

# Lumina through the North West Passage

## Onwards from Cambridge Bay

### Post 15



#### **Cambridge Bay to Letty Harbour**

After fuelling at Cambridge Bay we slipped away to several messages from boats on the dock that were still waiting for the fuel truck to come and fill them with a \$500 call out fee. We motored, sailed and motor-sailed for three and a half days to reach Letty Harbour. Gradually, nearly all of the four boats behind us initially overhauled us intent on squandering their expensive fuel by motoring at a higher speed. Boats are a bit like cars in that the faster you go the less mpg you will get. The difference between running at about 1600 revs that I like and say 2000 could be about 50 or 60% more fuel used and when you have many hundreds of miles ahead to the next fuel stop, that can make a big difference to the potential range that we have.



As we were initially motoring it was a good opportunity to sort out the Arctic Char that I had bought in Cambridge Bay. This was duly filleted and cut into steaks that were frozen with the end pieces smoked in the oven using some special “smoke pins” from Greenland. These are compressed chips made into a tube that you stick a wire through to make them stand up. In this way you can make cold smoke in a controlled way.



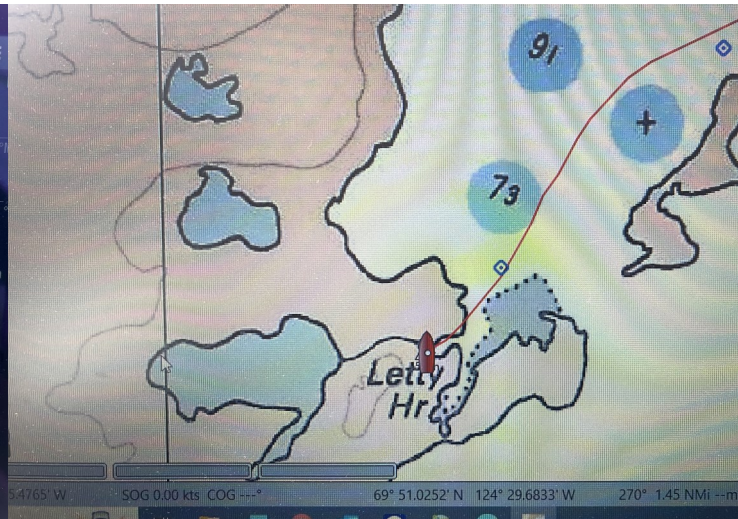
*We will have to get used to the sun setting from now on*

In all it was about 430 miles that we covered, mostly uneventfully, changing watches every 4 hours at night and getting as much rest as we could during the day.

As we were entering the second evening I realised that a rowing expedition were somewhere ahead of us. These guys were in their second season now, the first being from Pond inlet to Cambridge Bay. They had left Cambridge Bay a fortnight before us and were somewhere ahead. Unfortunately their tracker was rather intermittent and we were some distance off the shore of the island they had moored up to for the night. However, following a message on Facebook they came back to

me with a photo of us passing by. I had searched the shore for them but could not see the small boat, however, a yacht under sail was more visible for them. We wished them well and continued on into the night. We are now getting 4 to 6 hours of darkness now depending on the cloud cover. Being so far north the dusk goes on for hours so whether it is cloudy or not makes a lot of difference.

During the third day there was a lot of correspondence between ourselves and Voyager and Victor the Ocean Cruising Club ice pilot and general advisor for the NWP as to where we should hole up for the forthcoming gale. I had seen this anchorage called Summers Harbour which looked nice and then Adriano from Voyager proposed Letty Harbour just to the south east. With the promise of another Hudson's Bay



**Letty Harbour on Navionics Vector Chart**

**and on raster chart—old and large scale but actually more use!**

trading post to explore I changed my mind and we agreed on Letty. Then Victor chirped in as I think he had little knowledge of the place and Voyager opted back to Summers. We continued on to Letty and found a wonderfully sheltered little inlet with a couple of huts on the shore.

