

Lumina through the North West Passage

Umniak Fjord

Post 10

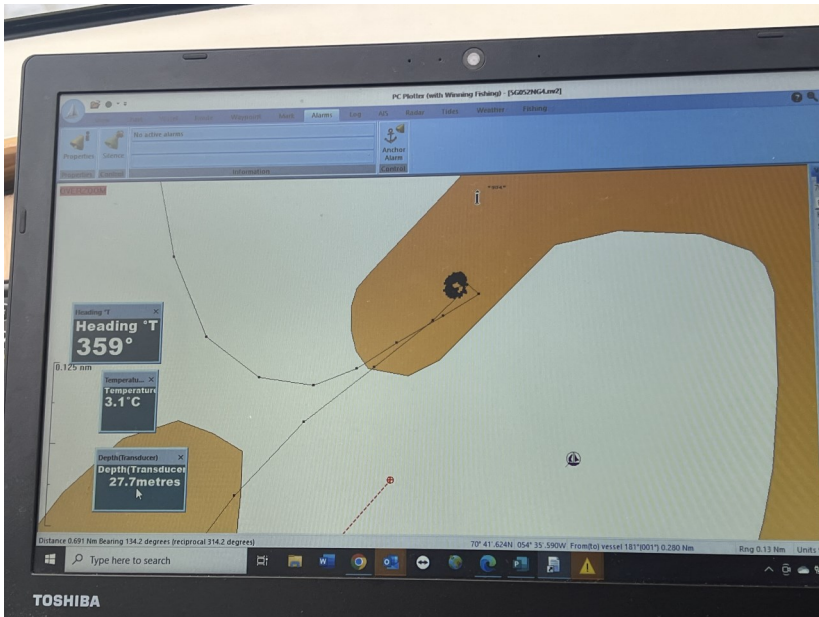
At the end of the Vaigat channel there is a small anchorage sheltered behind some islands called Nuusuaq. Information in different publications talks of an unusual stone built structure that was either a bear trap or a chapel. Determined as to seek out such interesting places we headed in. The chart on the

plotter was particularly vague with no depths, just an outline of the coast which, as it turned out, was just as vague as to get into the anchorage we had to pass over one of the islands and anchor on "land".

We were actually anchored in the centre of the bay, just inshore of the yacht symbol on the chart. This just emphasises the vagaries of navigating in these waters, not only do you have to live without any depths or contour lines on the chart to tell you if it is safe, the chart may not actually be where it says it is! Of course we are our own worst enemies as if you were navigating by traditional means you would never

know with such accuracy exactly where you were anyway so if the chart is a hundred metres off it does not really matter. We get used to incredibly precise location technology these days as is can be seen from the nice circle drawn by the boat on the chart as it moved round the anchor overnight and yet only 20 or so years ago such accuracy was only available to the military and now we get it for free. One day, know doubt the charts will catch up with the digital age but in the mean time they have been derived from paper charts, that may have been made well over a hundred years ago. The problem was much the same in Svalbard last year, although to a lesser extent and I was told by someone that the deep ocean is now mapped much more accurately the intricate and shallow areas as they are of lesser interest to big ships, cable laying operations or the military so don't get any new attention.

Anyway, despite the chart showing us on land, we still had to get into the dinghy to get to the beach. On land there was a small hut in good condition with an oil stove, table and sleeping platform. Outside we could see a stone structure a little further away and went over to inspect. We have seen hardly any stone built buildings in Greenland, despite there being no native timber, the oldest generally are of timber with turf or peat pieces built up around the walls as a second layer for insulation. So the bear trap or chapel is rather different to the norm, with exceedingly thick walls with unusual square corners it was only about 4



metres square and with the walls being over a metre thick the space inside was tiny, one could imagine a bear getting lured inside and trapped, but with even a good dose of imagination, a chapel is hard to believe. Imagine being told your parish was going to be that of Nuusuaq, but don't worry about your lack of charisma and inability to keep a congregation happy, as there is no-one there and even if there was they the church has only room for one at a time!

