

Curse of the mad axeman

Arrrrrgh!! What's that noise?

There seems to have been nothing to talk about for the past week but snow and ice. Well, that and stupidly low temperatures rendered even lower by wicked easterly winds. The TV, radio and every nook and corner of social media have been obsessed with it but nobody has been talking about the noises. We have kept our lovely stove well stoked and coped quite easily with the cold and the

wintery weather but the noises have
been a whole different ball game.



It's been a bit chilly

Amongst all the research that I did about life on a narrow boat I never came across any warnings about all the weird and wonderful sounds that boats make.

Particularly in winter. I'm not talking about the gentle throb of the engine or the jaunty toot of the horn but the strange vocabulary of the boat itself.

These noises are amplified and multiplied when combined with ice and wind and, let's face it, we've had a fair bit of both just recently.

Of course if you've never lived on a boat before as we haven't then it's easy to work out what is going on. The loud bangs of what sounds like metal on metal are obviously the work of the mad axeman on the roof as he tries to break in and murder us in our sleep. Then there is the ear splitting screech of tearing metal as ice pierces the side of the boat just below the water line. The ropes strain to breaking point with agonising creaks which must surely be an indicator that they are about to snap and cast us adrift into the wild dark night.

The sudden pounding of the wind moves the boat so violently that there couldn't possibly be any explanation other than we have been rammed by something like an aircraft carrier or the QE2. All of this is magnified both in volume and by vivid imagination as darkness falls and especially once we are lying in bed in what ought to be blissful silence. Then the groaning starts. It sounds as if some wretched former owner is trapped in the hull, probably as a result of the curse put upon him for renaming the boat. Well it was called 'Smith' so you couldn't

really blame him. It's tricky getting to sleep when all you can hear is the desperate last gasps of some poor soul dying an agonising death somewhere below the bed.

After several days of this we manage to rationalise most of the sounds. The reality is that we haven't been gruesomely murdered in our beds, there isn't a stench of a rotting corpse coming from the hull and when we look out of the window we are still snugly tied up to the jetty. All the strange noises, well most of them,

can be attributed to the boat moving against the ice and the ropes and a bit of good old expansion and contraction of steel. I'm still a bit worried by the axe I found on the roof though.