

Boat-owner's diary

The PBO 'family' share their boat-owning treats, trials and tribulations

Got you, you little bleeder



With a stripped thread on the bleed screw, a diesel-covered Ben Meakins replaces the secondary fuel filter housing on *Polly's* elderly engine at sea

I'm not a kleptomaniac, I promise. It's just that I hate to think of something breaking at sea and being without the essential spare part that would easily fix it and get us home.

As you might guess, this is not a common feeling among racing sailors. 'Do we need to put the boat on a diet again?' asks co-owner Adrian, whenever we convert the boat from cruising to racing mode. I

stare mournfully at the boxes of screws and bolts and oil filters as they disappear up the pontoon in a trolley. I'll admit we've never actually needed any of them – until last weekend.

Polly's elderly Yanmar 1GM10 engine putters away reliably most of the time, and we put many hours on it over the summer without a hiccup. But on the way to the start of the winter series race last week we ran into a patch of

weed. Once cleared, the engine wouldn't reach full revs, and hunted in neutral. I guessed that it was an air problem, but could find very little at the bleed points.

It was then that I noticed the bleed screw wouldn't tighten up fully. Yes, you've guessed it: the thread, tapped into the soft alloy housing, had stripped. Perhaps the greater load on the engine had sucked in some air from an imperfect seal on the bleed

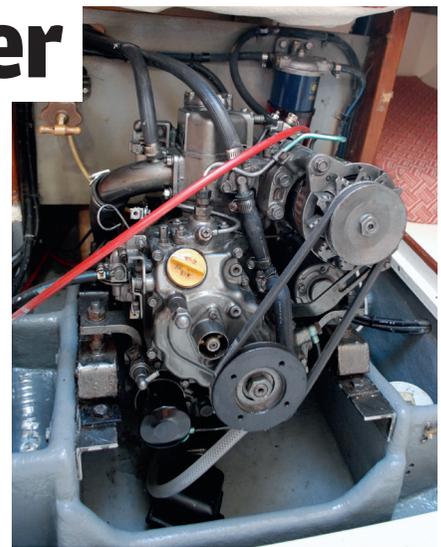
screw? Anyway, faced with a long sail home against a strong spring ebb in a failing breeze, I took to the engine spares box. Squirrelled away inside was an old, reconditioned secondary fuel filter housing, with stainless-steel helicoil inserts replacing the previously stripped threads.

And so, in the entrance to Southampton Water, *Polly* could be seen serenely beating against the tide in glorious October

sunshine. Down below, things were less pleasant. I could be found with diesel-covered hands, with the engine in pieces. I disconnected the fuel lines and removed the filter element, trying not to spill the diesel in the bilge as the boat heeled. Next, I removed the old housing and bolted on the new one, then connected everything back up, cursing as wash from a passing pilot vessel caused me to drop a copper washer into the bilge.

I searched for it, swearing, for a good five minutes before giving up and replacing it with one from the spares box. Several minutes of bleeding later and the engine started first cough, running like a dream for five minutes before slowing again. One further bleeding session to remove some more air later and all was well.

We all took different lessons



The Yanmar usually putters away reliably

away from this experience. Mine? Don't let them take ALL of your spares ashore in the name of weight saving. Seriously, though, be careful not to overtighten the bleed screws. The rest of the crew might have joked: 'We've been sailing around with THAT in the bilge?' – but were secretly pleased that we could motor home under our own steam!

■ PBO's features editor, Ben Meakins, and his wife Steph co-own *Polly*, an Impala 28, with friends. They keep her on the Hamble on a river mooring

Drawing a pension without apprehension



Age shall not wither Stu Davies as he looks forward to a winter of boat work: it's just as much fun as sailing!

This month, there is a big celebration for me: I turn into an old-age pensioner! It's a mind-boggling thought: do we become 'old' overnight, or do we continue to enjoy ourselves just the same? Do we suddenly become too old to pursue our hobbies? Are there suddenly things we shouldn't do?

I believe that people from my dad's generation were old before their time – so today, I think we should continue to play as hard as we can. Besides sailing, one of my

other hobbies is motorcycling, and I am the proud owner of a BMW R1100RS. The sun was shining last weekend, so I suggested to Mrs D that we travel to Holyhead on the bike, check out the boat and come back. 'Yes please!' she replied: so on with all the gear, and off we went.

It was a beautiful day. As we hummed along, I thought to myself how much motorcycling is like sailing: when the conditions are right, life is sweet!

Work in the sugar scoop is scheduled

Sacha was looking good: there was very little wind, and we took the opportunity to drop the mainsail and sail bag ready for the winter. Holyhead is an enormous harbour, but in north-easterlies an unpleasant surge can set up, and the effects need to be ameliorated by reducing windage.

This morning, as I write, we had the first frost of the winter and we will have to winterise the next time we go to the boat. Oil and filter changes are followed by a couple of litres of antifreeze through the raw water system. We visit *Sacha* every couple of weeks and find that staying on board for the weekend



Stu bikes it to *Sacha's* mooring

keeps her fresh. As I mentioned last month, work in the sugar scoop is scheduled: I enjoy working on the boat as much as sailing her, so winter is just as much fun as summer, and we have some new chums to get to know better as well as inviting old ones down!

■ Stu Davies has written many practical articles for PBO. He and his wife Laura keep their Bénéteau Océanis 381, *Sacha*, moored in Holyhead