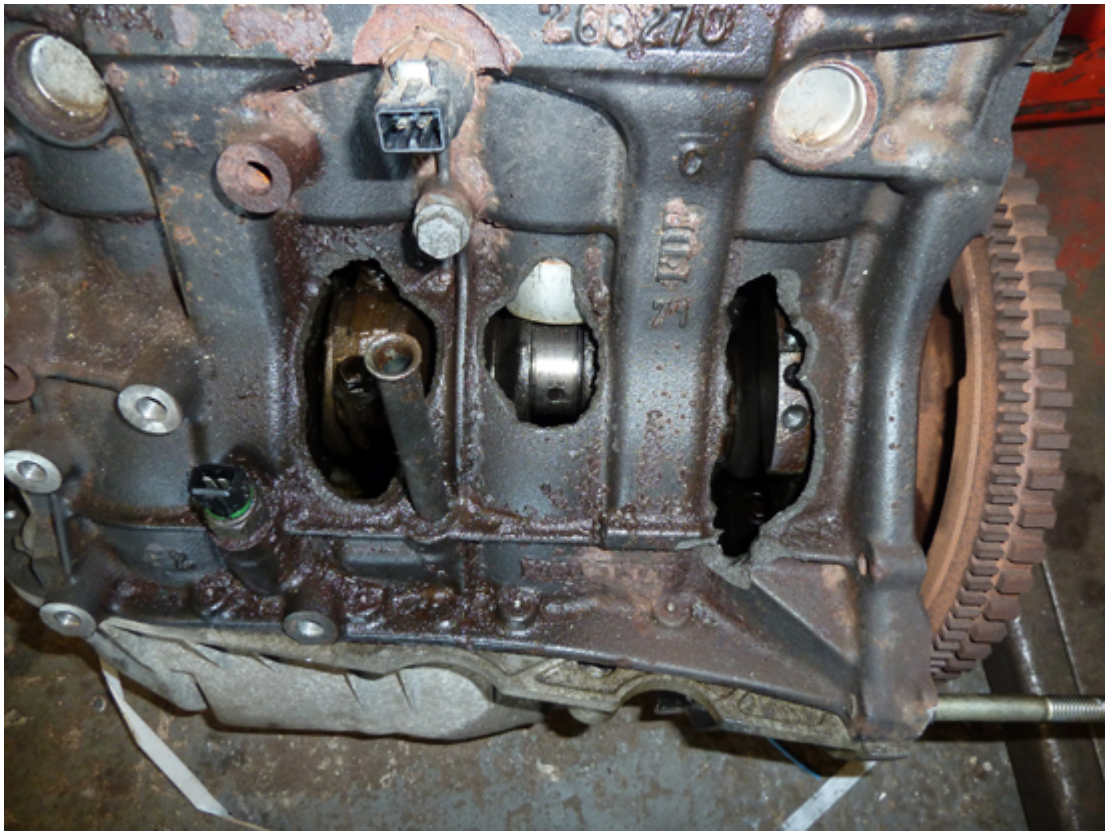
Wot, no oil?

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These days car engines are generally VERY expensive to rebuild or repair, and to me it always seems a shame – and a costly mistake – that so many drivers seem to care so little about what's going on under the bonnet that they ignore early warning signs of trouble… Sure, it gives me work, but I always (still) get upset when a mechanical unit that, given a little basic care and attention, has the potential to operate for a very long time, is wrecked due to sheer neglect.

Essentially, if a dashboard warning lamp illuminates, or a gauge needle suddenly dances off the scale, they are trying to tell you that there's trouble brewing. In almost every case, stopping to investigate, rather than carrying on driving, will give you the chance to rectify the problem before it becomes very serious, and has the potential to wreck your engine.



This engine was completely destroyed by a lack of oil, and in particular by the driver (we'll call him 'Silly Billy') ignoring the illumination of a warning lamp which was trying hard to advise him to stop the car and check the engine.

So it was in the case of a modern hatchback, towed in for us to renew the engine. When we opened the bonnet, we were shocked at the scale of the destruction. The owner admitted that the oil pressure warning lamp had illuminated (because, as it turned out, the sump was empty…), but he had, in his own words, "Carried on driving because I was in a hurry". Well, he wasn't in a hurry for very long before there was a huge 'bang' and three holes appeared in the cylinder wall as connecting rods and crankshaft bearings made a bid for freedom.

We installed a replacement engine, and the car is now back on the road. However, stopping the engine as soon as the warning lamp came on may have saved the unit, or, better still, if the oil level had been checked/topped up before the journey, much time, money and inconvenience would have been saved.

Is it any wonder I get grumpy at the complacent attitude of some of my customers towards their cars (by the way, they neglect brakes too, but that’s another story)!