

Lumina through the North West Passage

Into the Pacific

Post no 19

Leaving King Cove at first light we soon found the wind rising dramatically as we got out between the islands. We were glad we had not raised the mainsail but just the genoa as this could easily be reduced in size. Soon we had 35kn and had just a scrap of sail sending us on at a crazy speed. As we went further out the effect of the high mountains on the islands reduced and the wind became more predictable. I emailed Sand Point harbour to tell them we were coming but got no reply. It is always a bit of a learning



Lumina in the straps and about to be lifted

curve when in a new area as some harbours are into advance booking and others its just first come first served. The other thing that varies a lot is the use of radio or other forms of communication. In Scotland for instance certain harbours like Peterhead and Lerwick want to know of every boat movement, even if just moving within the harbour to the fuel berth for instance. In Norway the radio I used hardly at all and you can never get hold of a harbour, whilst here the radio is used a bit although we never managed to get a response from a harbour master. None seemed to like being emailed as we got a response from them with berthing instructions.

We were aiming for the next major settlement called Sand Point which promised to be a proper harbour like King Cove. As the light was just failing we came into the channel as a tug and barge were just preparing to leave. It was a perfect piece of ballet as the tug gradually changed from being tied alongside the barge to towing it on a long line. As we entered the harbour we could see

the mast of Thor and Henk came out to help us with our lines. Next morning after a half hour in the harbour masters office chatting with some old timers we took walk up to the village we treated ourselves to a landing net in the fishermans store, something we have often wished we had as apart from fish its useful for picking pieces of litter out of the ocean and anything we should drop. As in King Cove, the harbourmasters office seems to serve the pastoral needs of young and old, with limitless free coffee and easy chairs to accommodate those who just want to chat. The café provided a wonderful lunch and we retired to the boat to catch up with jobs there.

With daylight becoming shorter every day and now less than 12hrs long we left at first light for a lovely sheltered bay. The pilot guide warned about the swell coming into the bay but we were lucky and it was

fairly calm. Looking out as dusk fell we hoped to see bears on the shore but they were partying elsewhere. The forecast was not good with a massive depression approaching so rather than continue with short hops to uncertain anchorages we decided to make a break for Kodiak, a sheltered harbour. We left at first light and arrived at Kodiak just under 48 hours later.

Kodiak is an interesting place to enter for the first time in the dark, with the harbour so well sheltered the approach is not exactly straight in! Initially you have to pass towards the distant airport on shore with its plethora of red lights. Amongst the many reds, you have to pick out three or four flashing red lights which show you the way in, then find the one with the right combination on flashes in turn. Eventually we were able to turn to face the harbour and the red and green buoys became more obvious. We tied up to the water pontoon next to a big notice saying you could not stay there more than an hour and retired to bed.

As daylight arrived (its strangely late in Alaska) I took a walk in the rain to see if I could find the harbour master. He was amongst a gaggle of fishermen in his office drinking coffee as usual. A berth was quickly allocated and we moved in a couple of boats away from Voyager. Now wide awake we took full advantage of this wonderful harbour with its cafes just up from the dock to have the first proper American breakfast.



Journeys end—Tylers boat yard in Alaska

Later on we met up with Voyager, they had met the local pastor in a another café and had been persuaded to attend his church that morning. There they had met up with the owner of the local boatyard and he had found them a space for the winter. We were pretty tired at this point and the thought of another 48 hour passage on to Homer was very uninviting so I asked if we could possibly get in as well. Despite initially being full, it seems that the boatyard liked both of us. So a couple of days later we had an appointment

with the boatlift.

On the way to the boatyard we filled up with diesel at probably the best appointed fuel dock I have ever seen. It could cope with three or four vessels at a time, deliver petrol, diesel and even lube oil by hose. A hundred yards or so further on was Tylers boatyard with the lift ready and the straps already in the water.

The lift procedure is that you reverse in, over the straps and then once they are positioned in the places indicated by stickers on the boat, the engine revs up and the straps are lifted. Your boat majestically rises to a point where you can step off the stern onto the dock and then further so we could inspect the keel fully down. All appeared well so with the aid of a ladder I got back on board to lift the keel up. The lift then manoeuvred Lumina to its resting place just behind a boat that had been there for a year already so unlikely to be moved. Tyler and his gang took great care in levelling the boat and then building some chocks either side to stop it falling over. Then the straps were lowered and Lumina stood on her own for a while before being joined shortly after by Voyager just behind.



The Star of Kodiak in the evening sunshine

Surprisingly our tousele with the rock in Greenland had left no damage on the keel, just a bit of a gouge on the rudder and a dent in the hull where it had been bent back as the weight of the boat had tried but failed to modify the rock. There did not appear to be any permanent bend in the rudder post but some hairline cracks in the weld where the 4 inch solid aluminium post enters the rudder. As we cannot drop the rudder until the boatlift can get back in to lift Lumina high enough for the whole thing to drop out this will wait till Voyager is launched next year. At least with most of the fishing boats being made of Aluminium there is no problem finding an aluminium welder in Kodiak.

Kodiak, like most settlements in Alaska has its own fish processing plant but this one is a little different. Following the earthquake in 1964 and subsequent tsunami which destroyed much of the lower part of the town and harbour, a cargo ship was berthed to become an interim fish factory. The ship, now named The Star of Kodiak is still there, although now surrounded by concrete and buildings and still serving its original purpose. The ship has an interesting history as it was apparently one of the WWII liberty ships and is probably one of the last survivors of that age. Maybe I will research it for when we return...

We had a lovely week in Kodiak, first in the dock and then in an Air B&B near the boatyard. The first night we were invited to join Adriano and Merissa from Voyager at a cider bar. That sounds interesting I thought as also they were making the cider there. I got chatting to the barmaid and told our story of being sponsored by Westons Cider. On our second visit I took the last remaining bottle of Henry Westons Vintage and met with the cidemaker and his wife, gave them the bottle and was given a can to take

home to Westons. This evening coincided with the arrival of Inatiz and a jolly good time was had by all!

Our final evening was spent at a monthly session called "Galley Talks". This has been running in the winter months for a few years and comprises of seven talks by seven people for seven minutes. The theme was Rock the Boat. However in the spirit of good presentation, despite being a maritime and fishing community, there were not so many seafaring talks as you would think however each one was very well presented and everyone was remarkably good at time keeping.

With such a vibrant friendly community as that of Kodiak we were sad to board our taxi at 6.30 the next morning for the airport, a short hop to Anchorage and then flights to Seattle and London. Our sailing season was over, Lumina put into hibernation with antifreeze in all the water systems and the boat generally dried out as much as we could.

Next year we will return in May for a season of leisurely cruising in the fjords of Alaska and British Columbia. This year has been a real adventure, a truly epic season. We have crossed oceans, tricky situations in storms and amongst icefields, anchored in places you would not choose to, endured long motoring passages and dealt with losing the autopilot. We have entered three different countries without issue but failed miserably in trying to deal with a bank at home who are absolutely incapable of communicating if you don't have phone access.

So in signing off for this voyage, thanks to all of you for following us. It is lovely to get the occasional message sometimes from people when we are far away and also to renew contacts from a long time ago.

All the best

Tim and Carol

Ps Lumina now has its place in history as NWP sailing vessel no 169.

There have been a total of 411 transits of the North West Passage since Roald Amundsen in 1904

This year there were 16 yachts



A bottle of Henry Westons Vintage delivered to Alaska via the North West Passage

