

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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Nessletter No 50
February 1982

Rip's Piece

As we start another year of Nessletters, may I take the opportunity to thank you all for being members. With a special thanks to those of you who have written with their news and views. One letter I received towards the end of October came from David James. He had written it in April, after reading Nessletter 45, it had then been buried by a very heavy season of work at Torosay Castle, on the Isle of Mull. He was taking me to task for references I had made to the Loch Ness Investigation. He was glad that I had made it clear that Adrian Shine is following in the LNI footsteps. For not only was David a patron of the 1981 Expedition but Adrian is the 'heir-apparent' to the LNI. David also said I should make it clear that Adrian holds the LNI records on loan, so any requests for information concerning them should be directed to him. David then goes on.

"There are two respects, however in which you do less than justice to LNI efforts (which include your own) and the first is where you say that we expended a tremendous amount of energy on such a programme (ie. surface photography) without any really definite, usable results! This ignores the whole thinking underlying the Loch Ness approach over more than a decade as well as failing to evaluate what was obtained. In the first instance, when we were the subject of popular scorn, photography was the only hope of getting sponsorship and the thought that "sooner or later the right person, with the right camera will be in the right place at the right time" was persuasive. At any rate it secured us A T V sponsorship in 1962 and 1963., Observer support in 1964., private subscriptions in 1965, the Chicago Adventurers in 1966 and Field Enterprises thereafter. If results were meagre and disappointing, at least the bandwagon was rolling, nor indeed were the results to be ignored, since we had several film sequences positively vetted by the R A F's J A R I C ., notably of course Dick Raynor's.

But it was not our film alone that counted, since while as a matter of policy we were willing to submit any film to the R A F., Dinsdale's film, secured in 1960 and reported on in 1966, was crucial to getting the scientific establishment on our side, while both Alan Wilkins in 1975 and Peter Smith in 1979, knocked further nails in the doubters coffin. Furthermore the persistence of the surface photographic approach brought fresh operators into the field, notably Rines and Shine. It was thus an indispensable preliminary to all that has flowed since and those people who stuck to it year after year deserve the credit for it. Naturally, of course, as soon as funds permitted, we started to look at other methods and Professor Tucker's and Bob Love's approach, both under LNI sponsorship, were logical developments so that the balance between the surface and underwater approach gradually swung over until in 1972 we had the Rine's flipper shot, which I regard as being as big a landmark as Dinsdale 12 years previously. Soon, of course, sonar will yield to tissue sampling and hopefully to live capture, which is precisely the way that research should evolve.

You say, subsequently that the LNI did not keep the Council in the picture and that this led to friction. This, of course, is totally misleading and any suggestion is as unfair to the County (later District) Authority, as it is to myself, since we had the utmost assistance and understanding from Inverness, including a grant of £1,000 from the H I D B. To amplify the foregoing, you must remember that during the time in question my stepfather was Convenor of the Argyle Planning Committee, whilst I, as an M P was in constant touch with all relevant planning authorities in my professional life. We would hardly, therefore, have

neglected to get all the requisite permissions. At the start this was merely a matter of getting the approval of the Police, the Canal Authority and when necessary, of the Fisheries Board. No question of planning, as such, arose, since Achnahannet had been a camp site by repute since ten years before we appeared on the scene and John and Dorothy Fraser had long maintained a (rudimentary) toilet facility on site. Indeed for our first few years there, our caravans were outnumbered by itinerant ones, in the adjoining field. It was not until 1966 that any planning permission, as such, arose and this was when we wanted to leave caravans in situ over the winter. This was applied for and went through on the nod. The following year we wanted to create a proper entrance and exit to the site : this was a police matter and readily approved. It was not until 1970 that the County Planning Authority told me that they wished to implement a very sensible policy of eliminating all caravans between the road and the loch. However, thanks to the Chairman of planning, who lived in Drumadrochit, we were twice granted a stay of execution, at the end of which, having carried out a decade of surface watching, we were quite happy to call it a day, not least, so far as I was concerned, because increasing political pressures would have made it impossible for me to go on with the considerable job of organisation.

It would thus be unfair on the very helpful Local Authority to regard their attitude to us as other than co-operative and it would be untrue to say that I did not at all times keep all concerned fully apprised as to our hopes and plans."

