The Third Voyage of Lumina

Amongst the Fjords of Northern British Columbia

Post 12

It was just about 12 hours after receiving his passport that Sam found himself waiting at 3am for a bus down to Heathrow. This followed some sterling work by Carol getting the bus ticket, a flight to Vancouver and onward flight to Prince Rupert all booked in a matter of hours. Its amazing what you can do with the

The marine store had the toilet parts we were after and also every possible fishing lure you could want and a whole lot more

help of the internet these days. Returning to Prince Rupert we were luckier than our first visit and managed to get into the yacht club which is more centrally positioned, just as well really as three people on two folding bikes does not really work and there was also the need for a bit of a serious visit to the supermarket.

The evening before Sam was due to arrive, we were anchored off an island a few miles out, having returned from our detour to visit the old American storehouses. There was an earthquake over the other side of the Northern Pacific off Russia, quite a significant one and a tsunami warning was in place. Initially out of a scale of 4 we were at 3 so high alert but not quite evacuation like they had in Kodiak earlier. It was a little unnerving as we were in a shallow anchorage with little protection from the ocean and one could imagine a breaking wave coming over the skerries. The problem would be that it was due during darkness, not an inviting prospect, however as the evening progressed the alert level was reduced so instead of heading out to sea we stayed put and nothing untoward was felt. It must be difficult for those

monitoring and predicting such

events as these days we expect perfect accuracy and if people get too many false alarms then they tend to start disregarding them, only to be caught out by the big one. In Kodiak during the previous alert when people were heading up the hill, Tyler told me he stayed in his boatyard I guess ready to climb up on his largest boatlift, but when you have a business to protect and maybe mitigate damage then perhaps you think differently?

Prince Rupert Rowing and Yacht club was very helpful with several people on hand to take our lines and there were two other yachts on the dock so we didn't seem so outnumbered by the plastic palaces or aluminium speed boats. Our neighbours were more interesting than most having done an interesting voyage from British Columbia to Europe via Panama, then down around South America, across the Pacific to New Zealand and back to BC



using a coke can box as a salmon smoker

via Japan and Alaska. They invited us aboard and we took a bottle of wine, turned out they were non drinkers but encouraged us to finish it anyway! They had many tales to tell but were also interested in our exploits.



Skipper takes first bath in three months

The route from here down to the north of Vancouver island is through a really complex system of fjords and Islands with so many routes that you could spend several years going up and down the coast without having to use the same passage. Anchorages are getting busier now with many trawler style motor yachts mostly inhabited by the old folks of Washington and Oregon who potter up towards Alaska every year for their summers fishing.

Its not a very challenging way of life at the moment, we motor most of the time as there is very little wind, tidal

currents are surprisingly benign and you just progress through picturesque fjords lined with forest clad mountains from one idyllic anchorage to another. Every now and then there is a destination of interest, being a village to stop at for the night and have a pint or something else. Of course it would be very boring if I didn't find any of the latter category and with a bit or research I hope we don't disappoint you with this blog.

The Bishop bay hot springs it seems are one of those places the locals head for and unbeknown to us it was a holiday weekend. There is a small pontoon with room for a couple of motor boats on each side and a single mooring buoy. All were taken and with a steeply shelving shoreline the anchor was dropped in about 20m and then Lumina reversed towards the shore. With a long line attached to a tree from the stern we were fairly safely moored, well good enough for a visit to the hot pool anyway. The four small boats on the pontoon were in full party mode with the beer flowing and with crabs and prawns cooking on portable cookers it was interesting getting to the gangway. With the boiling pots negotiated the hot pools did not disappoint. Unlike the previous ones we had climbed high up a hill to get to in Svalbard that turned out to be a tepid puddle the main pool was a proper hot pool, like a bath, with a cooler one outside the shelter if you have had enough heat. The whole place was very well organised with some camping areas for the kayakers and a fairly well



Bishop Bay Hot Springs



built shed over the pool that had been built by a yacht club some years ago. Remarkably there were also very few sandflies to tarnish the experience and I must admit I am surprised how little we have been affected by six legged biting insects the whole trip. Only in one anchorage has it been an issue, although maybe if you were a land based venturer you would tell a different story!

Suitably simmered we retired to the boat for an afternoon cuppa and moved on down the coast to an inlet we could have to ourselves. Seemingly quiet the silence was occasionally broken by the baying of a wolf somewhere around us in the forest. When there is nothing else to hear, apart from distant waterfalls the sound of the wolf is something else and if you haven't had the privilege, then it sounds just like in the films!



