

Boats, Boats, Boats ...

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Boats seem an inevitable part of our existence, living up near the head of an inlet as we do. Every year, I think, “Well, the boats are in good condition this year, we’ve done lots of work on them, and everything should be fine.” And every year, our boats work hard to add just a little more adventure to our lives than maybe we really wanted.

So this year, our boat adventures started with the *Draiocht*. On a return trip from Kelsey Bay, we developed multiple pump leakage syndrome. Fluids seem to be squirting everywhere – seawater spraying out of our raw water pump for the engine cooling system and power steering fluid out of our power steering pump. Fortunately, we made it back to the float before things got truly out of hand. So the *Draiocht* got a long vacation tied to the float while we went to town using the *Awen* in search of various bits and pieces to fix up an old engine.

Amazingly enough, a month or so later, Ken got the old *Draiocht* put back together and we were good to go, or so we thought. Well, we made it to Kelsey Bay. The engine sounded a little rough, and I wasn’t too sure what was up. Of course, the wind was up, and Johnstone Strait was a little rough too, so it might have been my imagination. It started sounding fine by the time we were through the worst of the crossing, so I forgot about it.

After our shopping trip in Campbell River, we got in the old boat and headed home. Another rough, slamming across Johnstone Strait in a northwesterly crossing. Engine seemed more or less OK though, and home wasn’t far away, so we kept going.

It was late, we were tired, and our float was almost within touching distance. I was perched on the *Draiocht*’s bow, as always, getting ready to launch myself onto the float for tie up. Ken throttled down the *Draiocht* to make a nice, smooth landing ... and the engine died. That’s it. No go. No restart either. So we drift gently away from the float. Ken gets out the single emergency paddle, but no amount of effort is going to buck the tide and wind, and we get carried away towards the beach. I always wondered if we could beach land the *Draiocht*, and, well, now I know.

After we successfully and safely unloaded our groceries and other purchases, the wind dropped down, and Ken and I were able to tow/paddle the *Draiocht* back to the float, where she continued her vacation for another couple of months.

The diagnosis of this new problem – apparently we’ve been getting condensation in the fuel tank. Not enough to be really obvious, and we’ve been adding a fuel conditioner to try to resolve the problem, but apparently the fuel filters keep getting clogged up with water. Take them out, set

them in the sun and dry them out thoroughly, and they work fine again. The solution – a new, expensive filter with a clear fuel bowl and a spigot which can be used to drain any water that gets caught in the system.

In the meanwhile, we are using the *Awen*. This should all be good, right? Brand new engine put in last fall, everything up to snuff. In July, we had to go for the new engine's 50 hour oil change, a condition on the warranty. No problem. We head towards Campbell River with the *Awen*, still with a few hours before we reach the 50 mark. The engine's been working great, and all has been well. Except that we hardly get out past the narrows and the engine gives us a red light. What the ...?

So we tie up at the dock at Robber's Knob, and take a careful gander at the engine. Can't see anything wrong – oil looks fine, cooling system looks fine, no obvious problems we can spot. We don't want to run the engine with a red light and cause problems with our warranty, so we phone the shop. They can't figure it out either. They give us a list of things to try, which we do, but we still have a red light by the time we get to the Port Neville dock. So we tie up again. Phone the shop again. Wait wait some more. Finally the shop give us permission to proceed to Kelsey Bay, where a mechanic will meet us the following day to check out the issue.

The weather on Johnstone Strait was perfect – a rare thing in the summer with the constant northwesterlies. But we were forced to limp across. The engine is a new, electronically-controlled model, and the red light has put us in "Safe Mode", which means the engine will only operate at 60 to 70% load. Oh, well ... we did get there. And we were lucky enough to have some friends coming along behind us, so if things had actually developed into a problem, we could have gotten a tow.

The diagnosis of this problem? Everyone, including the mechanic, is still scratching their heads. Computer attitude? I don't know. In any case, the *Awen* is behaving fine now, but we had to drop nearly \$1000 dollars for the "emergency" trip to Kelsey Bay by the mechanic, considerably more than we were expecting to pay, had we gotten the *Awen* to Campbell River as planned. What's the old saying – "*Boats are holes in the water into which you pour money*"?