

Getting intimate with my Golden Girl

Well I would love to be able to tell you that I have serviced the engine on the boat and everything went smoothly and to plan but I'm sure that isn't what you want to hear is it? Well lucky you because that is exactly what didn't happen. I can take the credit for researching the parts required for the job and ordering them, but that is where the bulk of my involvement ended. I would love to show you pictures of me deep in the engine bay wrestling with

filter straps and bleeding the fuel supply but there aren't any. The reason there aren't any of course is because I didn't actually do the service. What I did was service my friend Paul's computer and he, in turn, serviced our boat engine. Know your strengths, that's what I say.



A great place for doing yoga

What should have been a two or three hour job ended up taking a bit longer and spanning two days. This was mostly down to me ordering the correct fuel filter but the correct fuel filter not fitting. Don't ask me to explain this, I'm still in correspondence with the supplier and for now I am pleading not guilty. Their blurb plainly stated that the filter in question would fit a Betamarine 38 engine and my friend Paul, who knows about these things, found that it did not. I will let you know the outcome of the dispute at

a later date if it proves to be interesting in any way, which I doubt.

So here is a brief summary of what I have learned about servicing an engine on a narrowboat.

Firstly, it's best to get somebody else to do it if at all possible. This is mostly because the engine in question is very big and the space that it lives in (we boaters call it an engine bay), is very small. Not only is it very small but it also filled with many cables, wires and additional bits of inconvenient apparatus in

addition to the engine which makes working in it almost impossible. Watching my friend contorting his body into ever more complex and painful looking shapes it occurred to me that a great second profession for a yoga instructor would be marine engineer.

The second thing that struck me was the way in which all the parts of the engine that you need to access in order to service it are hidden in the most inaccessible places imaginable. If I had done the job myself I would have considered it a major achievement

simply to find the oil filter never mind replace it. The situation did at least provide me with a small but vital role to play. Once Paul had squeezed himself into a cavity smaller than his head he was totally dependent on me to pass him the correct tool at the vital point in the oil filter removal procedure. I never thought I would feel so comfortable in my almost spotless overalls, or as proud when I noticed a small patch of grease on them.

With the service itself complete

and the engine purring like a contented cat on steroids I thought we were finished. Apparently not. Deep in the bottom of the engine bay there lurked an evil looking cocktail of water, diesel fuel, oil and general filth. Paul pointed out that in such conditions it would be difficult to detect any residual leaks from the new filters and it might be a good idea to clean it out. He even offered to lend me his wet vac to help with the job. So, there I was, me and my new found status of 'marine engineer', Hoovering foul smelling waste

matter from the bowels of my Golden Girl. By the time I had finished I was quite adept at wriggling around the engine though and I am very pleased to say that my overalls ended up satisfyingly filthy. You never know, I might even get to wield a spanner next time.