

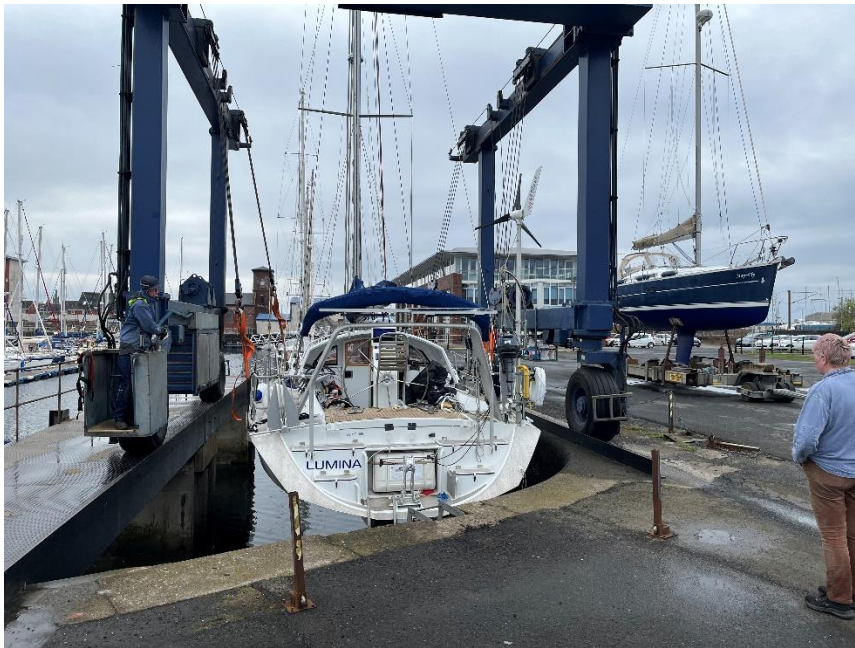
Lumina through the North West Passage

Post 1

Boatyard Work and passage to Oban.

So how did we get here? Physically we are now in Oban just making final preparations for a long passage across the North Atlantic with landfall in Greenland, however there has been an enormous amount of work done both to the boat in the boatyard at Ardrossan and also in other complicated preparations on the paperwork front keeping authorities happy and making sure that we have absolutely everything on board for the best part of 5 months for 4 people. Eagle eyed readers will immediately notice that I just said 4 people, and yes this time we will be Tim and Carol, joined by Ben, my nephew and his girlfriend Indie. Ben was on board for part of our first voyage in Acheron some years ago.

So back in the winter we had several trips up to a cold windy boatyard in Ardrossan in South West Scotland. Accompanied by the sound of the wind whistling around several hundred masts and occasionally the whole boat vibrating, we started with a number of upgrades.



First, I got the drill out and cut a new hole in the hull, not for the faint hearted as it's a pretty good idea to make sure what is on both sides before you start! However, with that accomplished the new forward-looking sonar was installed. Fortunately, this boat, despite having a lifting keel, has a stub which runs the full length of the boat so that when it grounds there is always a protected area to the side which would not touch the ground. This is important as its essentially a piece of plastic sticking out of the bottom of the boat that could easily be broken off leaving a hole..... yes you can work out the rest! Oh, but we do have some wooden plugs to bang in should this be desired.

Once the forward scan was in the hull the real work started as the cable had to be ferreted through many a small space to get back to the helm position where it is connected to the plotter, also a new piece of equipment. Unfortunately, I just could not pull the cable through one of the narrow points as it had a big plug on the end of it. Without standing on ceremony, out came the cable cutters and eventually we got the cable through with an interesting soldering operation afterwards on the 10 core cable.

Cable no 2 went to the stern so we can install the Starlink dish and was equally troublesome. Then there were network cables for the Camera to be installed up the mast and to link the plotters together so they can share charts. All very time consuming and not good for the language police.

