

The Fourth Voyage of Lumina - August 26

Back down the Columbia River and south along the Oregon Coast

Post 10

We took advantage of the Breakfast Brunch at Portland Yacht Club before bidding farewell and started our leisurely passage back down the river. We actually ended up having three nights on the way back to Astoria, the first night we anchored behind a spit in a small channel which kept us away from the shipping in the main river. Taking the dinghy for an outing to the shore I climbed up a steep sandy hill only to realise that it was bulldozed flat on the top and was in fact the results of dredging operations in the river. This seems to go on continuously to keep the big ship channel deep enough for the ocean going ships to get up to Portland.

Our second night was on a pontoon owned by the Columbia River Yacht Club in another quiet channel behind an island. This was open to all provided that the yacht club was not using it. It was extremely well engineered with a galvanised steel box profile running along each side of the pontoon for you to tie up to. We did our usual process of Carol organising the lines and fenders amidships to the bow whilst the skip-

per puts a single fender and rope at the stern..... As we came in towards the dock it became obvious that the current was not running parallel but setting the boat towards the pontoon. Carol of course noticed this and told me to keep out a bit otherwise we were going to be drawn onto the upstream corner. All went well and we tied up. A little later another sailing boat turned up and had one attempt at docking on the inside, but of course the current caused them to drift off and they went round for another try. However this time they went for the outside to tie up behind us, and not remembering that if the current was



A map especially for Mike, click [here](#) for a link to the actual page so you can zoom out for context



Traffic on the Columbia River

taking them away from the pontoon on the inside it would be doing the opposite on the outside. Of course the same effect as we had occurred but only noticing too late, they managed to put a small dink in the wonderfully polished fibreglass near the bow. The boat bounced off and round they went again. This time it was even worse as the boat hit the sharp metal on the corner of the pontoon amidships making a 6 inch gouge. I valiantly tried to push it off as the hull visibly deflected inwards and layers of fibreglass peeled off. Luckily it did not go right through but it certainly was a lesson as to how lightly built these plastic palaces are

these days. We invited the couple on for a drink in the evening and diplomatically the whole event was not mentioned!

Continuing to dawdle we had a further night anchored in the delta near to Astoria before spending a couple of nights in the harbour. It was a perfect place for a bike outing with several miles of lovely flat cycling along side a tramway with an old electric tram for the tourists. I am not sure where it had come from but as there were no overhead wires, it pulled a little truck with a generator on it for power. The route took us along the shore side which had a mixture of buildings from modern factories and hotels to derelict docks from



Now a museum, the old Columbia lightship makes a very interesting visit, unlike UK lightships it is a proper ship which can propel itself. In front is the light buoy which replaced it. Today there is just a smaller buoy

fishing fleets long gone. Often the buildings had gone completely and the shoreline was filled with the stumps of piles that once supported wharfs and canneries. As with a lot of places here you get the occasional whiff of some aromatic herb that seems to be frequently smoked also another feature of these less well trodden streets are the nomads who are sometimes comatose and sometimes talkative but never are threatening. At the far end of this once bustling harbour-side is an old cannery that had been converted into shops and eateries and we made use of the latter for lunch. It is all an amazing contrast from exactly 2 years ago when we were fighting the ice in the North West Passage wondering at times if we were actually going to get through.

Back at the boat we thought it would be a pity not to take advantage of the local pub which we had visited previously. On arrival we were greeted by the bar girl who welcomed us back again and asked if we had come for the Karaoke, we declined the offer in our shock that a whole week had passed since we were there before.



The Sealions have their own pontoon at Newport

Leaving the following day the river bar was fairly quiet and we made it out into the ocean without incident. Since then we have crossed several bars and stopped in a number of coastal harbours, all slightly different but the process is the same, although some days have been long we have not had to do a single overnight passage and what on the face of it seemed like it might be a boring plod down the coast getting ever nearer to our destination of San

Francisco it has been quite the opposite.

Tillamook bar has a similar reputation to the Columbia River and inside has a large lagoon and a permanent coastguard presence. On the North side is the small town of Garibaldi, named after the famous squashed fly biscuit. (no actually the two brothers that founded it were greatly impressed by the Italian general of the same name). It also has a steam railway running a few miles down the coast to Rockaway Beach so of course we had to take the ride. The interesting commentary from the guard pointed out numerous otherwise uninteresting features along the way, he obviously enjoyed his job. At Rockaway beach



everyone piled off and I had an interesting chat with the driver about firing the engine on heavy oil as it had been since its build (I have had various experiences with heavy oil boilers and their foibles in my horticultural career). Normally such a boiler has a burner with fans and pumps powered by electricity but this one atomises the oil into the firebox using steam. This then leads to the obvious question of how you start from cold when there is no steam but I will leave this complicated procedure as there are probably only one or two readers vaguely interested!

We then went in search of ice cream. One might think that for a beach resort there would be numerous sellers of that creamy delicacy, especially as just up the road is the famous Tillamook creamery that makes the stuff! Alas we had to walk the whole length of the strip before we found possibly the only ice cream shop. There were however maybe 10 candy shops all populated by the typical American who has already had more than their quota. The ice cream didn't disappoint and we lounged on the beach in the half sun/half fog of a day typical of this coast.



Arriving back at Garibaldi we once again alighted from the train and walked alongside the tracks towards the harbour. The engine was taking on water from a hydrant and recognising us the driver shouted to come over. I then got invited for a footplate ride back to the shed via several changes of direction and point movements.

Leaving the next morning they were just loading an excavator onto a barge to take it across to the other side of the channel where they were working on the south jetty. The jetties of Tillamook bay have an interesting history.

