



Pile moorings under power



Practice gives us confidence and confidence makes even the trickier manoeuvres more enjoyable. Duncan Wells looks at a variety of different situations, discusses the recommended way of dealing with them and provides handy hints to make things even easier.

When they go right

When they go wrong



1 That will do nicely. Preparing one of the spinnaker sheets.



2 Bowline with snap shackle at inboard end of the line.



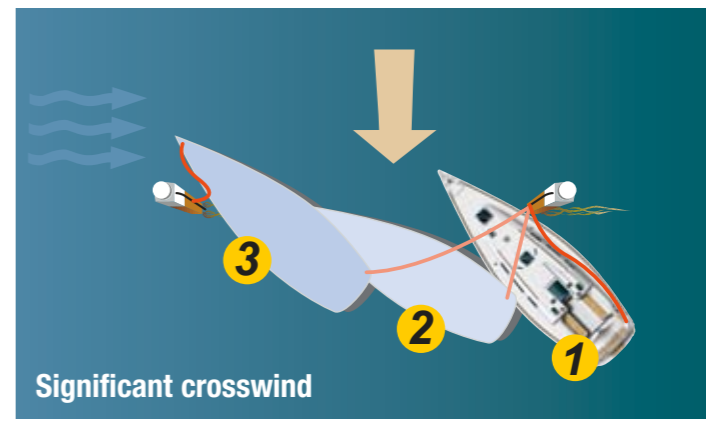
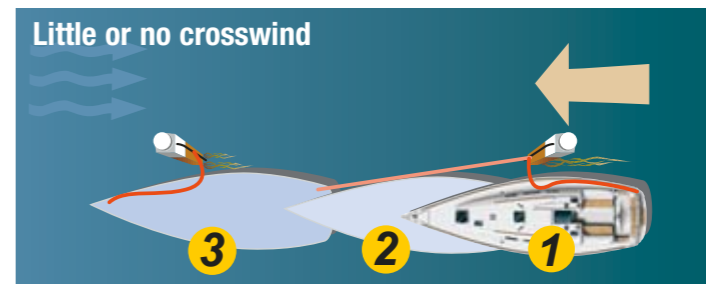
3 Taking the bight through the centre of the cleat ...



4 ... and then looping it over each wing, with the line ...



5 ... stowed safely on the afterdeck and ready to run.



snap shackles on the sheets make sure they are at this, inboard, end).

the centre of the cleat and looping it over each wing then pulling it tight

2, 3, 4 And we attach the line by taking the bight from outside the guard rail, through

5 ... one line for the stern and one for the bow. Take the running ends of both lines up

On the face of it there's nothing to it. With a tide and some wind we approach into the tide on the downwind side of the first pile, attach our stern line to the metal bar or 'iron horse' then motor up to the downwind side of the second pile to attach the bow. With a strong wind on the beam we approach the first pile in the same way, but aim to be on the windward side of the second pile.

As I say, that's the theory.

Preparation. First we must brief the crew. We want to position the boat with the pile amidships at the widest part of the boat so the crew should be able to bend down and thread a line around the iron horse. At this point it's worth warning them about the danger of getting any part of their body caught between the boat and the pile. We then motor ahead to the next pile and repeat the process. Since we shall be threading the stern line from the boat, through the iron horse and back again we'll need a very long rope. Length of course depends on the distance between the piles, but it's likely to be at least two spinnaker sheets' worth.

to the widest part of the boat. These lines will be long, the stern one especially so, and we'll keep the majority of them in a neat, flaked pile back near their respective cleats.

This is so that when the crew attach the stern they don't have armfuls of line to deal with, which might fall in the water, go under the boat and end up round the prop.

Prior to making the approach it's always a good idea to motor up to and past the piles just to check the state of the tide and the wind and generally to look things over in advance. Sometimes there are mooring lines stowed on top of the iron horse that you can pick up as you pass, as opposed to having to thread your own line round the metal bar. These days there are few pile moorings left. Generally, councils have put pontoons between them.

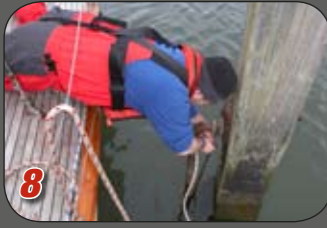
6 On the day we did this exercise the only pile moorings we could find were big enough to accommodate a fair sized cruise liner; our boat, in »



6 A little bigger than we needed.



The iron horse was some way down ...



... and required two hands.



9 Not stylish. The crew had to be very careful.

7 & 8 The metal bar on the iron horse was extremely thick so we had to use two hands to get the line around and we were at the top of the tide, so there wasn't much of the bar above the water.

