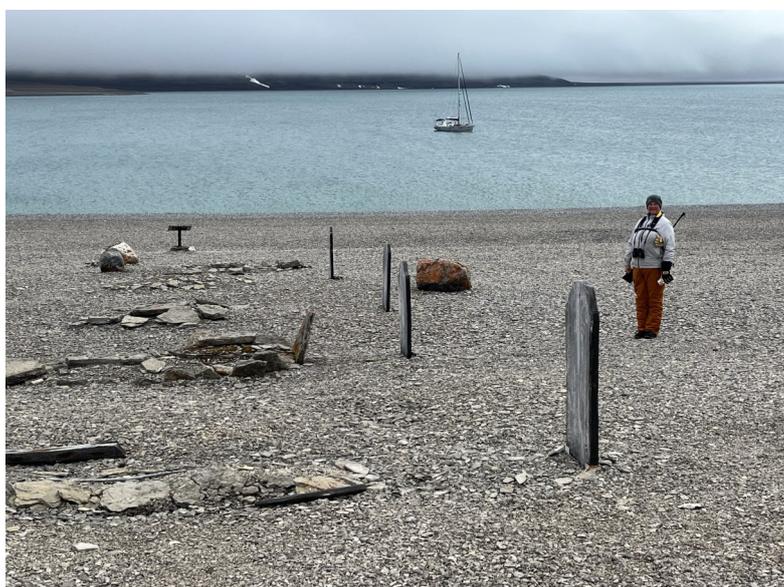


Lumina through the North West Passage

[Beechey Island](#) to [Fort Ross](#)

Post 13

With the storm abating, the wind changed direction meaning that the fetch to build the waves was coming right across the bay. We therefore lifted the anchor and moved across to re – anchor close to the graves from the Franklin expedition and went back to bed, only to be awakened a few hours later by the sound of Zodiacs going past. These were delivering cruise ship passengers from their “expedition ship” to see the graves. (Apparently you are on an expedition ship when you use zodiacs to go to the shore) Turning in for another few hours we waited till they had all done their shore visit before we went to pay our respects to the sailors buried there. In a way, these were the lucky ones who died during the first winter of the expedition and got proper graves instead of the rest who died over the next couple of years or so after surviving unbelievable hardships.



The grave site is a rather sober place, truly desolate and hard to believe that the Erebus and Terror ships would have been overwintering in the bay. Also, having seen the book about when they excavated the graves in 1984 it was very eerie to think of those faces, so well preserved were just a few feet below the gravel we were looking at. It's also interesting reading various books that tried to make sense of the history, written at different times and all knowing less than we do now, for instance at the time when the graves were excavated in the 1980s and Owen Beattie wrote "[Frozen in Time](#)" no one knew where the wrecks of the ships actually were, but now both have been found. There are still, however, so many unanswered questions about the ultimate demise of the sailors as only scant further remains have been found. I will let you do your own research into Beattie's expedition as the photographs are rather interesting to say the least with the bodies being perfectly preserved in the permafrost for 150 years.

Leaving the grave site we moved a mile or so down to near the headland guarding the bay to the site of



The ruins of Northumberland House and the monument to all those who didn't make it nearby



Northumberland House. This was a hut built by one of the many expeditions sent out to search for Franklin and his ships. It was stocked with provisions so that they, or anyone else in distress, could find food and shelter. Sadly, it was never used for its original purpose and now only the ruins are there, together with various memorials and a cairn that to this day has an emergency survival kit for anyone who needs it.



A tin possibly from Franklin or one of the rescue expeditions - It is thought that poor soldering possibly caused lead poisoning contributing to the deaths

With ice still in the south part of the route there was no hurry to get on, and with another boat doing the passage making it to Resolute we thought we would go there, as its only about 40 miles away. However, as we left the bay we came across a band of ice from the North which had not been there a couple of days previously and contact with the other boat who had already left confirmed that it would be difficult to get through, and then we may get trapped there. We therefore turned round and went into the inlet just to the east of Beechey Island for a change of scene at least. This was fairly sheltered and we waited a day for the wind to be favourable to head south.



The anchorage in Gascoyne Inlet was to be our furthest North on this trip and at 74 degrees is a full 6 less than the 80 we achieved last year in Svalbard. It brings into context the effect that the gulf stream has on Svalbard on making it Ice free so close to the Pole. In Gascoyne the weather grew cold with the temperature dropping to 3C and the sea at 1.6C. We had our first snow and we awoke to white mountains everywhere around us. With a favourable wind we set off for Fort Ross, back across Lancaster sound and down Prince Regent Inlet. The ice chart was showing some



Ice in the distance

ice in the entrance to Prince Regent where there had been none previously but we thought how hard can it be to negotiate a bit of ice 1-3/10ths.