Back in the early 1900s a property magnate

Bayocean in its prime, maybe already a little too close to the sea!

who had made his fortune developing sub divisions in California, Kansas city, and Portland was holidaying in Tillamook. Thomas Potter was Beatrix Potters brother who had emigrated to find his fortune in America, (actually no relation), but digressing, we did meet a fisherman who knew of Gloucester from the famous tailor and had learnt to read through her stories of the furry friends in the Lake District. Meanwhile, back in Tillamook, Potter fell in love with the spit on the other side of the river and invested his fortune in building the infrastructure for his idea of the ultimate seaside resort. BayOcean had a hotel, store, bowling alley and heated swimming pool. The whole spit was marked out and plots were sold to people wanting to get a bit of the action. Around this time there was interest in improving the waterway into the bay so the little port of Garibaldi could prosper and the plan was to build stone jetties out into the ocean to tame the river so that the channel did not silt up. Unfortunately they did not have enough money so just built the North jetty. Almost immediately the sand spit on the south side started to erode and over a period of years all of BayOcean gradually fell into the sea. Many dreams and fortunes were lost and today there is absolutely nothing to show for it. In 1972 the south jetty was built and the spit which, by then was just an island has rebuilt itself with the foundations of the town buried beneath the dunes. In all a fascinating story of optimism being the victim of badly thought out sea defences. Read the full story [here](#)



Brooking is full of unusual sculptures and carvings from a 6 cylinder picnic bench to a sea monster

Further down the coast we pulled into Brooking where we met a fisherman who had grown up in Point Barrow, the turning point at the top of Alaska where one starts heading South when you have come through the NWP. Having plenty of time we spent a couple of nights there allowing us a day to explore around the town. A lot of these coastal towns have many “vintage” or in other words second hand shops, some are just a mismatch of stuff on shelves and occasionally there is one where the owner groups items into interesting booths, but you do wonder if they actually do make any money! Back at the dock we found another elusive ice cream and watched the fish and game inspector at work on the boat ramp. One unfortunate fellow was getting the third degree as his salmon were measured and confiscated as being too small. Back on Lumina we were treated to a full recital from the coastguard station bugler





Piles designed to survive the next tsunami

across the dock as the flag was lowered for the evening. All the major inlets on this coast seem to have a very well equipped coastguard station with a couple of fully crewed boats that are apparently modelled on the RNLI Trent class of lifeboat. It was certainly different to hear the drone of the bugler upsetting the pelicans that then flew round and round the harbour.

Crescent City sounds rather grand and also claims to have the easiest entrance on the coast, boasting one of the few sheltered bays with a rocky outcrop to its north. A very well built modern marina with great facilities but a rather startling history as the harbour has been wiped out by tsunamis on two occasions in living memory. The same wave that took out Kodiak in 1964 came all the way down here causing devastation not only to the harbour but the lower part of the town as well, then again in 2011 following the Japanese quake that caused so much

damage of there, the wave came right across the pacific, destroyed the floating docks and sinking several boats. Apparently the shape of the coast and the underlying seabed makes it particularly prone to such problems. Today the breakwaters have been built higher and with a particular shape to dissipate the waves and the piles holding the docks in place are by far the largest I have seen.

The pontoons were a vibrant place with a boat at one end selling tuna whilst next to us was a boat that catches eels. It is amazing that we are continually coming across diverse ways to make a living from the sea but this guy was really different. With traps made out of barrels with holes in them out at sea, they trap the eels, bring them in and export them live to South Korea. On our second night, there was some problem on the fish dock and our neighbour, the fishing boat Annabel could not unload his catch. We were then treated to an evening of them trying to make the tank on the deck of the boat eel tight to try and stop them escaping, whilst making sure that the pump delivering water and air to the tank kept going as normally it was fed by an engine driven pump and he didn't want to have to run the engine all night. The skipper said he would still be up most of the night baby sitting his catch until they could unload in the morning.

The Hagfish eel is an absolutely amazing animal, its main defence mechanism is the production of a slime which envelops the predator or at least puts them off. The slime has unbelievable properties and he showed me how a tiny string of it when it meets seawater expands thousands of times in a matter of a second or two into a great ball of jelly like slime. Apparently there is much interest in the slime with its unique properties from diverse industries such as ballistics protection to textiles and wound management. Until these ideas become a reality our fisherman neighbour was happy with his regular income and lack of competition from other boats, which not surprisingly were not quite so



The Hagfish eel is a lovely slimy character

into slime. He warned us not to motor through any of the patches of the creamy substance that was occasionally draining off his deck and was now floating round the harbour when we left in the morning as it would probably block the engine cooling system.



Making sure his eels did not escape during the night

We also had another of those unusual meetings that only seem to happen on board, when a yacht came into a slip close by. The skipper said “ we have seen you before”. Whist always possible it turned out that when we were at Portland Yacht Club we had passed a group on the pontoon being shown round by the manager. Apparently he had just shown them the slip which they were due to take residence in when they moved their boat up from San Francisco and it was the very slip that we had been in. We arranged to meet in the pub to exchange the usual yarns, however we had only just got our drinks when the band struck up, after which any conversation was hopeless. Despite a lack of yachting tales the evening was a fine one as we knew all the songs but often could not place them, reason being that it was a reggae band playing everything from Tina Turner to Abba and the Everly Brothers. Either we had too much beer or the band was particularly good but it’s a very rare event that you see Mr Tim on the dance floor.

Every week there is a new subscriber or two so if this is your first issue then welcome to a select crew and you can see all the old blogs [here](#)

Best Wishes from Tim and Carol on Lumina somewhere down the California Coast heading for San Francisco—latest position [here](#)



There are over 4000 of these making up the sea defences at Crescent Bay