So with the Bear trap / Chapel mystery unsolved we gingerly exited the anchorage between a couple of islands with my eyes glued to the depth sounder readout. Once offshore we rounded the headland into Umanak fjord and a long motor to a rather dodgy anchorage just before the small town of Ummañaq. The harbour was reputed to be very small and congested so we opted for the anchorage with little shelter behind an island and amongst many unwelcoming rocks. All night we bobbed around in the swell that seemed to come round the island with vigour and it was almost a relief to be able to leave in the morning to see what the settlement had to offer.



Coming away from the rather tight fuel berth

The fibreglass covered rock on the end –at least it helped it show up!

Just before the main harbour entrance we spied a fuel berth and in need of a top up we gingerly headed in. The dock was only about half the length of our boat and a rock below the surface with lots of fibreglass scrapings was very visible at one end. With just the centre and bow lines attached and the engine running slow ahead we managed to moor at 45 degrees to the corner of the dock and fuelled up. Diesel that is easily obtainable ie by hose from a pump rather than by can or getting a fuel truck to come to the dock is getting harder to find as we go north and just in case we cannot fill later on we took this opportunity. It all took a while as the pump was a fair way from the boat and the default value that it would take from a card was less than we needed so it took two goes. It is still a great improvement on fuelling in Britain where I have yet to find an automatic pump that takes cards and does not need a time consuming charade that involves people coming to serve you and long walks to an office to pay.

Fuelled up we rounded the corner into the harbour proper to see another NWP boat, the Polish Inatiz rafted up to a fishing boat. As they had obviously done the running in finding a space we took the opportunity and joined them. They had been motoring overnight and not long got in but were very welcoming. A trip ashore and a proper cup of coffee was very much appreciated and we discovered that this small



harbour is one of Santas residences and he has a gigantic postbox to hold all the letters he gets. Whilst in the café, the coastal ferry arrived and we were glad that we hadn't anchored out in the channel where we thought we might and had come in as we would have been in the way. With little fuss it came right in and was soon secured and people getting off. This community whilst fairly sizeable is unfortunate in that it is on a very mountainous island, it has an airport but this is 10 miles away on the mainland where there is land flat enough and a helicopter makes the link. So this might explain the number of people getting off the ferry as one would expect travel by air from here would be expensive.

Santas post box at Uummanaq

Ferry arrives in the small bustling harbour. We were glad we hadn't anchored in the channel behind it!





Not wanting to overstay our welcome we left in the afternoon to head for a quiet anchorage some distance to the north. This island had a couple of options and we chose a little bay with an old hut. With a much needed quiet night behind us we continued after the usual trip ashore to the next anchorage. In this area they are few and far between and it was 2am before we finally dropped the hook at the head of a very remote feeling fjord. Rising late the decision was taken to stay another night and we took the water containers to the river to fill up. The beach was one of the few we have seen that collects flotsam

although even here there was not much to be found, just the usual mix of lost fishing gear plastic bottles and the usual single trainer that you always find. With our first decent rain overnight since we were in Paamiut over a month ago the day was not that inviting and the Reflex diesel heater was pressed into action for the first time in a week or so.



Musk ox skull on the beach



With our rest day over we headed out to find the next place on our relentless journey North, this time it was a lagoon behind a shingle spit, a good anchorage with a ruined hut that would be a pretty desperate shelter if you needed one, its only saving grace was the copious quantities of coal left there,

The Abel Tasman

but nothing to burn it in as the stove had disintegrated. It appeared no-one had been there in years. As we were coming into the anchorage the day before, I had spied a distant mast ahead of us and the next day we caught up with the Abel Tasman a 75ft true expedition yacht. With obvious good taste she was moored where we were heading and as we got closer you could also see a couple of paramotors flying around an adjacent iceberg. Eventually, of course, they came and buzzed us just before we put the anchor down and then landed on the adjacent gravel bank. Knowing the Abel Tasman was on the same project as us we took the dinghy over to where the paramotors had landed and caught up with the skipper and some of the crew. They certainly had plenty of gear on board as they were set up for climbing, diving and filming as well as flying. There are nine on board and apart from collecting marine samples for a science project they are making a documentary film as part of a series to be screened in Brazil.



Cheers, Tim and Carol on the good ship Lumina

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