



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.

Fri 1 Sep | Good-bye all Chalice, Elizabeth G and Hjalmar Bjorge said good-bye to all their guests today. Chris' guests aboard Chalice had some final sightings this morning in the shape of eagles and an otter. If we had lined up all three boats' 33 guests this week in chronological order they would have ranged from age 79 (Ronnie) right down to 10 (Phoebe). "Hello" and "good-bye" to Paul and Sally who travelled on Chalice this week - I know you check our news pages every day!!! I also know that Paul cheated terribly at card game "Uno" yet was still constantly thrashed by Phoebe. Don't worry Paul, it will be our little secret...

Mon 4 Sep | Stingray spotted A couple of divers aboard Hjalmar Bjorge saw an unusual stingray today. They were diving a wreck in Loch Seaforth (Harris & Lewis) at the time and spotted the stingray in mud on the seabed. It was about one metre wide with a tail also measuring about one metre in length. The divers identified it as a stingray by the four barbs on its tail. Species of skate and other rays are commonly seen in UK waters but stingrays are rare and are virtually never reported in Scottish waters. Yesterday Hjalmar Bjorge guests had some sightings whilst above the sea surface - half a dozen basking sharks and a small group of common dolphins both seen on the inside of the Outer Hebrides.

Tue 5 Sep | Seeking cetaceans Today a team of international cetacean researchers embark on a nine day charter in Hebridean waters aboard the Hans Hansson. The team members are hoping to spot minke, fin and sperm whales and various species of dolphins as well as a host of other marine life.

Divers aboard Hjalmar Bjorge had a very close encounter with a huge basking shark whilst diving the wreck of the "Chadwick" off Skye today. Ten divers descended to the wreck but a couple decided to swim with the basker who was totally unperturbed by their presence. They took lots of great photos of the slow moving beastie so we hope to have some copies soon. Once the wreck divers had ascended to the surface the shark approached them and one of them stroked it right down its side as it passed close by.

Thu 7 Sep | Kilda diving dash Hjalmar Bjorge ended up in Tobermory tonight after a last minute dash out to St Kilda. Earlier in the week the vessel, with 12 divers onboard, travelled up to Lochmaddy and East Loch Tarbert in the Outer Hebrides. The weather and sea conditions were not good thus it was decided to abandon any attempt to reach St Kilda and Mark brought the group back down to Skye where they encountered that fabulous basking shark on Tuesday. However on Wednesday morning the weather vastly improved and the guests remained keen to see St Kilda. Mark turned the boat round and took them all the way out to St Kilda where they arrived on Wednesday evening. Following one early morning dive today they watched Hans Hansson come in to Kilda and then had to hot foot it back to Tobermory to arrive tonight as passengers disembark tomorrow. A huge amount of sea time undertaken in just two days although this was relieved by lots of common dolphin in the Sound of Barra.

Wed 13 Sep | Superb sightings Gordon and the team aboard Hans Hansson said good-

bye to their cetacean researchers today following a successful charter. Further details to follow but we understand pilot whales and fin whales were recorded as well as more common species.

Thu 14 Sep | Sea eagle swoop Chalice set off today for her final cruise of the season "The Last Days of Summer". A promising start with a sea eagle flying right over the bow in the Sound of Mull. Hjalmar Bjorge also boarded passengers today for the first of five weekend charters taking divers out in local waters. Rob returns Elizabeth G to Oban tomorrow following the last St Kilda trip of the year - again with divers aboard.



We finally caught up with Struan and Cameron Smith today. The twins had snapped some photos of Hans Hansson, Hjalmar Bjorge and Elizabeth G leaving Oban together on 1 July. Some of their photos have been added to earlier news pages and here's another above. From left it shows Hjalmar Bjorge, Elizabeth G and Hans Hansson trailing in the wake of Struan and Cameron's RIB "Power of Scotland." Thanks for the piccies guys! Photo: Cameron/Struan Smith

Sat 16 Sept | Stars, sand 'n' sun Chalice guests saw otters yesterday as well as eagles. There followed an amazingly clear starry night and today the weather has been ridiculously hot and sunny.



