

Underpants, a pony tail and bad vibrations

Warning: this is a blog almost entirely about things that go on in the engine room. It contains graphic descriptions of an engineering nature and some people may find it boring.



The beating heart of the Golden Girl
Our Golden Girl has always had the ability to shake rattle and roll with the best of them but only when over excited by an excess of engine speed. Anything over two thousand revs per minute would send her into a frenzy of vibration accompanied by a tooth

rattling clatter that sounded like the engine was about to make a bid for freedom. I hadn't paid it that much attention to be honest because it usually corresponded with me throwing the gear stick wildly backwards and forwards in a panicked attempt to avoid destroying a precious piece of grade two listed national heritage. The rattle only became a problem when it moved down the revolutionary chain over the last couple of weeks and began to kick in at twelve hundred revs. Then at eleven hundred and eventually at ten. We had reached the point

where anything beyond a couple of miles per hour would set up a racket like an old fashioned football rattle on steroids and we were looking forward to passing under motorways just to drown out the noise. It was time to take action.

I set up a high level investigation bringing in various suspects from the engine room for interrogation. The mop bucket, the anchor, various fuel pipes and cables were all given a thorough going over in order to try to pin down the offender but without

success. The anchor was severely muffled with rags, the cables were rendered motionless with pipe lagging, the fuel lines were made chatter free by the judicious application of cable ties and the mop bucket was put into solitary confinement on the front of the boat. The next morning we set off in optimistic mood but alas at one thousand revolutions per minute the rattle was back again and just as loud and irritating as ever. We drifted slowly along the canal getting in the way of sluggish swans and even the odd water snail while I pondered the problem and

we argued over the precise location of the clatter.

Whether it was a dream or a nightmare I will never know but for some reason I woke up in the middle of the night excited by a new theory of what was shattering our dream of cruising gracefully and relatively quietly along the waterways. Before we set off the next morning I removed a large wooden shelf that sat over the batteries and which, in theory, protected them from non-existent falling objects that might short circuit them. I put it on the roof

where it couldn't do any harm and we gingerly left our mooring and accelerated. As the rev counter approached 900 I began to sweat with anticipation. At 1000 we both held our breath and strained our ears. At 1100 I couldn't stifle the beginnings of a grin and at 1200 we rejoiced in the sweet thrum of nothing other than the sound of an engine doing what it is supposed to do with quiet determination. At 1500 rpm the only noise louder than the engine was the sound of swans wings flapping wildly as the poor birds flew for their lives. Surfers were

eyeing up our bow wave greedily and water skiers were queueing up on the tow path looking for a ride. I did eventually come to my senses and as we approached a line of moored boats I dropped down to a gentle tick over and that's when the new noise started.

This wasn't a rattle or a vibration as much as a random clanking and thumping. At anything over tickover speed it went away but each time I throttled back it returned with renewed vigour. There was something irregular about it that made me nervous and

some deep seated engineering gene that I didn't know I possessed told me it was serious. We pulled up and lifted the engine bay cover and I set off again cautiously but now it was worse and the source of the problem was obvious. The engine was doing a fine impersonation of a drunken Dad at a wedding dancing to Michael Jackson's Thriller; it was jumping around like a thing possessed and it didn't look good. There was only one thing for it; we moored up and called International Rescue. We asked them to send whichever Thunderbird was

appropriate and within an hour
Jake arrived.

Jake was young and hip and he wore his cap backwards. He moved around the engine bay showing us a fine view of his fashionable underpants and when he dipped the oil he wiped the dip stick on his T shirt. I liked Jake. He seemed to know what he was doing but he couldn't be sure of the problem from my description and after doing a lot of prodding and poking he asked if we could take a little cruise along the water. We set off, in tick over and it seemed

touch and go as to whether the engine was going to come along with us or not. It was jumping around in a tantrum but this made Jake very happy because now he thought he knew what the problem was. We pulled up and he ran the engine in neutral and stood on it. There was a sound like a machine gun going off and Jake announced with a grin; "your engine mounts are shot".



“shot engine mounts”

Twenty four hours later Phil knocked on the roof of the boat and announced that he had come to fit new mounts for us. Phil had a pony tail and a very impressive set of spanners and he oozed confidence. I liked Phil. Gill and

I went shopping for wine and beer in order to celebrate finally getting to the bottom of the problem and to deaden the effects of the eye-wateringly large invoice that was heading our way. Phil packed up his tools, showed us how the engine could run at any speed without looking like Shaking Stevens with the DT's and transferred most of the oil and grease from his hand to mine with a manly hand-shake.



This is Phil, he knows about engines



The big spanner being deployed

So we are rattle, shake and clank free at last and I am pleased to say that the mop bucket has been released without charge and retuned to the engine bay.

The joys of boating eh?