Anyway, with cables installed, and many other things done, we were lifted by the boatlift on 6th May. With little drama we were floating in the marina with no leaks from the new hull fitting. The plan then was to have a week continuing to do boat work, loading food and fuel and generally tidying everything away. But as is often the way with boat jobs – an hours project takes a day etc, time began to run out and the end of the week with family members assembling for a big party drew near.

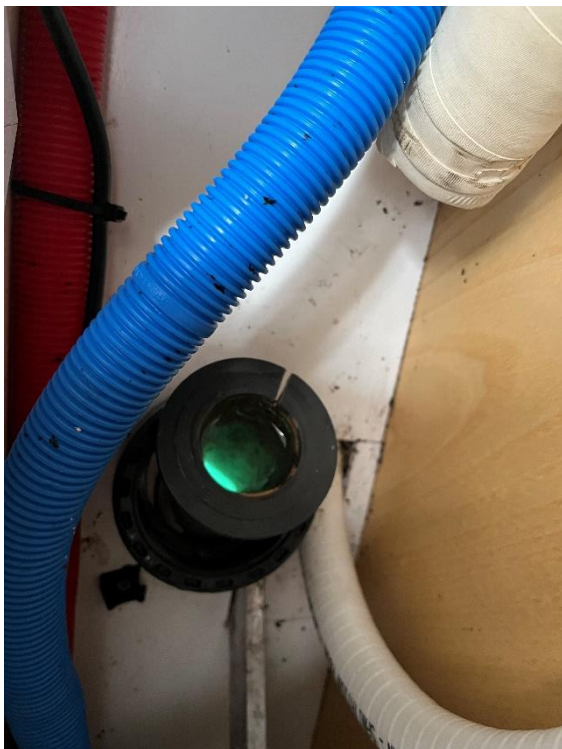


Famous Bob

It's now time to introduce our newest crew member: Bob Shepton, or Famous Bob as we called him. The Reverend Bob Shepton is a rather famous climber and arctic sailor with several books to his name covering his many voyages and climbs, including a couple of times

through the North West Passage. I had got in touch with him when trying to work out what the crucial dates are for a successful traverse of the NWP. He told me I had to buy his book to find out and we struck up an email conversation. It then became apparent that he lived just a few miles north of Oban and I said it would be very nice if we could entertain him when we got to Oban, he replied it would be even better if he was to come to Ardrossan and join us for the short voyage round to Oban! And so it was that we gained a hitch hiker and yet another mouth to feed at the promised dinner at the marina restaurant. We named him Famous Bob, as he is in some circles.

The Leak. As the weekend drew nearer and the boat got more loaded we found water in one of the bilges and it appeared to be dribbling down the inside of the hull beneath the galley. Obviously, it was coming from the sea water tap which we had replaced in the winter. One of the joints was indeed moist and the jubilee clip was duly tightened. Then the next day the water was still there, but not coming from the sea water tap. Must be to do with the water maker which we were trying to recommission. However, all the fittings were dry. Could it be coming from one of the heads (toilets) just along from the galley and running down one of the ribs on the side of the boat. Yes, the anti-siphon loop was leaking and it had an obvious crack in it so I changed it. Next day, water was still coming and I found that the sea cock (valve) on the outlet from the toilet was wet. Being very difficult to access it was a challenge to undo. All the sea cocks on the boat are on pipes welded to the hull of the boat, the principle being that the valve on the top of the pipe is above the water level.



The cracked valve union with the water level just lapping over

I gingerly unscrewed the valve off the end of the pipe to find that all the extra weight we had added has now resulted in the top of the pipe being just at water level and a crack in the fitting was now leaking continuously whereas previously it would only leak a bit when the toilet was being pumped. With water lapping over the top of the pipe, I immediately put the leaking valve back on and we started moving heavy items from one end of the boat to the other. With a new valve attached the leak stopped and as with all boat jobs it had taken three days to solve.