Chris' passengers encountered basking sharks and plunge diving gannets this morning before setting off for beautiful sandy Sanna Bay on the Ardnamurchan peninsula (above). Photo: Hannah Thompson

Hans Hansson departed Oban this morning and locked into the Caledonian Canal at 1300. It takes a couple of days to travel the length of the canal before exiting at Inverness. From here Gordon, John, Jan, Lou and Willy (a Norwegian skipper who has joined the boat for a few weeks) are heading over to Bergen to deliver the last of this season's charters. Photo: Hannah Thompson



Mon 18 Sept | Cheerio Chalice Chris finished his last cruise of the season today and will be having a well deserved break from all things boaty...but not before he takes Chalice up to her winter mooring at Banavie on the Caledonian Canal and crews for Rob on Elizabeth G next weekend. No rest for the wicked...

Tue 19 Sept | Canal cruise Hans Hansson is now in Inverness having cruised the Caledonian canal. The photo, below left, shows the vessel about to descend the final flight of locks in the city. The journey through the canal started in boiling hot conditions but with the tail end of Hurricane Gordon looming it doesn't look like the crossing to Bergen is going to be quite so pleasant...



Sat 23 Sept | Berthed in Bergen Yep, as predicted, it was a hideous crossing from Inverness to Bergen but Hans Hansson arrived safely today about lunchtime. By coincidence there was a naming ceremony in Bergen today for the Norwegian Rescue Service's newest rescue cruiser, RS 137, "Kristian Gerhard Jebson." When the harbour-master was informed the visiting ship Hans Hansson was none other than ex Norwegian rescue vessel RS 66 "Skomvaer II", he berthed the two ships together, as shown in the photo above right. Gordon was told that RS 137 was called out yesterday to rescue a yacht in trouble as "the North Sea was very rough". The crew of Hans Hansson nodded knowingly at this comment... Photos: Gordon Fitton

Guests boarded as arranged about 4.00pm and the boat will leave tomorrow for her journey north.

Sun 24 Sept | Not oldie goldie Chris is on Elizabeth G this weekend, giving Rob a hand, but he found time to take this photo of a juvenile golden eagle (right) in the Sound of Mull. Chris says he has frequently seen this chick and its two parents in various locations around the Sound and on the Morvern shore. Photo: Chris Jackson



Hans Hansson left Bergen on a perfect sunny day today and cruised north to Sognefjord, anchoring in Leirvik, a delightful little spot with a waterfall and most romantic looking stream running through woods to the beach. However, after a Sunday dinner with all the trimmings, one of Jan's puddings and a few glasses of wine everyone decided to enjoy the view from the boat rather than go ashore.

Tue 26 Sept | Half way home Well...rather more than half way. Chris tied Chalice up at Corpach today en route to her winter berth on the Caledonian Canal. Chris won't be able to take the boat up Neptune's Staircase to Banavie until some time in October as his usual berth is currently being used. Hjalmar Bjorge finishes charters on 16 October and will then be joining Chalice on the canal. Elizabeth G is on a mooring in Tobermory between charters and Hans Hansson departs from Norway next month.

Photo: Chris Jackson



Sat 30 Sep | Stunning sunset Hjalmar Bjorge is out on charter with divers this weekend. Nick, who sent us this lovely photo of a sunset in Tobermory harbour said, "the weather was brill, the sunset in Tobermory fantastic, we saw some porpoises and seals. In short, fantastic weather, fantastic company, fantastic food, fantastic diving. We will definitely be back." Photo: Nick Turner

Hans Hansson is steaming north up the coast of Norway at a great rate of knots as guests are keen to get up to the Tysfjord area and look for killer whales. Promising signs...last night the vessel was surrounded by thousands of jumping herring (for it is they the orcas feast upon) and other fish - five fine cod were caught from the aft deck. All aboard were also treated to a wonderful display of the Northern Lights...surely a good omen?!

