

The Fourth Voyage of Lumina - May 26

Chimainus to Desolation Sound

Post 2

We left [Chemainus](#) on another bright sunny day with little wind to help us as we motored north towards De Courcy Island and our destination for the day of Pirates Cove. Here there is a small marina run by a cousin of the couple who run the boatyard we used to use in Milford Haven. We had met up with them by accident in Vancouver last year but this time it was not to be as they were away sailing in Victoria. However we had a very pleasant night anchored in the cove, didn't see any pirates or even a pirate galleon just poking its rigging above the water. Some of the island is a marine park and it seemed a nice idea to walk some of the trails. Just as we got to the head of the creek we were overtaken on the road just above us by a convoy of pickups with a dozen or so people onboard. They quickly disembarked with a stretcher and paramedic rucksacks and hurried off in front of us. Probably an exercise we thought but after about a quarter of a mile we could see them in the forest a hundred yards or so off up the hill amongst some small crags. Apparently someone had for some reason taken a detour and ended up breaking their ankle. We then did a complete circumnavigation of half of the island and caught them up again an hour later with the casualty almost back at the trucks. There is always someone else having a worst day than yours!

From [De Courcy Island](#) we headed North towards Dodd Narrows, diligently reading the tales of woe from the pilot guide. Essentially you were warned only to proceed at around slack water but we were hours early if that was going to be the case. We fished for a while but still caught nothing as we drifted towards the ever narrowing channel. With our experience of the sounds of Pembrokeshire and Scotland where my tendency had been to go through at ever closer to the peak of the current without too much



trouble. Also we had grown used to be able to see white water in the distance with binoculars. Here there was little evidence of disturbance to see and the chart showed it would be flowing at around 6 knots, so we gingerly motored onwards the crux, Fortunately we never met the maelstrom, we did not get turned like a cork and the whole thing was pretty calm, with a few whirlpools and contrary flows on the downstream entrance.

This took us to [Nanaimo](#) where we had been earlier by car to pick up the Radar. We were given a

Narrow or shallow—we will try them all



nice berth on the harbour which was pretty well empty of pleasure boats, I think we were the only cruising boat in town. The weather had turned a bit chilly compared to the recent days of wall to wall sun but we were captivated by a floating Mexican restaurant just up the dock from where we were berthed. I think it may have been the happy hour we

could just catch with discounted margaritas but it wasn't really the evening for outside dining as the spicy food still couldn't take away the chilly breeze from your back.

The following morning after a trip to the supermarket for essentials like milk (you still cant beat fresh milk when you can get it) and a few other delicacies, we headed for the military museum, as often there are little gems of information you can get from such places. It didn't disappoint and as we were the first customers of the day we were given a personal tour by a lovely old chap who had an anecdote about every exhibit. Somehow they had struck the balance between filling the place with miscellaneous junk and the other extreme where you have very few actual exhibits that are very artistically laid out in vey expensive cabinets. There was something about every campaign that the Canadians had been involved with, mostly helping out the Brits around the world.

Heading out from Nanaimo we headed for another promising place, [Smugglers Cove](#). This promised to be a very secluded anchorage, and was one we had hoped to use last year on our journey south but at the time it was getting dark and we could see there were many boats inside on the AIS, knowing that they would only account for about a third of the total, we had given it a miss on that occasion. There was just one boat anchored but the whole of the rocky shore had stern ties all around. Stern ties are used in congested areas and its essentially the same as Med Mooring where you drop your anchor out in the middle of the bay, reverse back and tie up to one of the chains on the shore. This means that once secure the boat does not move as it is secured bow and stern. There are downsides to the system, for instance if you accidentally drop your anchor over the top of someone else's and it gets tangled, or the wind shifts and comes strongly from the side. I doubt that there is too much trouble with crossed anchor chains and even crosser skippers as you find in the Mediterranean as here the shore ties are probably a good 10m apart but in a Mediterranean harbour they are only a boat width apart providing endless fun for hot and bothered skippers who have just hired a boat for a week and never really get the hang of it. A good spectator sport anyway for land based tourists sitting in the bars around those Greek harbours though. Smugglers

cove is reputed to have been a real smugglers lair in the days of prohibition as once inside you cannot be seen from the seaward side so maybe it is true?



Lumina moored at Jedidiah Island with the anchor away off the bow almost at the other side of the creek and the stern tied to a chain attached to the rock behind.

This was before the log raft arrived in the night almost blocking the channel behind us

A bit of abandoned history beckoned on the interestingly named [Jedediah Island](#). Anchored in Deep bay a narrow cut only about 50m wide we stern tied for the first time as there really wasn't room to swing on an anchor. With the boat secured we rowed to the shore and headed down a fairly well used trail towards an old farmstead on the other side of the island.— This was built by a couple who farmed and grew crops on the island from the 1970s to 1990s. They cleared land and built a beautiful house completely from timber they felled and milled on the island. Then as they grew old they decided they must move away from the



A beautiful farmhouse being allowed to rot. Its amazing how fast buildings deteriorate here—its only been abandoned for 30 years and will be flat soon. In the barn was a Massey Ferguson 135 that just needs a new battery and a bit of easy start ~I should think!

island. However faced with the opportunity to sell to a developer who wanted to build a resort there, they sold it at a heavy discount to a group set up to try and buy it to preserve it for future generations. The

eventual purchase was helped tremendously by a legacy of a Canadian climber Dan Calver, the first to reach the summit of Everest and K2. Unfortunately he was killed on the descent but his memory lives on with a plaque and the landscape of Jedediah Island for ever.