I have a high regard for David James. He was a founder member of the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau. In my opinion, while the LNPIB may have been started without his help, it certainly would not have achieved what it did. Over the years he has expended vast amounts of his time as well as no small amount of his own funds. Because of my regard, I have quoted most of David's letter. I at no time intended to make light of his efforts and the efforts of the LNI. Without any doubt David is correct on the question of planning permission etc., But from my time spent with the LNI I know there were one or two very unfluent local people, landowners, who were very much anti - LNI. There were occasional incidents that added to this feeling. One of these was when the camera platform was built at Achnahannet. It was not a building, so did not come within the planning umbrella, so it was just built by the volunteer crews. But it did not meet with everyone's approval. For myself, I found, in 1971 when I was bringing the Achnahannet site up to the standard required by the local authority, that I received every help from the officials I had dealings with. But it was because of very careful negotiations by David that it was possible for the LNI to remain for the two years.

About the surface photography, I think David's letter states my position. There was no alternative to surface work when the LNI mounted their early expeditions. But they persevered, and laid the foundations to all that came after. They also brought the investigation to the point of being accepted by the scientific establishment. They did get results, but unfortunately not good enough. The LNI's evidence confirmed the existence of the creatures, for most people. But there was not sufficient to identify them. And that is what most of the LNI volunteers, myself included, were there for. The hope that the right person, camera, place, time, combination, would come up, sustained us. As it still does, those of us who continue to visit the loch clutching cameras. It should not be forgotten that the LNI did invaluable work at the loch, being the focal point for all interested parties, and bringing them together in many marvellous expeditions.

I have been rather long winded about this, it is after all history now. But I feel all monster hunters owe such a great deal to the LNI, that younger members and older ones that did not belong to the LNI, should know of what went before. I am also grateful to David for writing, and enabling me to keep the record straight.

More letters

I have a few member's letters which I have not had chance to use as yet. One from Peggy Gerba of Tucson, U S A., I received almost a year ago. It was a brief account of a short visit she and her husband made to Loch Ness at the beginning of September 1980. They took one of the boat trips on the loch, finding it very pleasant. She said she had not expected the area to have so many trees, also the

loch was much larger than she had imagined. She ends by saying that until we know more about the animals we must keep open minds as to what they are. But she feels that as no small 'nessies' are reported it would seem to make sense that they are large eels. I should add here, that there are a few 'young animal' reports mentioned in some of the books.

Valerie Smith of Reading, enclosed a short letter with her subscription. She had been ill, and as a consequence she will be having a year off from her studies at university. She hopes to spend much of her time at Loch Ness. Her thoughts on what the animals may be, have now settled on the giant eel theory. She had previously believed that they may be some type of plesiosaur.

John Gaughan, of East Dulwich, London, sent a long letter. He told me he had seen the piece on ITV about Mr Wignall, giving a full account. Then he went on to give me his views on what the creatures may be. He says, "I keep an open mind, but tend to support the 'sea-serpent' idea, recognising these creatures as evolved forms of the 'plesiosaur' family that have survived to the present day almost oblivious to man's enquiry. One has to respect, though, the numerous theories and candidates put forward for the creature, a favoured suggestion from this category being Dr Mackal's eel theory -- somewhat conservative, but feasible." John has not visited Loch Ness to date. But while on holiday with his family in Co Mayo, Ireland in August 1978, he received an interesting report (2nd hand). It came from his grandmother, now deceased, who was 83 at the time of telling. It referred to an incident that occurred some fifty years ago when a neighbour reported seeing a 'water-dog' or 'water-horse', she mixed the names. A beast with a horse's head, rose up out of the waters of a local lake, while he was on his way to the town fair. It caused quite a stir at the time. The lake is one of three, approximately 2 miles N W of Kilkelly off the road to Swinford, Co Mayo.

