

Lumina through the North West Passage

Through the Vaigat passage around Disko Island

Post 9

New Cold War?

Whilst we were in Ilulissat we were walking along the far side of the dock and could see another yacht coming in. It was trying to raft up alongside a larger yacht that was on one of the commercial docks. In the process of tying up there was a bit of a commotion as the neighbouring large yacht that was in the same livery and was rafted to a fishing boat next door seemed to be moving but there was no one on deck. It appeared that they were drifting away from the fishing boat, it appeared that their lines had been cast off. Shortly afterwards we saw a couple of people on deck and the yacht started reversing with the fishing boat right on its bow almost pushing it. This continued until both had gone round the corner and out of



The Hurtigruten ship Fridjof Nansen outside Ilulissat showing the difficulty of being at anchor outside the harbour.

view. Later on we were in conversation with our neighbour, a Brazilian girl who had overwintered in the ice somewhere north of where we are now. It transpired that both yachts were Russian owned and were doing some sort of charter operation. However they were apparently waiting for a charter to start but were shunned in the harbour. They came and went several times when we were there and spent most of the time on anchor just outside, however to do that you would need to be continually on watch and ready to move every few hours

due to the moving ice.

So after three days in harbour we headed out to pastures new with the aim of continuing our gentle cruise northwards with a view to getting to Upernavik at the end of the month. Outside the harbour the ice coming out of the Isefjord seems to head north and we spent a short day weaving in and out of



the ice to get to a lovely sheltered bay that faced North and had a shallow entrance meaning that big ice grounds and does not come in. A useful steam enabled us to fill the water barrels and replenish our supplies and a walk ashore in the warm sunshine was just wonderful. The mosquitoes however must have

some special sense as normally when anchored a hundred yards or so from the shore we are usually safe, but here they were on a mission and must be patrolling the bay.



The following day saw us continue up the inside of Averprinsens Island up Ataa sound. It seemed like a good idea at the time as the nautical chart we are using does not show the glaciers spewing ice into it further up. Ah well, more dodging ice. Where its big and well spaced its ok and doesn't really slow you down, but where bergs have disintegrated into thousands of smaller pieces from the size of a tennis ball to a car its more of a problem as you don't really want to be hitting anything really and a car sized chunk would be over a ton. That night we an-

chored off the abandoned settlement of Ataa. There were several well kept houses and a few ruins. A speedboat had brought a couple up from Ilulissat and were catching arctic char with a drift net, the husband explained that his mother had been born there but moved with the rest of the inhabitants to Ilulissat in the 1960s. One wonders what will happen to the houses in all these abandoned settlements when the generation that left gets more remote from those alive and the children and later generations get further dispersed and have less interest in maintaining them.

After being woken several times in the night by the thunder like crack of collapsing icebergs we had another even more intense day of ice traversing culminating with a squeeze between a large berg and a rock face to enable us to reach a safe anchorage in a small bay behind an island. It ticked all the boxes for a relaxing night, entrance facing away from the ice direction of travel and a shallow entrance in case anything big did approach. The mosquitoes were abundant though and whilst the weather would have allowed, alfresco dining was not on the agenda.



Dodging out behind our island the next day brought us out further down the fjord and away from heavy concentrations of small ice. As you get further away from the glacier the small ice seems to have melted and you are left with the big bergs. Some obviously get grounded but others promenade down the centre and eventually find their way out to sea, with the occasional one even reaching Newfoundland.

Another nightly anchorage saw us at the end of a short fjord with a rapid coming down just a few feet from a lake, indeed at spring tides salt water does enter the lake. Here there were thousands of seagulls



feeding on the same small capelin fish we had seen before. On taking to the dinghy for a visit ashore the fishy smell got stronger as right at the head were millions of dead fish. It seems they come to spawn in shallow gravel beds and then mostly die. You could even see them swimming along the shoreline in shoals, just like elvers in the Severn. In another arm there was a small fishing boat and I think they were catching them in nets to take back to Ilulissat to sell to the halibut fishermen for bait.



The Ivalo Artica offshore at Saqqaq with the lighter at the dock and below being loaded back on board



So the end of the week saw us at the small settlement of Saqqaq. Here an island protects the anchorage from big bergs and a cable across one entrance is supposed to catch the smaller ones. We anchored and went ashore for an ice cream as the weather was truly tropical for Greenland. The supermarket was closed as they were currently unloading supplies brought in by the Ivalo Artica but we have enough Ryvita on board to survive without fresh bread. This is a smaller vessel to its sisters on the [Arctic Line](#) and is known as a settlement ship. These visit the smaller towns and villages. Sometimes they have on board a lighter (small freight boat) which is first unloaded off the deck and this then takes the goods ashore. It looks like when the lighter is being used that only single pallets rather than containers can be handled. Pallets of goods for the supermarket were coming off, with everything from Pringles to a new washing machine and on return trips, it was taking back pallets from the fish factory.