The last habitation in Butedale, now derelict

One night we ended up at a place called Butedale. As it's right



on the main drag North and South it has long been a stopping off place and has a pontoon. Once it was a cannery but closed completely in 1974 and then gradually rotted away. In its heyday 400 people lived there however today there is little left. Around 20 years ago it appears that the then owners did some superficial clearing up in an attempt to market it as an investment opportunity for a resort and marina to be built on the site. Much of the old dock was knocked down together with most of





The old cannery building inside and out. The end had blown off some years ago but still has some impressive timbers inside





The fishmeal plant had fared less well with the roof completely collapsed, however the large rotary dryers were still in place under the wreckage

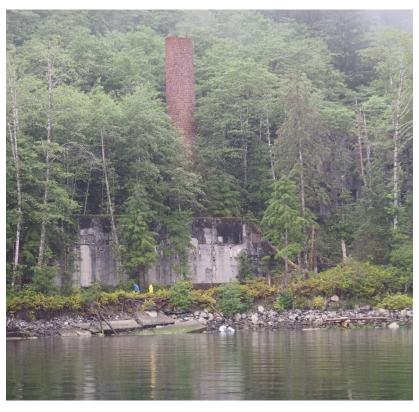
the buildings so today there is little of the dock and accommodation still standing. All that remains is the old cannery building, completely empty together with a fishmeal plant behind that has collapsed on top of the machinery. It was interesting if a little dodgy to clamber underneath the collapsed building to try and work out what all the machinery did and fishmeal is what we came up with. Mechanised plant needs a lot of power and usually these places are associated with a good water source. Just above Butedale is a large lake with a waterfall coming down near the dock. A Hydro plant used to provide all the power for the place and this could be reached using a bridge but now it is gone and the power station is safe from interested people like us, unless of course you fancy walking across the pipe. I did suggest it but it was vetoed!

The last house to be occupied by the caretaker during the clear up and subsequent sale attempt was in half decent shape. I am not sure what happened to him but the contents were pretty much all there, although obviously not inhabited for a good ten years or so.

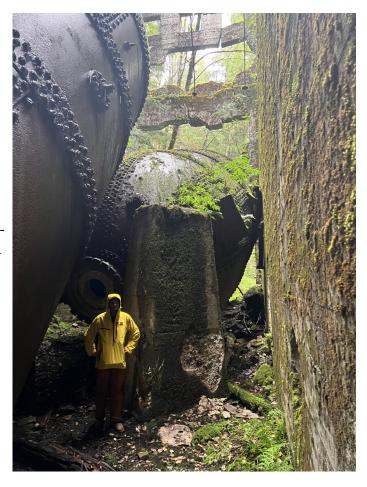
Leaving in the rain the following morning we continued southwards and after a couple of hours I noted

a chimney marked on the chart. With a bit of googling it appeared that we had come across the site of the first paper mill in British Columbia. Thinking it would be a bit rude to pass another industrial relic by, we hung a left into Swanson Bay. The chart shows the brick chimney as "conspicuous" but it is hardly that as it is rapidly disappearing into the forest. As you get closer one can make out some pretty significant buildings amongst the trees, but from a distance it has all but disappeared. With the anchor dropped Carol surprisingly didn't seem that interested in yet another piece of industrial archaeology particularly as it was raining pretty steadily. So the boys set off in the dinghy it being only the second time I have put on full wet weather gear on this

voyage. Now, if Butedale was decrepit then this was at another level, abandoned since the early part of the 20th century everything timber has virtually disappeared. There are just the remains of a few pilings of the docks and boardwalks. After not an inconsiderable struggle we climbed up onto "dry" land only to realise that the moss we were walking on was the remains of the boardwalk and trees had grown up through leaving the occasional hole into the abyss below. Behind, amongst the undergrowth could be seen a massive concrete building. Climbing under and over the rotten timber we made it inside and found a shell maybe six stories high with the chimney at the far end. Beyond the chimney was another concrete shell of similar size with three enormous funnel shaped vats that had fallen off their supports and now were stacked against each other. Their age is given away by the fact that they are all made of riveted steel rather than being welded and with 1909 being the date the mill started that would be about right for that vintage. The construction for the time without the lifting equipment we have today must have been



Chimney and ruins at Swanson Bay, one of the first pulp mills in British Columbia.



Incredible construction of these vats, they will be here for may years to come!

quite feat, however by 1943 the whole operation was out classed by newer technology and it has been



A typically calm damp morning

derelict since then. As we were coming away in the dinghy we noticed another massive building trying to hide amongst the trees just a hundred yards further back. Beaching the dinghy again we once again negotiated the rotted boardwalk to find a similar sized building with the remains of massive fans and next door the drying stacks. You could see how the paper would go up and down inside the chamber to dry out. The water pipes from the heaters were strewn about as the thin steel coverings had disintegrated and even the fans were only just discernible amongst the rust.



Salmon for dinner — again

Continuing on we had a lazy night at a place called Shearwater, the other extreme, where the original cannery site has been completely redeveloped into a resort with accommodation, a proper dock with power, water and fuel available and a restaurant and bar in a further attempt to take as much money from the tourist as possible. Of course compared to the fishermen who spend thousands of dollars for a week fishing here we are the cheapskates on the pontoon

but we did partake of a couple of pints in the pub in the evening.

Best Wishes from Tim, Carol and Sam on Lumina

Website with all the old blogs Tracker page

