

The Fourth Voyage of Lumina - June 26

Prince Rupert to Stewart

Post 6

With a week or so in hand before we have a berth in Prince Rupert booked for 12 days whilst we do our road trip we called in at the Yacht Club for a night so that we could do some shopping. Walking down the pontoon we came past a boat called Seabelle. Now, there cant be too many of that name so I knocked on the hull to enquire if they were the Seabelle that came through the North West Passage? Indeed it was and we arranged to



Sonia and Calin on Seabelle

meet up at the pub that night. It was an unexpected meeting as I thought they were well south of us but was very welcome as they sure did have a story to tell, which was even more extreme than I thought. They had started the NWP the year before us but ended up overwintering the boat in Inuvik and finishing in our year, although by starting in the middle of the passage, they were always ahead of us so we never caught up with them. Their NWP experience started off much the same as ours, waiting for the ice, and getting to know the other boats going in the same direction and sheltering from storms. Somewhere after Cambridge Bay and apparently following two fantastic days of downwind sailing and surfing they went to start the engine and there was nothing. It appears that all the downwind sailing in big short seas had caused water to be able to flow back in through the exhaust elbow into the cylinders and hydrolock the engine. Of course when they tried to start the engine they did not know of its predicament and in trying to start the engine, devastating damage was done to it. Of course initially they thought, just remove the injectors and get the water out, then it will turn over. Unfortunately with bent connecting rods the engine could not run. So there they were, miles from anywhere without an engine. Now you might be in a sailing boat but the North West Passage is probably impossible to do in one year by sailing alone. The wind is just too unreliable and we motored a lot of the way, particularly in the latter stages when time was running out. Their only option was to sail to Tuktoyaktuk and see what they could do there. With the aid of their outboard fixed to the transom of their yacht they made it into the harbour at Tuk. There they were able to diag-

nose the engine properly and the only option was to take it out, ship it to Edmonton for repairs. In the mean time they had to say goodbye to the other NW passage yachts. It must have been terrible to see their friends sail away and leave them to the fate of the ice, as there was no way that the engine could be repaired in time for them to continue that season. In the end, they got towed 100 miles up the Mackenzie River by the last tug of the season to Inuvik where the boat was dragged out of the water onto the shore. With the engine away for repairs, they waited several weeks for its return so that they could be sure they



The Coastguard cutter anchored for the night to check the bears were behaving themselves

would be ready the following year. In the end all went well and they finished the passage the same year as us, one of quite a few passages that like Amundsen took more than one year.

We had a most enjoyable evening in the pub at Prince Rupert and later

they made us a wonderful lunch on board whilst we waited and watched for bears at the Khutzeymateen Bear Sanctuary. This is just a few miles round the coast from Prince Rupert at the head of an inlet. On the way we anchored for the night at the enticingly named Pearl Harbour. This one has nothing to do with its more famous Hawaiian namesake but does have a rather large white rock prominently left by a retreating glacier on the beach.

We had just anchored and I spied a wolf in the distance looking across at an island that was about to be linked to the mainland by the falling tide. It waded in up to its belly but rather than swim the rest of the way it retreated and then started down the beach towards us. We were anchored quite close to the shore, but several hundred yards from where the wolf had started its paddle. Over the next few minutes it gradually made its way over rocks and beaches towards us, passing just about 50m away and continued before disappearing in to the forest. All in all, quite a wonderful encounter.



Wolf on a mission

At the bear sanctuary, despite having to register our arrival with the ranger at their floating lodge, the bears were rather reticent and despite being on anchor for 24hrs we saw nothing, however on our way out in the second evening we saw two singles and a mother and two cubs, but outside the reserve. Obviously they had not got the memo!

