

RCR BOAT STORIES

WINNER



It comes in threes.

'The engine won't switch off.' The captain pointed worryingly at the metal hatch, trying to use his superman vision to see inside our narrowboat engine.

I was quite pleased as we were travelling along the River Trent towards Hazelford Lock on our first proper cruise and I wasn't quite sure why we didn't want the engine on.

It had been over two months since we'd sold our two bed terraced house in Newark and taken the plunge to leave land life for life afloat. It was certainly proving challenging as well as the best decision of our lives. We have discovered that when you buy a boat which is in need of TLC, it means parts break on an almost daily basis.

'Well,' I replied, trying to be calm and hoping this wouldn't affect my ability to make a cappuccino with the 'Planet Killer' as The Captain calls it, based on how much power it requires to run it, 'lets just wait until we arrive at the lock. There is not much we can do about it now. Shall I make a coffee?'

A sigh was the response, so I contented myself by casting my gaze over the banks of the River Trent and watching the swan glide at ramming speed, aiming for the geese hugging the bank trying to look inconspicuous.

After enjoying ten minutes of no smoke billowing from the engine, I fired up the 'P.K' and coffee in hand we continued the cruise.

'Look the end spot is free.' I said positively, trying to turn the mood of our four week cruise.

Our stern is large enough to fit two chairs and there is nothing better than mooring up and pouring a glass of fizz (prosecco) and a beer with an uninterrupted view watching the kingfishers, swifts, and other river wildlife.

The engine bay was revealed and after it had cooled down and the stern gland had been twisted to stop any water flooding the boat, we discovered that a wire had come loose and therefore an easy fix.

'Hurrah.' We cheered as we clinked glasses and settled down to watch the sunset.

After a deep sleep, with the rhythmic sound of the water gushing from the weir, we woke to a beautiful morning and enjoyed sipping a cappa on the stern, watching the sunlight glinting off the water.

The steep concrete wall at Hazelford lock can be slightly tricky to juggle when removing the ropes as I'm vertically challenged, being somewhere between a Hobbit and Dwarf. In my defence for the following mishap, I was under pressure when another narrowboat turned up to use the lock and in the spirit of saving water, we rushed to untie the ropes and join them.

'WHAT.' I shouted, hearing a cry from the stern, because no matter how calm, quiet and relaxed people think boating life is, a lot of shouting is generally required to be heard over the engine noise.

'I HAVEN'T PUT THE TILLER ON AND THE STERN ROPE IS STILL ATTACHED!' came the very clear reply as I watched the wall disappearing further and further away from the boat.

I tried to look apologetic as The Captain frantically untied the ropes and rammed the tiller home to steer the boat. (I was quite pleased I was at the bow) A few minutes later, after a nerve racking moment when the force of the water from the weir tried to spin us back towards Newark, we entered the lock, glad that no-one had seen us and adding yet another item to the 'What new thing have we learned about boating today'

As we left the lock, a screeching noise emanated from the engine bay and we wondered if maybe boating life wasn't for us. After a quick check it turned out the fan belt was slightly loose, despite The Captain giving the engine a once over that morning. We left with fake optimism convincing ourselves that surely nothing else could go wrong on this four week adventure.

A few days later as we basked in our boating expertise there was a cry from the shower room, 'the shower pump has bloody broken now.'

Clair & Chris