As the evening grew closer we had crossed Lancaster Sound and began to see ice in the distance. We tried to fit the ice chart that was already nearly 24hrs old into what we were seeing. This is quite a challenge as the chart is on a very large scale. Eventually we came to the point where there was ice to the left and right of us, but according to the chart should be clear water ahead. Initially it was fairly easy navigating between

the floes but gradually it got thicker and thicker and we had to push them apart. With no clear water ahead that we could see and the wind apparently pushing the ice together behind us we made the difficult manoeuvre of turning round and trying to retrace our steps back to the ice edge. This took quite a while but after a couple of hours we were out.



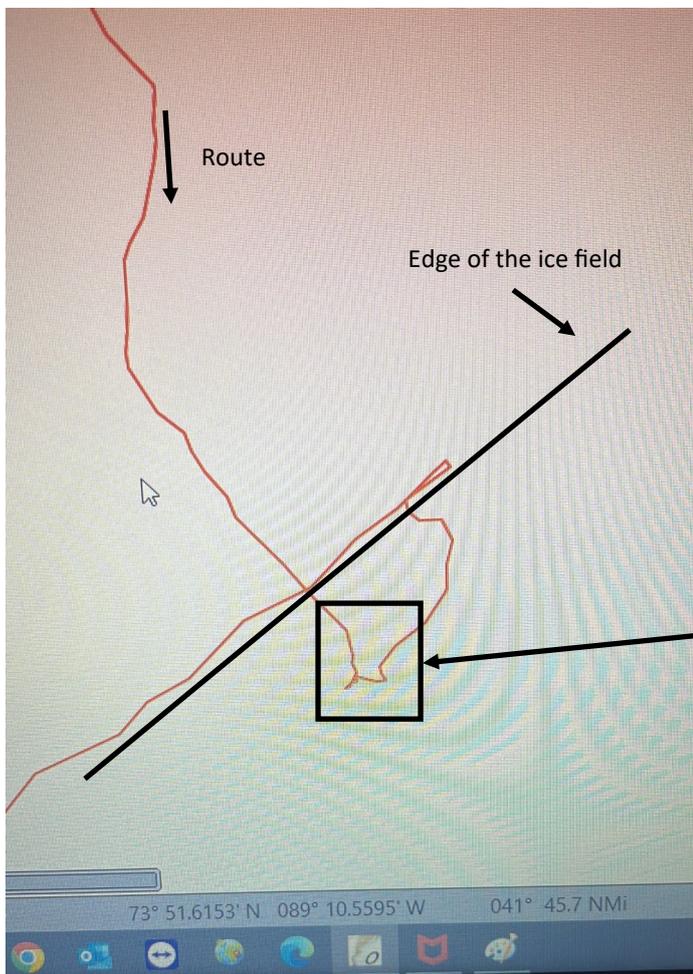
Difficult to find a way through

We then followed the ice edge in vaguely the right direction until we came to a point where we could see clear water on the other side and had another go at getting through. This time it was only a few hundred yards and with some pushing and shoving we made our way through. It is surprising

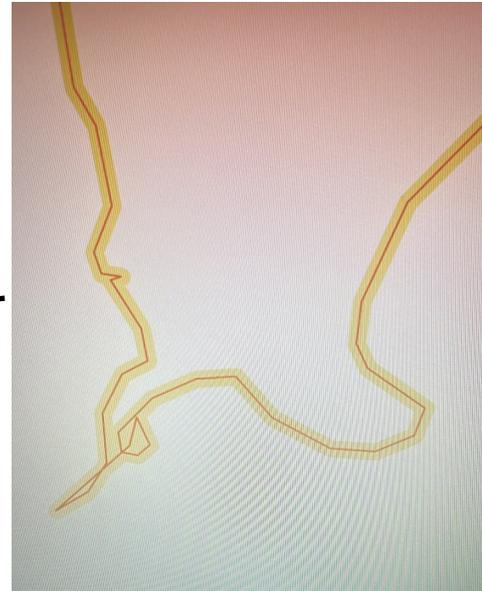


Sometimes it is easier

how large an ice floe a small boat can push when you wedge the bow in between two of them and provided that there is some open water to push the ice into then you can make a path. This is only viable for really short distances though.