With a few days still to spare before we return to Prince Rupert to pick up a car for a bit of a road trip into the interior there was time for another side trip time up the Portland Canal to its head at Stewart. The Portland canal is the longest inlet being a good hundred miles long. It has Alaska on one side and Canada on the other so we are only allowed to anchor or go ashore on the Canadian side. It was also the site of a

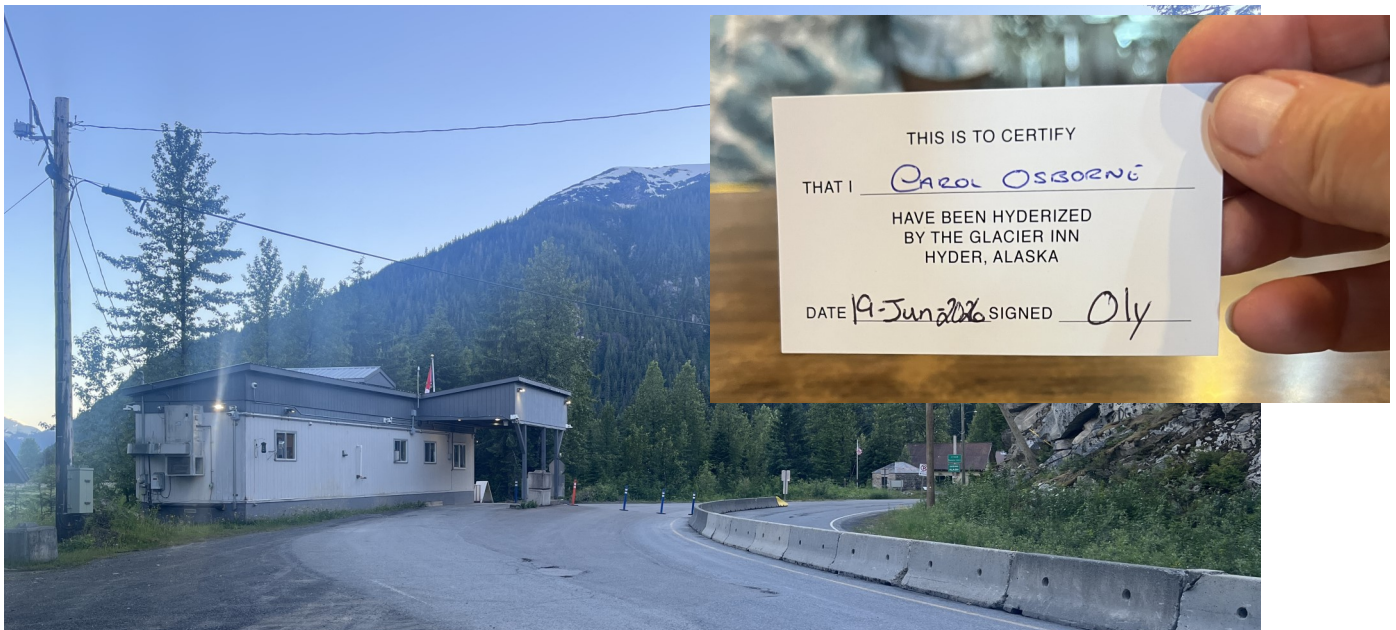
border dispute in the late 19th Century possibly due to a mistake made when the Americans built some stone buildings to mark the border. Unfortunately two were actually built in Canada and we unearthed them last year. There are two others in this series, one definitely on the US side and the other at the head of the inlet actually on the border. After a couple of days of sailing and motoring we neared the head where Stewart is sited on the Canadian side and Hyder, another village on the US side. In the distance you could see a definite line going right up the mountain with the trees cleared. It was completely straight and went from sea level up to the snow line.



Border marker, Storehouse and the border marching up the mountain behind.
Alaska to the Left and British Columbia to the right

There is a small harbour at Stewart for local boats and also a very large dock for loading stone from a quarry which goes just about to the border. I wonder what an international incident there would be if they quarried any closer and some of Alaska fell into British Columbia. Arriving at the harbour, we bypassed the pontoon reserved for aircraft and made friends with a local who gave us a key so that we could get back into the security gate. One got the feeling that they don't get too many visiting boaters here!