The next letter came from another Mr Gaughan. I do not have his first name, just the initials P V. He lives in Dudley, in the West Midlands. He has noticed that a small black and white TV monitor, as used by some stores, plus a 12 inch screen are now priced very reasonably. He thinks the mounting of one, plus a light source with a small electric drive propellor, and a stability/ballast system, seems a prospect to tempt many a model builder. Powered from a twelve volt battery, with a few hundred feet of suitable cable. The idea would be to snug down at the loch-side, like a fisherman, pop the 'torpedo' in, switch on, and let it roam on its cable. With very little weed to snag on it could be interesting to see what it may come up with. Mr Gaughan says that maybe such a unit is available commercially, for jobs like examining dam walls, etc., Just a thought.

An ex-LNI member Bill Paintin sent me an interesting letter. Bill, who lives in Salisbury, is now retired. He was on expedition to Loch Ness with LNI. He remembers the camera station at Strone Point, it was a wooden shelter on the roof of the Carey's garage. Over the seasons it became adorned with graffiti. One piece that remains with Bill said, "The Loch Ness Monster is a psychic phenomenon", as he puts it "There is another though for you." Bill says he has studied the Paranormal all his life. He believes that it will eventually take its place in the general scheme of scientific knowledge. He feels that Ted Holiday may have been on the right track in his book "The Dragon and the Disc". Persistent elusiveness, the failure of cameras at critical moments, the feeling of horror felt by those who claim to have had close contact with the monster. These are the things that have made Bill wonder that perhaps 'The Loch Ness monster is a psychic phenomenon'.

From Glasgow comes another letter on a similar theme, sent by Roland Watson. It is a long detailed letter, going deeply into the theory. Roland was interested in some of the theories put forward by other members. But he finds most of them totally unconvincing. He opts for a metaphysical explanation for the anomalous Loch Ness 'creatures' - if that is what they are. He finds the variety of forms of the creatures too extreme to indicate one 'animal'. He quotes a list of conflicting reports, and says that to his mind these indicate more than one species or a creature that goes through an extraordinary metamorphosis in its lifetime. After considering all these things, Roland cannot reconcile himself to accept the claim that the monsters are animals. Yet he feels that they are alive and breathing, created from the 'dusts of the Earth', so to speak. He goes on to try to explain how this is

brought about, through infinite energy fields whose frequencies are so high as to be undetectable. It is rather complicated and according to Roland is also the explanation for UFOs.

I have had a letter from Mrs McNish laid about for some time, and it connects with the foregoing. Mrs McNish, from Sunderland, along with some of her family had a sighting of an animal in September '79 (NIS 36). In her letter she said that she had read that certain people can conjure up the Loch Ness monster at will - a sort of psychic power. She said that it may be true because she is somewhat 'that way'. Her family and friends believe she is psychic, and if anyone would see something at the loch it would be her.

Once again may I thank all of you who have let me have your comments and views. Next time you send your subscription, put a note, or long letter, in with it. That brings me to the point of subscriptions. I am sorry to have to ask for more, from now, rising postal charges being the major factor, the UK subscription will be £2.50 per year, and the North American \$9.00. Other areas on application.

Constance Whyte

While I was writing the piece about the LNI and how much I feel we owe them, a letter from Nick Witchell arrived. It brought very sad news indeed. Constance Whyte died in hospital in Sussex at the end of January 1982. She was a qualified doctor, who went to live in Inverness when her husband was appointed Manager of the Caledonian Canal in 1937. She became intrigued by the Nessie saga and started to collect data, which was eventually written up in 'More than a Legend' published in 1957. She was later one of the founding directors of the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau. I feel that her presentation of the evidence in her book, was instrumental in arousing the interest that brought about the founding of the LNI. Nick enclosed a tribute to her, which is included with this Nessletter. May I endorse all he says, and include myself in his expression of sympathy.

Sightings

I recently wrote to Mr Gordon Sutherland of Abriachen. I first met Mr Sutherland during my holiday at the loch in 1980. I asked about sightings remarking that there seemed to be very few. He sent me a short letter in reply, saying that he thought that the creatures had been seen more last year than for some time. An Edinburgh man, who stays at the loch for about six weeks every year around July, had a frightening experience with one of them. Sorry no details. A baker from Drummadrochit saw one, one morning. (NIS 43) An old lady from Lochend also saw one near Lochend. David Bead, also of Lochend, and two others in a boat were surprised by three creatures moving across the bows somewhere off Dores. It was windy and the water was rough, a girl in the boat was terrified, she said they looked like cows in the water. Someone living in one of Mr Sutherland's caravans took photographs of something, but the prints only show a wake. I am very grateful to him for the news, although it is frustrating not to have more details. If I get further news of them, I will update the accounts in future Nessletters.

