

Check That Stern Gland!

By Graham Turner, Shrimper 438 (Julie Kate) (Autumn 2007)

They say that things always happen in threes, and this year in Poole we have had three boats that required their stern gland rubber hoses replaced - and those are only the ones I know about.

Failure can be pretty catastrophic, as the boat will fill with water in days rather than weeks and can result in flooded engines and interiors, large claims on insurance and lack of quality time on the water.

All the boats were of similar age - about 1990 - so the rubber could have been up to 17 years old. Please note, though, that rubber has no definite life and may fail earlier or later for no specific reason.

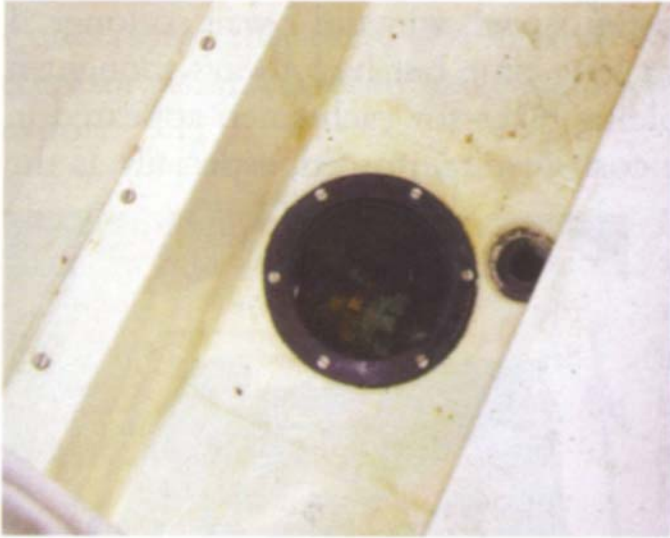
If I have now convinced you to go and check, I'm afraid it's more bad news. The rubber hose is situated behind the stern-gland stuffing box and can be seen by removing the inspection hatch under the cockpit grating. Seen is not quite the right word as it is buried in the skeg between the bilge pump suction hoses. To inspect it properly, you will need to remove the cockpit floor and engine box moulding, which is held in place by many screws and selastic type sealant.

This job is not as bad as it first seems as once the sealant is cut though with a sharp knife, all that remains is to remove all the screws and disconnect the engine control panel and the bilge pump suction hose from the cockpit drain bilge pump. Check to ensure the outside of the hose is not perished or the inside has not collapsed. If it feels soft or squidgy, this is a sure sign replacement is due. Perhaps if the hose is more than five or six years old you should be considering replacement to be on the safe side.

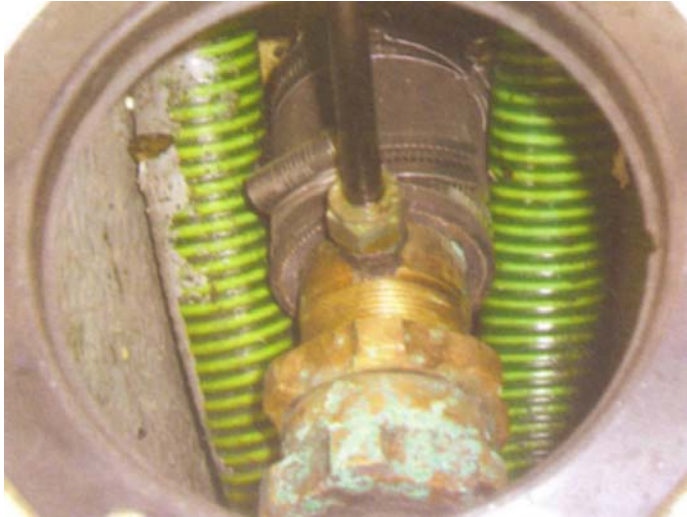
If you need to replace it, the prop shaft will need to be withdrawn, so while you are at it you might as well replace the cutless bearing and repack the stern gland. Don't forget to check the engine mounts at the same time.

These instructions only refer to a Mk 1. To gain access to the stern gland in a Mk 2 you have to remove a screwed panel, which may be much simpler. Due to press deadlines the photos only refer to a Mk 1.

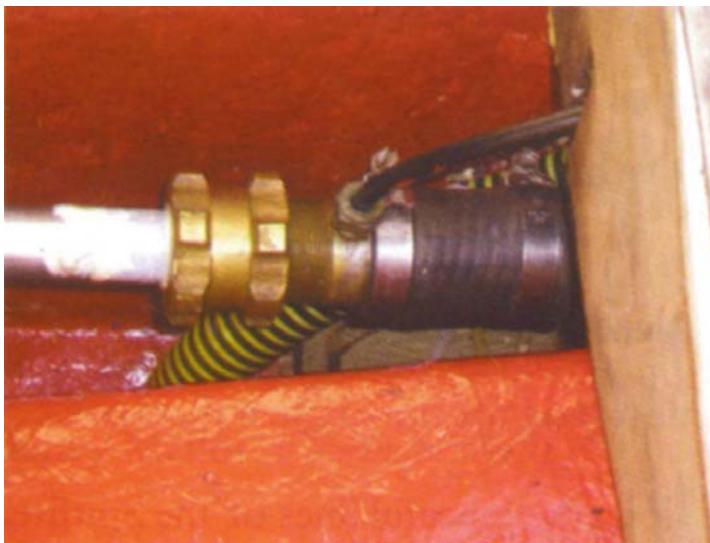
Graham Turner *Julie Kate (438)*
with thanks to Piglet (430) for some of the photos



This is the view of the stern gland you normally get through the access hatch - not a lot to see!



This close up shot shows the new rubber hose nicely, picked up by the camera flash. It's not normally this easy to see, but the bilge pump hoses prevent a thorough examination.



That's better! A view of the assembly with the cockpit floor removed.