

Blue language

Repair jobs aboard boats frequently occupy that seventh circle of hell. The only consolation is that they greatly expand one's repertoire of swear words, as **Jess Lloyd-Mostyn** notes

There is nothing more satisfying than a boat problem solved. It's that wonderful combination of detective work followed up by skill and potentially artistry to effectively and even sometimes elegantly install, repair or improve your yacht.

However, 99.9% of the time the road to this wonderful result is a bumpy one. One where you only have metric tools to offer up to an imperial fitting; where that all-important spanner falls overboard and a well-meaning spouse (let's face it, it's often me) suggests too late how useful a lanyard would be; where it would really come in handy if you had the same number of limbs as an octopus; or where you turn green with envy at a bigger boat's 'engine room' compared to the myriad small rectangular openings and tight wriggle spaces you have to access your Yanmar.

Sound familiar? Sometimes these jobs are accompanied by loud grunts of effort, similar to a hefty lob of the ball at Wimbledon, hanging head first into the lazarette is good for that. Often such tasks have a soundtrack of heavy, weary sighs, where the combination of the day's heat and the difficulty of the chore are clearly taking a toll on our boat hero. And others can only ever be cracked or surmounted with the additional help of releasing a filthy, torrent of foul, colourful, dare I say it even 'SAILOR-LY' language.

I think that the best explanation for this is that every single fitting, connection, part, fixture and object on a boat has a perfect and ideal amount of force that should be used upon it. Too much and you risk bending, breaking, shearing, boring and all manner of problems as a result of it. But if you use too little then nothing happens, the seacock seizes up, the deck fill corrodes shut or the movement of the steering becomes clunky.

All the expletives and swear words that come along with much boatwork is generally because either too much force was used on something and it's now wrecked, gone overboard, pinged into the bilge, split in two, caused a hard sharp tool to impale itself into warm, squidgy flesh or some delightful combination of these options. Or the cursing and profanities are due to



'Changing our engine's impeller is my own private task nightmare as it's just so awkward to get to'



JESS LLOYD-MOSTYN

Jess and James left the UK in 2011 in their Crossbow 42 and have sailed halfway round the world, growing their crew en route. Follow their journey at water-log.com

something that SHOULD move refusing to do so, no matter how much brute force is used on it.

It is this latter option that brings out the real pirate language in my other half. There he is, sat in the cockpit, vital elements of our binnacle strewn around him, beads of sweat clustered across his forehead. In his hands he has a large claw hammer and an impact screwdriver with which he is attempting to free and turn the four seized screws that hold the cover to our steering clamp in place. This is not a critical job but I see the determined, somewhat manic expression in his eyes as he rhythmically bashes at them one by one, alternating each hefty whack with a loud, four letter word.

"How's it going?" I inquire, with as sing-song and positive a voice as I can, looking at the

victim screw and seeing that every bash makes it turn a tiny fraction of a full turn. He glances at me and the next thwack misses and sends the hammer onto his thumb and the tip of the driver into the edge of his palm. His eyes bulge, he inhales sharply and the exhale includes a stream of longer, more inventive swears, with many more than just four letters, and I tiptoe away until the "g** d***, son of a b****, b*****ring b***ard thing" etcetera gets quieter.

Sometimes, a boat job is stressful due to the trickiness of space. Changing our engine's impeller is my own private task nightmare as it's just so awkward to get to and inevitably sees me lying half on my belly, half on my side, across our galley floor, with my head under the kitchen sink and my hands trying to co-ordinate themselves to undo screws, prize out the impeller without damaging it, smearing the correct grease on the replacement, and re-fitting it properly. All while feeling like I'm doing everything upside-down and at the extent of my arm's reach. Needless to say that I perform this only under duress and in conjunction with growling some decidedly un-ladylike phrases.

I think we're all in the same boat on this one and if a little blue language lessens the pain then so be it, from a stubbed toe, to a lost tool, a missed hammer to a bored screwhead. How can I be so sure? Because of what I just heard the chap on the boat next door yelling!