9 All of which made things difficult. We motored into a fairly weak tide downwind of the pile and found that as we slowed to give the crew a chance to attach the line, so the bow would be blown off. We then tried coming across the pile and allowed the tide to push us on to it, which

simply lasso the top of the wooden pile or drop a bight over it, just to get our stern attached and then sort things out once we had the bow on. This would certainly be an option (see pic from ST134, right), but eventually we got the stern line on ...

11 ... and then motored forward to attach the bow, which was really very simple.

12 Once we were settled we thought about what we'd done and came to the conclusion that although we'd used the textbook method, it would have been much easier to get the bow line onto the uptide pile and just hang there while we got into the dinghy and sorted out the stern line.

13 Hanging by the bow. Notice how we're using the rudder to keep the boat in line with the piles despite the fact that the wind is blowing the

worked fine for attaching the line, but looked a bit awkward and there was the chance of graunching the gunwale. It took us a number of attempts to get the stern line on.

10 I was on the verge of suggesting that we should



10



Another way. In ST134 we simply lassoed the top of the wooden pile.



11 Securing the bow was much easier than the stern.



12

In position. It worked perfectly well, but should we have used the dinghy?

board with a roving fender is a good idea. However, as long as there's tide running, the boat can be steered quite effectively by the rudder. The bow is being held in position, so it's just the stern you need to control. Adjusting the rudder should keep you in line with the tide and the piles.

With that in mind, rather than trying desperately to get the stern line attached, you can make things easier by getting the bow on first. In truth, wherever there are pile moorings in harbours, the berthing masters or harbour masters are always helpful and often handle the lines for you.

Another way of handling the bow-first method would be to drop the boat back on the bow line and steer the boat to the downtide pile – as opposed to getting out the dinghy.

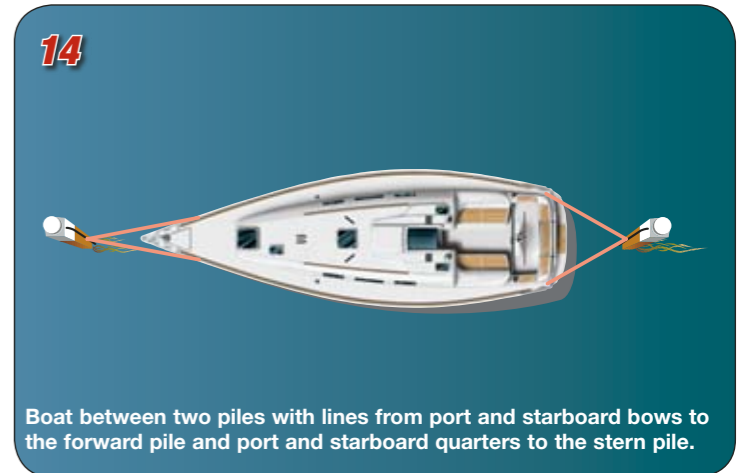
Mooring on singled-up lines will do for a short stay, but rope can chafe through quite quickly and if overnighing we need to attach ourselves properly. There is usually a ring at the bottom of the bar with a thin line attached by which you can pull it up, but if the line is missing, a boathook should do the trick. Tie the mooring ropes to the

stern to port.

If the mooring is crowded and there's a bit of wind, a crew member standing by on



13 Hanging by the bow.



Boat between two piles with lines from port and starboard bows to the forward pile and port and starboard quarters to the stern pile.

ring with a round turn and a bowline to prevent chafe.

14 For extra security it's a good idea to run two bow lines and two stern lines.

When leaving the pile mooring, single up the lines

and leave into the tide. Release both at the same time, being careful not to let any line get near the prop and depart into the tide either bow or stern-first. How your boat handles astern and the degree of crowding at the mooring may convince you to wait for a tide that will allow you to motor off bow first.

It's worth remembering when we raft up to another boat between two piles that not only do we need to set our normal mooring lines to them for the bow, stern and springs, but that we also need to set fore and aft lines from us to the pile moorings. You'll find in most harbours with pile moorings that running your own lines to the pile while rafted up is a bye-law.

Well, that's pile moorings, but if you know a better way of doing things, please don't hesitate to tell us.

Bowline for beginners

Handy Hint for tying a bowline. We can all remember the business about the hole the rabbit and the tree that we go round, but can we always remember which way we create the hole? Can you draw a '6'?

- 1 Take the running end of the rope and draw a '6'.
- 2 Now you have your hole. Bring the running end, 'the rabbit', up through the hole ...
- 3 ... around the tree and ...
- 4 ... back down the hole again, tighten and you have a bowline.