As usual there was lots of activity with people coming and going in small boats and a couple of teenagers messing about in their dinghys. This had been a bit of a destination for me as the settlement was reputed to be the home of Hannibal Fenkers "Arctic Garden". Apparently it used to be quite a spectacle with many

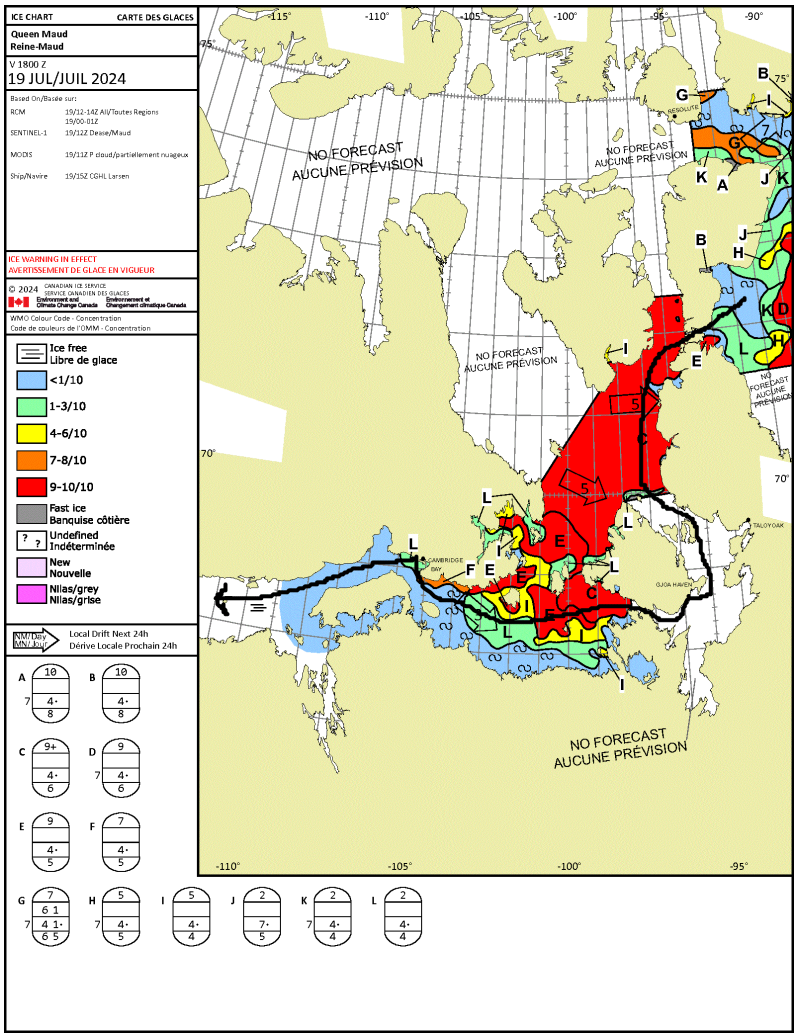


non arctic plants growing in his small greenhouses, however since his death it has not been looked after. By the side of the house were a young lad and his father, it turned out that the were his grandson and great grandson, here for the weekend and doing some maintenance on the buildings. The younger of the two was very happy to show us the garden but while all the glass was still in the domestic sized greenhouses the only plants

still alive were some rhubarb and dwarf willow, although one could see the effect of the improved climate as instead of being about 6 inches high it was 6 feet.

With about ten days to go until we are intending making the crossing towards Baffin Island, we are watching the ice charts and satellite images closely. Unfortunately our ice pilot Victor Weger who seems to take passage makers under his wing is rather despondent today, There is a lot of unusual ice movement south into the channels around the islands in northern Canada. This may be because it is breaking up in areas normally more stable, however its movement is currently blocking our path so no hurry to get across at the moment.

Image shows the ice chart for the mid part of the NW passage, the arrows show the direction of travel and the distance in miles per 24hrs. The black line is our preferred



route and the usual one taken by yachts.

I have made a Whatsapp group that you can join if you wish. This is because I need an easy way to communicate with those of you who are following closely, the tracker page is fine but to add photos I have to continually transfer them to the pc first and then find them. By using Whatsapp it can be done immediately from the phone and if you want a quick pic of what it is like outside just now then just ask.

NB we are 2 hrs behind most of you and don't have starlink on all the time !

You will need to open the link using your phone and have Whatsapp already installed

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/HSld6iSUWLW7SesgCJ0y8b>

Let us know what you think

Cheers, Tim and Carol

[Tracker page](#) [Website with all the old blogs](#)

