



**This newsletter has been designed to enable you to get an idea of what kind of experience you will have should you join us on one of our cruises.**

**Thu 2 Apr | Hjalmar on hard-standing** Hjalmar Bjorge is out of the water at Corpach Boatbuilders for a few days. Mark usually takes the boat up to the excellent slip at Mallaig but since time is of the essence and the Corpach slip had availability and was, ooh, all of a couple of hundred yards away, it was an obvious choice. Below: montage of Hjalmar Bjorge at Corpach with Ben Nevis to the right by Hannah Thompson



Today's weather has been truly amazing - unseasonably hot. Tomorrow looks to be the same. This makes the whole process of bottom-scraping, washing and painting much easier. Sod's Law says it often rains when the boat is slipped. I have fond (?) memories of painting the hull of Hjalmar Bjorge, at Mallaig one year, whilst it was snowing...

**Fri 3 Apr | Another day, another image** Well this is becoming quite a regular occurrence! We've just supplied an image to a design studio in Edinburgh who are creating interpretive panels for the Highland Council. This time, an image from one of our diving guests, of a basking shark.

Right: basking shark photographed underwater by Nick Clark



**Mon 6 Apr | Both boats waterborne** Zuza is now back in the water at Oban Marina on Kerrera where she is pictured, right. Charlie, her owner, has paid for a pontoon berth this summer and we will be meeting and greeting our sailing guests on the North Pier this year, from where they will be transported over to Kerrera by courtesy boat. The advantage of this arrangement is no ladder to negotiate on the pier! Zuza's first charter is this forthcoming (Easter) weekend with a full complement of eight guests. Photo: Zuza on a pontoon berth (centre) at Kerrera by Hannah Thompson



Hjalmar Bjorge left the slip at Corpach Boatbuilders today and is back in the Caledonian Canal for a few days prior to her first trip also starting this Thursday.

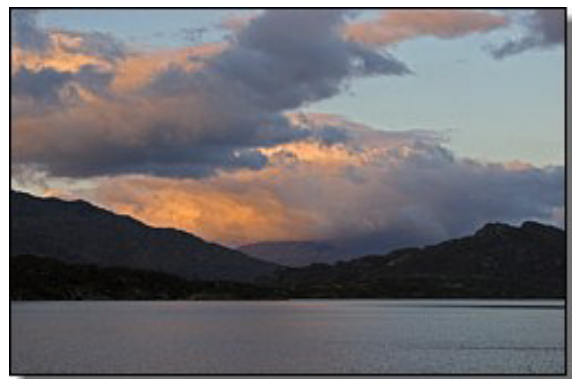
**Thu 9 Apr | Two first cruises underway** Both Hjalmar Bjorge and Zuza crews met guests for the first trip of the season today - an Easter Springwatch long weekend. Mark aboard Hjalmar Bjorge is joined this year by cook Mark P (Ylva's brother who covered a couple of trips for us last year) and Anna who also crewed some trips for us last year. Aboard this weekend too is Anna's son Louie who is the boat's "honorary Bilge Rat". Above: the wheelhouse is finally finished, transformed from last year, with a large seated area doubling up as a skipper's berth. Photo by Hannah Thompson



Zuza skipper Tim is being ably assisted by Sue this weekend, as Heather only returns to the UK later this month.

Not a great forecast if we're honest. Zuza opted to stay overnight in the safety of Ardentrive Bay, Kerrera, while Hjalmar Bjorge guests had a rather bumpy ride over to Lochaline. Louie steered the boat for about an hour.

**Fri 10 Apr | Sea and golden eagles seen** Zuza guests enjoyed a gentle sail up the Sound of Mull and into Loch Drumbuie (Loch na Droma Buidhe) today where guests went ashore on Oronsay for a walk. Hjalmar Bjorge guests went ashore at Lochaline this morning where they went fossil hunting and castle spotting. After lunch the boat travelled north to Loch Sunart. A sea eagle flew directly over the boat and a couple of golden eagles were also seen. Below: Zuza anchored in Loch Drumbuie and sun setting over Loch Sunart. Both photos by Murray Lenton



**Sat 11 Apr | Celebrations in Tobermory** Zuza skipper Tim was 99% sure he spotted a porpoise as the yacht sailed up Loch Sunart this morning. It's early in the year for porpoises so that's an excellent sighting. The vessel traversed over to Tobermory where guests opted for the day ashore, as did Hjalmar Bjorge guests, who had also crossed over from Loch Sunart.

Today was Zuza guest Ken's 50th birthday and cake and champagne were enjoyed aboard. The yacht guests also went onboard Hjalmar Bjorge for drinks before dinner and Mark was especially pleased to see Ronnie, Ann, Norman and Valerie again.



