



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.

Tue 6 Apr | Flotsam and jetsam John and Cathy - whose wedding photo you might have spotted back in November's news - took a walk on the south coast of Mull today, from Laggan sands, near where Mark and Hannah used to live, out past Rat Island. Their most interesting beachcombing find was a sign, about two feet square, urging the electorate to vote for John Efford of the Liberal Party. John who? Well it turns out that he stood for election in Newfoundland about four years ago so best guess is that the sign floated to the west coast of Scotland all the way from Canada.

I wonder what the party's environmental policy says about litter?!!! Above: John and Cathy outside their house in Croggan with the Newfoundland sign



Sun 11 Apr | Funny find in funnel Skipper Mark, doing a thorough pre-season check of Hjalmar Bjorge, found half a dozen duck eggs in the funnel this morning! Most likely explanation is that a duck laid them in there although there was no sign of a nest. There were also a couple of broken eggs on the sundeck so best guess is that a gull picked those ones up out of the funnel and subsequently dropped them.

Thu 15 Apr | First day of first cruise Hjalmar Bjorge left Oban at 1630 for the first cruise of the season. Onboard were nine guests, three crew and one ship's dog. They cruised over to Loch Spelve for the first evening which looked magnificent in the spring sunshine. After a lovely meal, courtesy of return cook Mark, a very quiet night was spent under starry skies watching the new moon rise above Ardura.

Fri 16 Apr | Beautiful beach walk Hjalmar Bjorge cruised the Ross of Mull this morning bound for Erraid. The vessel anchored at 1250 and after lunch all aboard headed ashore for a walk up to the Signal Light (used for signalling the lighthouses at Dubh Artach and Skerryvore). The Light building was restored about 20 years ago and is a copy of the original structure. A few of the more intrepid walkers made it over to Balfour Bay with its beautiful white sands and calm blue sea. Ship's dog had great fun on the beach. After departing Erraid they travelled through the Sound of Iona anchoring overnight on the south coast of Ulva. Below (top left) Hjalmar Bjorge anchored off Erraid, looking towards Iona (top right) Balfour beach on Erraid. Both photos by Lindsay Wilson





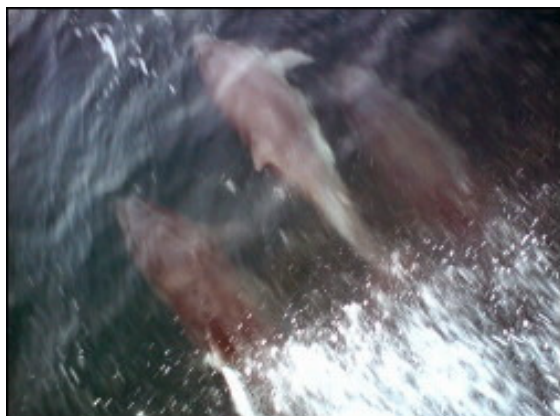
Above (left) Balfour beach on Erraid and (right) Ship's Captain and ship's dog on the beach. Both photos by Marc Calhoun

Sat 17 Apr | No missing guests!!! The weather had deteriorated overnight with rain and a fresh south westerly wind blowing. Guests had hoped to land on Cairn Na Burgh Mor and Cairn Na Burgh Beg at the Treshnish Isles. Legend has it that the library from St Colomba's on Iona was buried and hidden here and a new archaeological investigation and dig on this site is due soon. The weather, however, prevented landing and all aboard had to be satisfied with cruise close to the two islands instead. Lunch was taken in Soriby Bay in Loch Tuath.

After lunch Mark decided to lay some cruise-related ghosts to rest. After the most intensive guest briefing ever (which stopped just short of pre-warning all the emergency services) Mark landed the guests ashore for the reverse of the notorious Gometra to Ulva walk. Some of this weekend's guests had been on the previous notorious walk (not mentioning any names Valerie and Norman) and it was a huge relief when, this time, everybody turned up in the right place at the right time. If you have no idea what is being referred to here, have a look at the last story in the newsletter pertaining to August 2006.

Mark happily sailed away from Gometra harbour with a full complement of guests onboard and anchored overnight at Bunnessan.

Sun 18 Apr | Dolphin escort Like much of the rest of the country Hjalmar Bjorge was covered in a light dusting of volcanic ash this morning. Heading south toward the Sound of Iona the boat was joined by three bottlenose dolphins who escorted it into the Sound where Mark anchored for lunch and guests went ashore for a walk. In the afternoon the boat cruised to Lochbuie where guests also went ashore and had a walk to the stone circle and the mausoleum. Below (left) dolphins accompany Hjalmar Bjorge to the Sound of Iona and (right) ships dog checks them out. Photos by Lindsay Wilson



Mon 19 Apr | Sea eagle sightings Hjalmar Bjorge left Lochbuie early this morning and everyone aboard was treated to some close up views of a pair of sea eagles on their nest and a couple of fly-bys. Arrival in Oban coincided with a leisurely brunch on the mooring. Thereafter guests disembarked via the tender which made a nice change from wrestling with the Calmac ladders!

Fri 23 Apr | Mull Music Festival Regular guests Biddulph SAC (this is their sixth Music Festival trip) arrived in Oban today to join Hjalmar Bjorge at 1600. There are a record number of nine divers amongst the rabble this year!

Sat 24 Apr | Music and mayhem Lindsay's mum, and occasional crew, Rhona travelled to Tobermory from Caignure this evening to join guests and crew for supper. Thereafter she, with flute, and Lindsay, with fiddle, provided the best performance of the weekend right there on Hjalmar Bjorge, firstly inside the boat and then on the top deck.

Mark was also highly amused to witness most of the staff from our accountants (RA Clements in Oban, you have been named and shamed) raucously singing Queen numbers on a neighbouring yacht. Linda, Mark's running partner from Clements, was amongst the party. He also got some, er, interesting video footage of them hoisting underwear up the mast. Not posting that on youtube has got to be worth a discount on this year's bill surely?!!!

Mon 26 Apr | A dozen dolphins Hjalmar Bjorge left Tobermory very early today to dive the Breda. Just after 0730, whilst passing the Green Isles in the Sound of Mull, the boat approached around a dozen bottlenose dolphins feeding by the red can buoy. They bowrode for just long enough for the weary divers to rise and get a brief glimpse, which was no mean feat, considering how hard they'd celebrated the last night of the Music Festival the previous evening! Guests departed after brunch today.

Fri 30 Apr | Tragedy and celebration After boarding guests yesterday afternoon Hjalmar Bjorge departed Oban and berthed overnight on the pontoons in Tobermory. Following breakfast this morning the vessel left Tobermory and headed north for Muck arriving shortly before 1100. After anchoring all the guests went ashore in glorious sunny weather, a truly beautiful spring day. Below: beach on Muck, looking across to Rum by Murray Lenton



Mark met one of the residents who explained they'd had a tough winter on Muck, particularly as a young island girl had tragically died in late October. That's a struggle for any community to recover from but especially hard-hitting in an island population of just over 30 folk. This weekend was to see some joy on the island however, as the owner's son is getting married on Muck tomorrow. Lots of visitors were already ensconced and Hjalmar Bjorge's crew and guests were very tempted to stick around and join in the festivities. But they left the wedding party to their celebrations and headed after lunch to an overnight anchorage off Rum.

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