Walking through the island you could see evidence of old logging from many years ago but now it is preserved so will never be logged again.

During our second night in the rather tight little creek with rock walls either side we were awakened at about 1am by the noise of a boat. Looking out I could see something out in the main channel a couple



of hundred yards away. There was a fairly large vessel with a searchlight trained on the rock wall on the other side of the channel and an interesting set of navigation lights (three vertical white lights) I immediately knew, well guessed actually as there wasn't anything else it could be at that time, that this was a tug and one could see the start of a huge log raft it was towing. With much commotion and revving of engines, it came away from the raft which now seemed to be secured to the other side of the channel and off it went in the direction it had come from. Hoping that the logs were not going to be blocking our exit, we retired to sleep again to wait till morning when daylight would reveal all.

The log raft moored to the rocks opposite our anchorage

Next day all was revealed, it must be a regular staging post for log rafts as on the other side of the channel were several mooring lines attached to large rocks or trees, some of which were securing the raft. One can only assume that perhaps our tug had deposited them there for another to collect or gone back to get more logs from somewhere else to enlarge the consignment. Compared with some that we have seen this would not be a particularly impressive log raft so maybe the latter is the case, either way we crept past and headed off to Comox which promised to be an interesting little town back on the east side of Vancouver Island.

Heading up to Comox I looked round at some point to see a Coast-guard cutter which seemed to be trailing us about a mile behind. Its unusual for ships like this to creep up on you unless they are military or similar as they are operating in stealth mode and not showing on AIS so when you suddenly realise they are behind you going at the same speed it is a little unnerving to say the least. In home waters you would not worry but in foreign parts you can never be certain that you are not contravening some regulation you didn't know about! Then a short time later a rib was launched and it started to come in our direction. I thought we were certainly going to be boarded but they sped past and went to a fishing boat away on our port side. Previous experience in Ireland made us think we might not be out



Dining out in Comox overlooking the harbour

of the woods yet but we never saw them again. The cutter sped up, coming round in front of us and off into the distance and the rib, we must presume took a different route through the islands to meet up with its mother ship. Arriving in Comox a few hours later, the coastguard vessel was at anchor and the next morning they had gone, off to more interesting tasks than checking on sailing yachts.

With a quiet night at anchor we headed in to Comox we were awoken from our holiday lie in by some low flying jets in formation. It seems that Comox is the home of the Canadian Snowbird Air Display team and they were practicing for the start of their display season. We were treated to the full works with smoke trails. Apparently they get used to it here but for us it was impressive nonetheless. I had not managed to raise anyone in the harbour masters office so we crept in and tied up next to a fishing boat. It turned out that the harbour master is actually a harbour mistress but being ultra PC here I thought it



*In our natural habitat,
amongst the fishing boats
in Comox, not some posh
marina!*

safer not to ask how she should be addressed. The weather was beautiful and people were sunbathing in the park and kids were playing with the fountains. Our neighbouring fishing boat were preparing for the opening of the prawn season in a few days time, their boat stacked high with 300 collapsable pots and we had a delightful meal on the balcony of the pub overlooking the harbour. I always think meals out taste better when you are the one overlooking your own boat rather than just looking out at a nice view of a harbour!

On the dock I struck up a conversation with a chap who had wandered along to check out our boat. It turned out that he had grown up in Ocean Falls, the abandoned pulp mill town we had visited last year. It was fascinating to get an insiders view of life there.

Life in Comox was just a little easy for us so we headed across the strait of Georgia to the ominously sounding Desolation Sound. Captain George Vancouver in 1792 said "there was not a single prospect that was pleasing to the eye", Today however it is described as a place of extraordinary beauty. It is a fairly untouched maze of inlets and islands, very fjord like with a few running deep into the mountains.



All heavily wooded there is a mixture of state parks and private ownership. You therefore have to select your anchorage carefully as in the first case, most of the fjords are very steep sided resulting in few places it is even possible to drop the hook, but when you do see somewhere that ticks all the boxes it will either be perfectly idyllic, or that bay will be surrounded by private docks for holiday cabins. Once one has worked that out we found some perfect idylls and few other boaters. Last summer on our way down, we had a single night in the area, but the number of boats was oppressive,

You can be 10m off the shore and have hundreds of metres depth

but now we are still officially out of season so there are few people around and those that are tend to be those on the "big trip" like us, resulting in a few interesting meetings with fellow sailors from far and wide.

On shore we found lovely forest walks that in some cases were obviously well used but always had them to ourselves. I haven't yet seen anywhere that has never been logged though which is a bit of a disappointment. Wherever you go you will find the stumps of the ancient giants that once dominated the forests and whilst the present day trees will never be harvested again in these protected areas they still have a bit to go to match the size of their forefathers. That said compared to the trees we would see at home, they are sizable if not enormous!



The offspring of the monsters of the forest live on but we will have to wait another generation before their size is matched

Shortly we will be back in civilisation heading for Campbell River where there should be some boat electrical parts waiting for me including a pair of batteries for the bow thruster. We will also be picking up a couple of friends from Newent who are on a tour of British Columbia so I will be on best behaviour for a few days as we continue north.



All is well on Lumina now we have our first fish of the season.

Ling Cod with freshly gathered samphire from the shore, but potatoes, peas and capers from stocks brought through the NWP!

[Website with all the old blogs](#)

For those avid stalkers, I am afraid I am not using the old tracker link due to the cost—something like £175 a month for the service on the iridium satphone as we are in friendly waters this year, will probably use it again for the Pacific but in the mean time you will just have to make do with Noforeignland. Their tracker is bit flaky but works most of the time! Check it out [here](#)