We took a gentle walk a mile or so into Stewart got an ice cream and some milk and mingled with the intrepid campervan travellers who had also made it to the town at the end of the road. Stewart is however not at the end of the road as it continued on past our little dock,



Possibly the quietest Canada/USA border crossing at night

past the quarry to what has to be the quietest border crossing between the USA and Canada. In the evening we got the bikes out and followed the road towards Hyder. It was in fact only a few hundred yards to the border. There was no security crossing into Alaska but the Canadian side was manned, so it was just as well that we had our passports with us. This is in fact the only way into Hyder so even if you made it into the good old United States of America without any documents, you could not get to anywhere else anyway. That being said, the Canadians obviously take a different view as it was manned both on our way out and back in later, But anyone entering Canada through this border would either be one of just 100 people who live there or someone who had already like us passed in the other direction from Stewart. I am sure it makes sense to someone.

So following a look at the last American stonehouse (you might remember us looking for two others last year that were actually built on Canada) but this one actually straddles the border, we continued a good



Being 120 miles inland from Prince Rupert, they don't get too many visiting boats at Stewart

hundred yards to the Glacier Inn for a pint. Shortly afterwards three youngsters came in and had to show their ID. We had passed them earlier in Stewart and they were on a road trip to Hyder. Apparently this is actually a destination, being not only at the end of the road, but also a bit of an oddity as the only way in or out is through Canada. Shortly afterwards the barman starts pouring shots for them out of a bottle in a paper bag. I said why the paper bag? Ah he said its to get Hyderised. Its on me he said, but you have to down it in one, and you can't sip or smell first otherwise you buy a round for the whole bar. Sounding like a deal, and with the alcohol creeping up the inside of the glass we duly all downed the shots and got our certificates for being "Hyderised". Then probably assuming that we were all there for the evening an interesting cocktail was poured with whisky, baileys and kahlua called a duckfart which turned out to be very drinkable. Eventually after a few more drinks the youngsters decided to retire to the campsite and we got on our bikes and wobbled off down the road towards Canada. We had been told that at night the post was not occupied but you had to use the video phone to pass. We were just trying to work out how the phone worked and the window opened and we were asked for passports. With everything in order and without any stern warnings of being drunk in charge of a bicycle we made it back to the boat without incident.

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We have been troubled by floating ice when at anchor in the past but here it is logs!

Waking up the next morning surprisingly not too worse for wear we pushed off early to make the most of the tide and with 100 miles to go down the inlet we needed every help we could get. The aim was to get back to our previous anchorage and also have a look at the Swamp Point Aggregate mine that appeared abandoned a mile short of our destination. It had apparently been more successful than the gold mine but eventually the company operating it had enough reserves elsewhere so it was closed. We tied up to a pontoon below a very fancy aluminium walkway but as the ramp was hoisted up to protect it we still had to use the dinghy to get to the shore. Climbing up the side of the



shore end of the walkway the track had disappeared into the undergrowth as we have seen before, It seems that 10 years is all it takes for everything to disappear here. There was a bit of a clearing with concrete pads where know doubt buildings had been but everything had been removed except for a rather unusual octagonal structure that was essentially a very strong tent with an aluminium frame. Luckily the door was unlocked and inside was a pick up truck waiting for its next outing. Google earth had not shown any other interesting structures so apart from finding the barge loading dock there was nothing else for us than return to collect some mussels from the shore and paddle back to the boat.

Not a flying saucer but the sole building left at the aggregate mine



A couple of days later sees us now back at Prince Rupert after a 250 mile round trip to a pub. Here we will, for the first time ever, be leaving Lumina in a dock and taking to land for a road trip to meet up with Amy, James and little Charlie in the Rockies and visit the little town on the prairies where my father Ralph was born.

Best Wishes from Tim and Carol on Lumina

Website with all the old [Blogs](#)