Above: Duart Castle in the Sound of Mull and Tobermory's colourful harbour houses. Both photos by Murray Lenton

**Sun 12 Apr | A perfect day. Probably** Easter Sunday and the most beautiful, calm, sunny day. Perfect for walking and relaxing. Less perfect for sailing! Zusa had to motor from Tobermory to Port Ramsay, on the north end of Lismore, because there was not a breath of wind today. A sea eagle was seen and guests walked on Lismore in the afternoon. Photo: Golden eagle seen by Hjalmar Bjorge guests as they approached Loch Spelve, below. Photo by Mark Henrys



Hjalmar Bjorge guests enjoyed a very gentle cruise down to Loch Spelve this morning where the boat anchored off Croggan. En route golden eagles were seen sitting on a nest. Our guests walked to the ruins of old Croggan village and, later, Big John (who skippered for us until his defection to Cal Mac!!!) and his girlfriend Cathy - who recently became his fiancée - came aboard for dinner. Above: Mark and Louie in Hjalmar Bjorge's tender by Murray Lenton



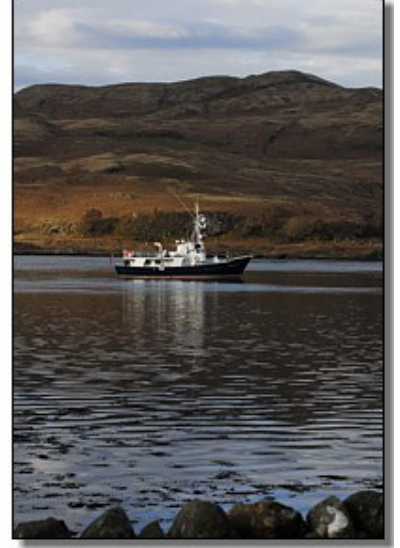
Above (left) Anna preparing an Easter egg hunt for Louie on Hjalmar Bjorge whilst (right) he pretends he hasn't noticed what his mother is up to! Photos by Murray Lenton

**Mon 13 Apr | First forays finished** As planned, both Easter cruises finished today, with Hjalmar Bjorge dropping guests on the Railway Pier in Oban and Zusa berthing at Kerrera. The yacht guests travelled back over to the town on the 1300 courtesy boat. An excellent first weekend for both vessels, with some fantastic weather. Special thanks to Sue for cooking and sailing on Zusa for the first time.

Right: Hjalmar Bjorge anchored off Croggan in Loch Spelve, by John Maughan

**Wed 22 Apr | Watch out, there's a Lindsay about!** Many of you will remember Lindsay, our fiddle-playing crew member of two years. She passed her driving test today! Hooray!!!

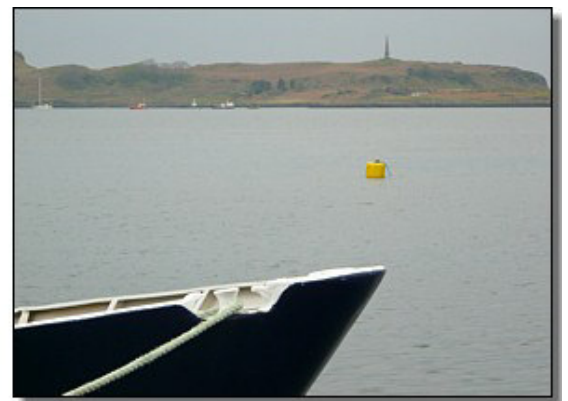
Below: Murray and Louie on Hjalmar Bjorge cruising the Sound of Mull. Murray was a little concerned about the possibility of seasickness and was glad "the bilge rat" was onboard to look after him! Photo by Mark Henrys



**Fri 24 Apr | Mull Music Festival** Regular guests Biddulph SAC arrived in Oban today to join Hjalmar Bjorge for a weekend of music on Mull, drinking and perhaps some diving (depending on how much drinking is done). As usual they thoughtfully brought their own breakfast with them - Staffordshire oatcakes - and Mark, the cook, has been instructed to serve them with bacon and cheese, as is their annual habit. Luckily last year's cook Ylva, Mark's sister, had mentioned this so extra cheese was bought for the weekend.

Oban was chaos so nothing new there. The Railway Pier, which is our usual berth, was full of fishing boats. The face of the North Pier had two huge fish-farm boats tied to it and Hjalmar Bjorge ended up outside another boat on the side of the North Pier. We do have another option in Oban Bay now though. Our commercial mooring has finally been laid and is in a convenient location north west of the North Pier.

So, as an alternative, we can always put the boat on the mooring and run guests to and from either of the two nearby slipways. Photo: Mooring in Oban Bay beyond the bow of Hjalmar Bjorge on the North Pier, with Kerrera behind. Photo by Hannah Thompson



**Mon 27 Apr | Diving, dancing, drinking** Mick and his buddies completed their weekend today. Immediately upon reaching home he emailed to thank us for a "top weekend" and asked to book in for the same dates next year. Mull Music Festival wouldn't be the same without Biddulph SAC on board.

Some of the divers managed some of the diving, including a site at Slignich Mor, photo over, in Loch Sunart, which is good ground for scallops.

Photo: Michelle on the bow of Hjalmar Bjorge waiting for the divers to surface, by Mark Henrys

Yesterday some of them, in between pub sessions, took a walk to Aros Park, around the lochan and to the waterfalls where two golden eagles were seen. Today a couple of porpoises were spotted off Drimnin.

Mark took Hjalmar Bjorge back up to Corpach for a couple of days with Mark, the cook, and Michelle, who worked as crew for us this weekend. Great to have her onboard, as she is also a diver.



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