## The Third Voyage of Lumina

## We join the masses on their holidays

## Post 11



Ocean Falls with the town on the left and the old mill on the right. The massive dam overflows behind.

Continuing down the inside passage there was a couple of other historic sights I had on my radar, both of more recent demise and the promise of interesting visits. Ocean Falls is strictly speaking not abandoned as still has a small resident population living off the occasional visitor, a fish farm and possibly the most random occupation imaginable in such a place, a bitcoin mine. Founded in the early part of the 20th cen-

The dam provided water for the hydro power plant which powered the mill and surrounding area

all too aware of in the world of horticulture. So as Swanson Bay closed down Ocean Falls grew in size. With its dam created lake just behind and massive hydro plant producing unlimited electricity and a good deep water

tury as a pulp mill it would have just come into production as Swanson Bay became uneconomic and may have helped in its demise. Technology moves on and often it is better to just start again somewhere else than continue on the original site. I guess it's a story told many times in different industries and, unfortunately, one that I am



Looking down towards the harbour with the abandoned hotel on the right







Inside it brought back memories of being back at college with long corridors and many rooms!

dock it must have seemed to be an ideal place to site a pulp mill. By 1950 there were 3500 people living there accommodated in a variety of buildings from high rise apartments similar to those in Whittier to individual houses. It must have been quite a town in its day and boasted the 400 room Martin hotel which was one of the largest in British Columbia at the time.





No access to the old mill/new bitcoin operation but plenty of houses disappearing into the undergrowth

However by the 1970's its remote location making it a relatively expensive site to operate and with paper making technology moving on, Ocean Falls was left behind and instead of being upgraded was about to be closed in 1978. The whole site was bought by the Provincial Government and they kept it running for a couple of years before realising that they were not experts in turning round failing industries and the mill closed in 1980. Since then despite much being demolished there are still many overgrown houses and an apartment block and the hotel still in evidence. The dam appears in good condition and part of the hydro

plant is in operation providing power to some neighbouring settlements and the new industry of bitcoin mining. You cannot visit the mill site as it is across a bridge over the river which provides good security as you cannot gain access over the dam either. The buildings are massive but I can only think that even a great number of computers working on bitcoins would only take a fraction of the space so that part remains a mystery. We did have a walk up to the dam and round the apartment building. An enterprising lady was running a B&B together with a bakery selling fantastic cinnamon rolls and ice cream, of course we partook of both and sat in the sunshine watching the world not go by! There was a pontoon dock for visitors but no one else seemed that interested in making money from boaters.



Humming bird at the café

One could imagine that a good restaurant or bar might if it got the right reviews attract people to come as apart from the "abandoned town" there is little to attract visitors.





Tied up at the old dock at Namu

The old Store building

With time getting a little short on this voyage, instead of staying the night we pushed on and found a lovely quiet anchorage and the following day continued south to another historic site. Namu is the site of another abandoned cannery but this one is much younger than anything we had seen previously and appar-



Much of the contents still on the shelves

ently little visited. Leaving the plethora salmon sport fishermen out at sea we easily located the prominent buildings and wharfs of Namu on a sheltered inlet. Tying Lumina to one of the dodgy docks we used the dinghy to get to the shore as there were no ladders to gain access. In front of us was a building with a big sign saying Namu Store which looked promising. Struggling up through the undergrowth we emerged on a rather dodgy boardwalk. The store didn't disappoint, it must have been quite a place in its time and appeared to not only have been a general store, but a marine store as well. Fortunately, all the freez-

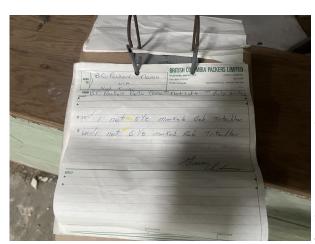
ers had been cleared and food had been cleared out but there was still copious quantities of other items on the shelves. There were all sorts of engine spares from piston rings to rotor arms and whilst there could only be a fraction of the stock still there, if you had to go and buy just the oil and fuel filters you would be into hundreds or thousands of dollars of stock. One could only surmise that what was left was the more obscure variants as indeed, none of the filters were what we could use. Exhausting the exploration of the store we moved into the first of the other buildings which had various workshops where you could imagine various guys wearing warehouse coats jealously guarding their own domains looking after the different disciplines of keeping such an operation going. Apart from the mechanical workshop there was also the electricians and maybe the refrigeration experts who all had their own





The actual cannery buildings were empty but the refrigeration plant sits just waiting to be turned on again

space to look after. Across an open area with a dead excavator and a pile of scrap freezers and other detritus was the first of several large cannery buildings. The majority of the machinery had been stripped out and the large buildings were pretty well empty although one had large insulated rooms with shelving with many pipes on it. This was probably freezing rooms as alongside was the refrigeration plant with massive compressors all waiting it seems for someone to return and turn them on. One



Sad to think someone wrote the last record, shut the file and walked out never to return

could only guess that after the cannery closed, that the ice plant and maybe the marine store remained supplying fishing vessels in the area. Behind the cannery buildings were a number of houses all disappearing into the undergrowth like those at Ocean Falls. They were pretty much intact with some furniture and although anything of use of value has been removed it was noticeable that beds and mattresses obviously have no value as they were always remaining. In all it was interesting to see how quickly the wilderness returns to overcome the buildings, quicker than they decay and why do people always smash the toilets?