The pilotage into the inlet was essentially by the seat of your pants. The electronic charts were absolutely useless with depths showing 5m when we actually had 20 or 30 and the land boundary very crude. The other source we have is essentially a digitised paper chart. In some places there are more detailed chartlets that pop up as you zoom in but not here, however what was shown was pretty accurate with the



depths and the land boundaries more or less where the shore actually is.

As we put the anchor down a rather startled arctic fox that had been in front of the huts cantered off, one wonders if it had ever seen a human.

With water beginning to run low on board and no working water-

maker, the cans were loaded into the dinghy and together with the rifle we made the short hop to the shore. Whilst still dry inside, the huts were not in such good shape as at Fort Ross and it seems they get very few visitors. By few, Victor thought we might be the first sailing boat in 30 years to call by.

I surprised an arctic hare behind the huts and it obviously does not see many humans as initially it ran off, before coming closer again to a better look before finally deciding that we were not good company and disappeared over the rise behind the huts. Interestingly, this is the first place for a long time since Scotland where we have seen any driftwood on the beaches, mainly from small trees, maybe come down the Mckenzie river from the south.

We thought it best to have a walk up a small hills so we could get a general view over the area to see if there were any bears around but none were seen, however some white geese were in the distance and we put up a pair of peregrine falcons which circled us for a while.



Returning to the dinghy we motored a few hundred yards up the creek to where a half decent river came down to the sea from a small inland lake. With full cans we returned to Lumina and emptied them into the water tank. Another two trips resulted in almost 200 litres back in storage and with the plan to do another couple of trips the following morning would give us enough a good few weeks.

***Still supplies enough for a decent breakfast but I wont be bothering with the powdered egg next time!***

The Hudson Bay Company set up the Letty har-

bour trading post in 1930 but by 1937 it had closed due to lack of trade. Looking at it today you would be surprised if there was any passing trade at all, but with the general movement of the population into larger settlements over the last 50 years time have changed a lot.

Morning came and we had what we call a Hartlepool breakfast. This was because many years ago on the first voyage of Acheron, we left Hartlepool only to find that conditions were not quite what we had hoped for, returned to the marina and had a fantastic full English in a café. Cafes are unfortunately rather scarce in Letty Harbour and indeed we have not seen one since we left Greenland, so the next best thing was to raid the freezer where we still have some bacon and sausage from Ardrossan.

With our breakfast done the water taxi was



pressed into action and a couple of trips to the stream saw the tanks virtually full. On the first trip we also walked up the other side of the valley to have a look at an enclosure on the top of a hill. It was a small graveyard with about 8 graves, one with a readable headboard dating from 1932. There was also one half dug grave. In these areas of permafrost I guess that it was prudent to have a grave prepared in the summer when the ground was not so frozen in case you needed it in the winter.

Back on the boat the storm came in, we didn't get the full force of it by any means due to our nice snug little anchorage but it was a different story elsewhere. On facebook a picture and short videoclip turned up from the rowing expedition. I had asked them as we went by if they had a safe place to wait it out as where they were would not have been too good. It appeared that they had anchored on a lee shore ie one where the wind is driving you towards land, their anchor had broken and they had ended up on the shore.

Surprisingly the anchor that they showed was one of those crappy little folding grapnel ones, probably well under spec for their quite large rowing boat as the tines had broken clean off. As they seem pretty well sponsored it seems surprising that they were relying on a £10 anchor you could buy from ebay. I messaged them to say that there were a couple of yachts that would be passing them in the next few days if they needed a hand but they said they thought they would be ok. However the pictures of the breakers smashing into the side of their vessel on the beach did not look very encouraging.

With the wind seeming to subside on this Saturday evening we will look at moving on at first light tomorrow as time really is not on our side now. The next stop will be Tuk (Tuktoyaktuk) for fuel and then the long haul to Nome.

Best Wishes

Tim and Carol

[Website with all the old Blogs and tracker page](#)