With the image of the ice chart on the screen in front of us and the chart it was still impossible to see where we were but there was clear water apparently as far as the coast on the west side. Following the clear water we gradually got closer and closer to the coast to a point where after about 20 miles



Zoomed in on where we got stuck!

we just had a mile or so between the coast and the icefield to our East. Ahead, however, you could see the end of the ice and eventually we were past it with open water all around.

However, as we continued to follow the coast another icefield out in the centre of the inlet started to encroach on us, but this time we remained clear. At one point we were about a couple of miles offshore and I was on watch, steering round a few small bits of ice. As the boat yaws around a bit on autopilot because we have to steer to the wind direction as the compass is useless up here, these small pieces of ice seem to have some sort of attraction to the boat as whichever way you send the boat it always seems to want to point straight at the ice block. This piece seemed particularly difficult, in fact it seemed to be moving. As we got even closer it was actually moving, as it was the head of a swimming Polar Bear trying to avoid us. They are remarkably good swimmers and indeed are classed as marine mammals and the clue is in their name - *Ursus Maritimus*

As we neared Fort Ross, we could see Abel Tasman just heading out into the Bellot Strait to head through. We exchanged greetings and they continued on through the sound. After 36 hours of concentration with navigation we needed a rest and after all Fort Ross is one of the most iconic places on the passage and not to be missed.

We turned in and by morning the anchorage had become quite busy with Hauru, Voyager, Inatiz and Night Owl arriving. We went ashore to start replenishing our water stocks, not having got any for over a fortnight now and to have a look at the old Hudsons Bay Company hut.

It is here that they had a trading post, the last to be established by the company in 1937. Four buildings were erected over 5 days and stocked with provisions for the manager and two clerks, all delivered by one of the companies ice breakers. They must have had high hopes for the place generating trade from



local trappers. However ice conditions prevented resupply for two summers and in 1943 plans were made to evacuate the post. With Canada's participation in WWII no local planes were available and they called on the USAAF for help. In



November 1943 Captain J.F. Stanwell parachuted down together with extra provisions with the plan to prepare a runway for a plane to land to evacuate the inhabitants. This was apparently the first parachute jump north of the arctic circle. A runway was created on a

local lake and the place abandoned for till the following year when a ship was able to reach it. However after what must have been one of the shortest lived trading posts it was finally closed down in 1948.

Today it is well maintained, stocked with provisions to last someone a month or two should they need it, has a cooking and heating stove and some bunks. The door and windows are protected by planks of wood that have to be slid out before you can open them. This is polar bear protection. It is probably the best equipped hut I have come across. With wind and ice conditions not being helpful we held a party in the hut for the fleet and everybody remaining came, although Night Owl had decided to make a break for it earlier in the day and head down the Strait. The 4 remaining yachts and crews all brought a bottle and something to eat, and we also got a visit from some crew from the icebreaker Jean Goodwill that was anchored in the sound. I don't know how long ago that one would have seen so many people from different vessels in the place, but its not often visited for sure judging by the visitors book. We added Lumina to the boat and crew names on the wall and found a space below Dodo's Delight, Bobs boat from 1st Sept 2013.

The following day the ice charts showed no real progress in opening up further on and a favourable tide not until the evening, a couple of Poles from Inatiz and Hauru came over to try and diagnose my problem with the errant water maker. However, after a couple of hours trying to get the main pump to prime we appear to be back where I had got to with no solution. With the wind getting up to over 30kn they took advantage of more coffee and pancakes and as it abated a little went back to their yachts—the



Party time!

Polish Plumbers did not live up to expectations!

Shortly after, the radio crackled into life “bear on the beach, bear on the beach”. Indeed there was a solitary individual casually meandering along the shingle, just where 24 hours ago we had all been. Whilst apparently walking slowly it was amazing how fast it moved over the ground and continued into the distance. With ice now coming through the sound past our anchorage it looks like we will not be leaving on tonight's tide, so another day goes by.

Hopefully the next posting will see us making progress towards Alaska otherwise we will be getting perilously close to having to make difficult decisions about going on or back... Watch this space!



In full “Henry Weston” gear I led a cider tasting session

For those interested in this stuff, there is a boat coming the other way called Lumi. They make videos on YouTube and we have been in touch with them for a few years now. The plan has been for us to meet up and say hello and a page has been created on Predict Wind showing both theirs and our tracks in the hope they connect. You can find them on YouTube under [Alluring Arctic](#) and the double tracker page is [here](#)



[Website with all the old blogs](#)