From here on for a few days we were entering some interesting waters as the area to the north of Vancouver Island just has a few narrow channels between islands and whilst

the entrance down south by Vancouver and Seattle is tens of miles wide, at the north end of the island



Lumina feels more at home amongst the fishing vessels and tugs at Campbell River rather than in a swanky marina

in places the main channel might only be a half mile wide. This creates very impressive tidal currents and we had a wonderful three days flying along at up to 12knots with anything up to a gale behind us and managing to find quiet anchorages each night. With the tide only running in a handy direction for 6hrs at a time it did however limit the length of our sailing day but the average speed compensated. On the third day we ended up in Campbell River the first big settlement we had been in for a while. We approached the harbour at such a rate that I didn't notice that we had passed the entrance until it was almost too late and I had to give the engine a good workout just to claw back a hundred yards against the 6knt current. Safely through the breakwater there was a tricky manoeuvre to berth downwind with the



gale still blowing behind us, but help from the trusty bow thruster I managed to turn us into the wind between a rather solid looking tugboat and the pontoon and with our extra crew member to help, we were soon tied up. We manage to find the key fob for the entrance gate that the harbour master had left for us in an electrical box and went off to explore the town. It was strange to be once again walking on pavements and having to avoid traffic as here you are at the north of Vancouver Island with plenty of RVs and caravans from people on tour. We tried to book a table at a bar for a meal later but they didn't take bookings so we went back to the boat for a shower before returning for a beer and steak. We had a short wait for a table as they had suddenly got busy in the half hour we had been away and we sat



Being an old kayaker I always see swimming as a failure but others disagree

watching the ferries across to the mainland side struggling against the current.

The main destination for cruisers of all descriptions in this area is Desolation Sound. Leaving Campbell River we needed to hammer against the tide for just three miles to get around the south of an island opposite the town. With the current against us it took over an hour to make it as we had the wind and current against us and this included using all my skills of dodging the worst flow by cutting across to the far side and creeping up as close to the coast as I dared. At one point we got into a good back eddy but it

didn't last for long, anyway I am sure we proved to be a good spectacle for the RV's on the campsite we passed. It was very warm and once we rounded the point and had the wind with us we were roasting. There were boats everywhere and all the anchorages often small private marinas. We are still adjusting to the pressure of humanity but obviously this is one of the main destinations for the thousands of boats which live in all the marinas round Vancouver and Victoria on Vancouver Island.

We did manage to find a fairly quiet cove with just a handful of holiday cabins around and just one other boat moored and the afternoon was spent lounging in and out of the water in the heat. We had been hearing all day about a large wildfire on Vancouver Island and next morning with a wind shift we were engulfed in a smoke haze. With Desolation sound being so busy and looking at the satellite pic-



The Tent at Texada boating club

tures of the smoke it looked like it was clearer to the south so we abandoned the sound and headed away. The forecast for the next few days was also not very inviting with south easterlies that were not much use as that was the direction we wanted to go. It also looked like this weather system was here to stay for a while so aborting rather than proceeding further in the wrong direction seemed a good idea.

Cutting back across to get some shelter behind islands as the South Easterly had arrived we came across a lovely little bay with the intention of anchoring, however there was a small marina there with

someone on the pontoon indicating they had a space so that is where we ended up. We ended up spending a couple of nights at Texada Boating Club, a community run marina where there was a vibrant com-

munity of both sailing and motor boats staying there. Despite being very windy it was still warm and there was some rain on our first night and morning no doubt giving some respite for the fire fighters. In the small village was probably the best museum we have seen this year with lots of history mainly about the mining all around the island which was why the town, now village was here. With an interesting mixture of igneous and sedimentary rocks there was something for everyone from gold to copper and iron, with plenty of limestone thrown in. Today there are just some large multinational owned cement works utilising the limestone.



And a lovely farewell from our new friends at Texada



A very well presented museum, totally community driven

We had already had many conversations with people on the pontoons and word came round on the second evening that there would be pot luck drinks and nibbles in the tent which was at a junction of the pontoons and had some picnic tables. A very jolly evening was spent hearing peoples of peoples adventures and back stories ranging from the live aboards to those still working and wondering how they would make it back to Vancouver for the end of the weekend a couple of days ahead as they needed to get back to work. The latter problem was quite an issue as strong south easterlies were continued to be forecast and we now had the same problem as well as were booked in at the Royal Van-

So as I write, its now Saturday, we did leave the boat club this morning but only made it about 9 miles down the coast as the wind is blowing 25-30kn in our faces, tacking is very unproductive and motoring feels much the same when you have to thrash the engine to only do 3kn. So now we are anchored in a sheltered cove waiting for it to abate tonight. So tomorrow we should get down to Vancouver to meet up with Adriano and Marissa on Voyager from the NWP who we are just about to catch up. Then its over to Sidney (BC) to get lifted out and say goodbye to Lumina for the winter.

Best Wishes, Tim, Carol, and Sam

couver Yacht Club for two complimentary nights from the Sunday.



This sums up all those abandoned places we have visited—someone diligently drained the toilets expecting the place would start up again the following season but it never did. There are literally hundreds of places like this in Alaska and BC in varying states of dereliction and one wonders how the King Cove plant is this year as when we were there last year it had only just closed and now probably has joined the ranks of industrial change.