With Famous Bob installed, we started debriefing him as he sat watching progress on changing the project boat into an ocean traverser. Then Friday came and the gathering of the clans began. Ben and Indie turned up followed by Kelly, Carol's daughter, and boyfriend Iwan (he is from Wales but we didn't hold it against him). They also brought old sea dog Reg who had kindly offered to drive my van back home followed by my sister Annie, and Simon in their camper. Finally, my daughter Amy (resplendent with baby bump) and boyfriend

James with Fern the dog. After a fish and chip supper on board most retired to their B&Bs leaving a hard core to find a place to sleep on the boat.

Saturday continued with more food shopping and a few more boat jobs ticked off but now progress was slow due to the general requirement for tidiness however I did manage to finish the solar panel upgrade.



The main event that everybody had really come for was the meal in the marina restaurant that I had promised and Indie's father Ward and partner Sally's arrival completed the party. It was an excellent evening with much banter and beer. Sunday was for goodbyes and the realisation that our time at Ardrossan had come to an end. I paid my very reasonable bill for the boatyard stay and by midday Monday we were off, motoring across to Arran to anchor and wait for the tide to take us round the Mull of Kintyre and up the sound of Jura. I cannot praise Clyde Marina more highly, the prices of overwintering were very competitive but its not just the money, it's the people –

every member of staff couldn't have been more helpful, and the general atmosphere was fantastic. With some places you feel like its almost too much trouble to lift your boat out or they want you to pay for many extras that here they came as standard – like a complimentary week in the marina when you have launched – a real bonus I wasn't expecting but just the job for us.

With an early start we motored to the Mull and with the aid of Paul McCartney and Wings in our ears we just about got round before the tide changed, then were able to hoist the sails for a brisk tack up to the Isle of Gigha and a mooring buoy for the night. There was no hurry the next morning so we split up with Ben and Indie walking up to the north end of the island and myself and Carol going the other way to have a look at the garden at Achamore and Bob catching up on reading our library on Lumina.

Continuing on to the mooring in Craighouse on Jura where we were able to again show Famous Bob our ability to pick up a mooring buoy on the first attempt before sampling the ales in the pub.



With no wind again the engine took us up the sound of Jura, past the famous Paps and through the Corryvreckan which, much to everyone's disappointment, was as meek and mild as it comes and on to the popular anchorage off Seil of Puilladobhrain. Today it was surprisingly empty and we entertained ourselves in the afternoon with installing the last item of upgrades – the thermal camera up the mast. This involved drilling a hole at the bottom of the mast and high up where the camera was going to get the cables through, then another 12 holes for the rivets holding the bracket on. The two crux issues were feeding the cable down the inside and finding it at the bottom to get it back out and actually fitting the rivets. For masts they are made of some exotic alloy called Monel and they are really hard, either that or I am getting weak. Anyway, by the end of the day it all worked – result and apart from getting the cable through the boat had not properly lived up to the name of “boat” job.

On to Oban we arrived just as the yachts were assembling for the start of the Islands Peaks Race, this is a combination of sailing and running up Ben More on Mull, the Paps of Jura and Goat Fell on Arran, with sailing (no motoring) in between. This year promised to be a slow one with those who had various contraptions on board for man powered propulsion perhaps coming to the fore. The most interesting one was a paddle steamer type of arrangement on a catamaran powered by a cyclist.

In Oban we continued with last shopping including a bag of potatoes, carrots and onions from the veg wholesaler, said our goodbyes to Famous Bob and did the last of the boat jobs.

Incidentally if you want to look up Bob then have a google for [Rev Bob Shepton](#) or you can see him on [youtube](#) with some crazy climbers. I felt very privileged to have him on board and to be able to hear some of his stories.

So now we leave for Greenland, there is absolutely no wind, but we will motor out to the end of Mull and see what we can find there.

And finally.....

The proposed route



Here is the [tracker link](#) so you can see where we are

Next Blog from Greenland!