and we just put up with it, but I always thought that there must be a better way.

I discussed this with my mate John who has twenty years experience fishing the Great Barrier Reef as a professional line fisherman and his solution was to make up a heap of admiralty type anchors out of plain iron reinforcing rod and just keep replacing them as they were lost.

I thought that I could come up with something better than that so I set to and started trying different types and designs, until after a while I came up with the anchor pictured here. The principle for this unit was to be able to

fabricate it at home with minimum equipment, to be a reliable anchor, be small in size, be made out of stainless steel and have some alternative to having to keep rebending the tynes every time it was retrieved.

This system is based on the fact that by keeping the tynes short, thick and mounting them on a long, very heavy shaft, I am able to break it out of the coral or rock reef by pulling forward and using the leverage of the long shaft against the short tynes. This system also has the advantage of doing minimum damage to the coral, as when the grapnel type is dragged through the coral it tears its way out, while straightening the tynes, whilst my anchor only breaks a small fraction of coral compared to the others.

I have also found that this type is also more reliable in holding and have spent the night anchored up on it when I got stuck in the middle of a large coral reef and could not find a way out before nightfall.

This position required a good holding anchor but the use of a Danforth was not desirable as in the event of conditions requiring us to move quickly, it was likely that the Danforth would get



stuck in the reef putting us in danger.

As can be seen from the pictures, the anchor is made by welding the tynes onto the heavy shaft using stainless steel welding rods and an ordinary home stick welder which most people could do easily.

The chain connection is

only a piece of stainless steel bar bent around in the vice and welded to the other end of the shaft. Readers may also notice that I have joined the chain to the anchor using a snap hook.

This was done as I have installed a Woolf electric anchor winch which stows

all anchor rope and chain on a drum and means that I only use one rope for all different anchors which are just snapped on or off.

An interesting point arose when I first started using a snap hook for this purpose, when a couple of times as the anchor was coming up over the bow roller it just fell off and disappeared into the depths.

I discovered that as the snap hook came over the roller, if it had the spring loaded keeper which stops the rope from coming off was facing inwards towards the roller, the pressure on the roller opened the snap hook and the anchor just fell off.

I overcame this problem by changing over to a Carbineer style hook where the keeper is held captive by a threaded sleeve which is screwed up hard and keeps the snap hook locked shut until the sleeve is screwed back out of the way.

So there it is, the Dunstan reef anchor which looks much more stylish, is a hell of a lot smaller, is easy for anyone to knock up in the shed, is very reliable and costs next to nothing as it is made out of a few bits of scrap stainless steel.

Neil Dunstan, Sarina F&B