Sydney Wignall

I have had a very nice letter and a sheaf of photocopied photos. He told me he was to appear on Blue Peter (a BBC childrens magazine programme) on Monday February 22nd. He confirmed that he had used Microlite aircraft, fitted with floats at the lochs. Also a conventional four seater 'Rallye' low wing monoplane, this with its wheels had to be flown from either Inverness Airport, or Broadford on Skye. The interview on TV was very interesting. Mr Wignall hopes to mount another expedition this year, one of his proposed schemes is to shoot a sonar beacon into a beast with a type of airgun. The small unit would not injure the animal, but could be tracked from the shore or a boat, enabling a record to be made of its movements. Another idea is to use a two seat Microlite, on floats, when a creature is spotted near the surface, the aircraft lands. Mr Wignall in dry-suit with waist mounted scuba gear, drops into the water with an underwater camera rig, the rig consists of 35mm black and white and colour still cameras with miniature 16mm cine. He then swims towards the animal and obtains close-up stills and movie film. I do not know if he would be doing an advisable thing, but he says he is confident it would be safe. Mr Wignall has promised more information as things progress.

Dinosaurs

I have a news clipping of the expedition undertaken by Mr & Mrs Regusters. They have returned with 23 rolls of film taken in the Congo, and a second tape recording of the animals roar. The sound on the tape has not been identified. Mrs Regusters was on a lake in an inflatable when an animal came to the surface some 50 yards away. She said it looked like a small brontosaurus, and took photographs of it. When they were processed they turned out very underexposed. The reason given for that was that the heat and moisture in the Congolese jungle had affected the camera batteries and caused a malfunction of the automatic light meter. Now where have we come across events like that before ?

Well that is it for the first Nessletter of 1982. My address is still, R R Hepple, Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. But as I mentioned before the subscription is now UK £2.50., U S A Canada \$9.00

Rip.

A tribute to Constance Whyte, who died in hospital in Sussex on 24 January 1982 :

It would be no exaggeration to say that it was the courage of Constance Whyte, in writing her book "More Than A Legend" in the late nineteen fifties, which inspired the whole modern phase of the Loch Ness inquiry. For the first time since the palaver of the thirties serious attention to the mystery was brought into sharp focus. Quite apart from provoking a serious question on the floor of the House of Commons, I'm sure that Tim Dinsdale, David James and Peter Scott would all agree that it was as a result of reading, in the pages of "More Than A Legend" the carefully argued record of events at the loch, that the big expeditions and investigations of the sixties were launched. Those inquiries continued into the seventies and will surely go on until answers to the questions she posed so thoughtfully in "More Than A Legend" are known.

Although Constance Whyte retired with her husband Frank to live in Sussex she maintained a keen interest in everything that happened at Loch Ness right up to her death. To me, she was the source of immense advice and encouragement in the preparation of my own book "The Loch Ness Story". Her records of the early years of the mystery were invaluable. Here was someone who'd actually met and interviewed "The Surgeon" R K Wilson, Lachlan Stuart and so many others ; the people who, to later generations of investigators, were the noted names in the history of the saga. She had met them all and recorded the evidence they had to contribute in what, in my opinion, is still undoubtedly the best and most stylish book written about the mystery. She set a standard to which the writers who followed could aspire to. Today "More Than A Legend" is a collector's item.

I once asked Constance Whyte to describe what had compelled her to write "More Than A Legend". In her answer, which I recorded in my own book, she said she did it because : "The search for truth is always worthwhile but in this instance it was the vindication of many people of integrity who had reported honestly what they had seen in Loch Ness which was my main motive." Through her work, many scores of other people were infused with the same determination. It is tragic that she did not live to see the mystery which intrigued her so deeply, and to a solution of which she contributed so much, finally resolved.

I know that a great many people who've been involved in the Loch Ness saga will join me in expressing the deepest sympathy to Constance Whyte's husband Frank and to her son and daughter, Andrew and Jean. We share their loss.

Nicholas Witchell