

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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Norman Collins

Early in September I heard of the death of Mr Collins, he died in London at the age of 74. He had a distinguished career in both radio and television, as well as writing a number of novels. In his early days he held a junior position with the Oxford University Press. He published his first novel in 1934, and continued with others through the 1940's and 50's, he was still writing up to 1978 when his 'The Husband's Story' was published. He joined the BBC in 1941 as a producer in its North American service. His drive and experience led to him being chosen to launch the BBC's General Overseas Service in 1944. This was to be an alternative to the Home Service, when the war came to an end. 1946 saw Mr Collins as the controller of the Light Programme, where he nurtured or inaugurated such programmes as, 'Womens Hour', 'Radio Newsreel', and 'Much Binding in the Marsh'. In 1947 he was made Controller of Television, he was not welcomed by the people already in television at Alexandra Palace. They were trying to resurrect a service from the devastation of war, on very limited resources. He seemed, to them, an opportunist, prone to short cuts and precipitous behaviour. But he led the service through the maze of television politics, breaking new ground with programmes, such as 'In the News', that thrust the service into fearless political discussion. It was due to his forcefulness that the BBC made the breakthrough and covered the declaration of the results of the 1950 General Election. Late in October 1950, after failing to be appointed to the new post of Director of Television with a seat on the Board of Management, Mr Collins resigned from the BBC. During the next four years he was regarded as the spearhead of a movement to create an alternative to the BBC. His experience of the medium made him indispensable in the complex negotiations that followed. When the Television Act was finally passed and the franchises awarded, he emerged as vice-chairman of the Associated Television Corporation. He held the post until he left the ATV network in 1977 at the age of 70. A very distinguished career, but what has it to do with us? He had many interests beyond the world of Radio and TV, one of them being Loch Ness. He was the founder-chairman of the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau. He brought his influence and organizing ability to the loch. He did a great deal of behind the scenes work, drumming up support and finances. The big ITV expedition in 1969 could be said to have been more a publicity exercise than a serious scientific effort. But at the time they were using the best equipment they could, and it did a tremendous amount of good to the general cause of the hunt. Drawing the public's attention to the fact that many people were doing serious work at the loch. We owe a great deal to Mr Collins. While his work prevented him from being an active 'monster-hunter' he did visit the loch many times. I had the pleasure of meeting him once or twice, and found him a gentle gentleman. He continued his interest in the mystery after the LNI ceased field operations, and was an early member of NIS. He will be sorely missed in many walks of life, not least in the continuing search for an answer to the Loch Ness mystery.

Roger Acraman

Roger has kindly let me have copies of his slides (NIS 53). I have examined them as closely as I am able. The first shot taken with a 150mm lens shows a patch of disturbed water, with what could be a small hump in it. It is most exciting, unfortunately the other two shots taken with the 500mm lens do not give any more information, just showing two patches of disturbed water with no sign of the hump. The first shot is not 'obviously' one of the creatures, although what would 'obviously' be I am not too sure. I have an idea what it may be, and have written to Roger explaining my thoughts. He answered, and does not agree with me, but he is hoping to obtain an enlargement of the relevant part of the slide. I look forward to seeing that. What Roger has captured on film looks very much like a hump, but we must be cautious. In the process of gathering evidence to support the existence of large animals in the loch, any possible explanation must be taken into account, and hopefully discounted. If we, the believers, do not do this, the un-believers will. If any piece of evidence we have presented can be proved, or even suggested to be, other than what we claim it is, our whole case is weakened. Over the years Roger has done much research and experimentation on the best type of film to use and other matters. He has now achieved what could be positive results. Despite being very pleased about this, I must stress caution.

Ireland

Over the past few weeks I have received letters from various members concerning the Irish side of the mystery. John Kain, of Loughton in Essex, sent me a very nice letter and a number of photographs. He had been to the west of Ireland, where he had visited a number of the loughs and lakes mentioned in the book 'The Dragon and the Disc' by F.W. Holiday. The photographs were of five of these locations. They were very interesting but the areas of water seemed to be very small compared with Loch Ness. Although Ted Holiday did record that the Irish animals were reported to be smaller as well. During his visits John did not have any sighting, but did manage to speak to a witness at Lochagh Lake, County Kerry.

'Doc' Shiels sent me a letter recounting some of his doings for 1982. He, along with family and friends, has returned after a longish time in Ireland, they travel around and earn their keep as entertainers and musicians. They spent many hours around, upon and in various lakes reported to have monsters. They concentrated on Co. Kerry, especially Lough Leane, Near Killarney, which has a long tradition concerning its 'Great Worm'. They had no positive sightings, but report seeing a number of enigmatic wakes and ripples. Next year they plan to examine the lakes of Galway and Mayo, between May and September. During the winter months he will be keeping an eye open and a camera ready in case Morgawr should re-appear in Falmouth Bay. He is planning to organise an expedition to Loch Ness in April 1983. A fully equipped Nessie-raising trip, during which he hopes to invoke the creature, in front of witnesses, and obtain some movie or video footage.

Lionel Leslie wrote, in September, to tell me of an expedition, sonar survey, he was arranging for Bob Rines. The party was to consist of Bob Rines, Mr & Mrs Byren, Mr Needleman, Mr Curtiss, Ivor Newby and Lionel. The venue was to be Lough Derg, County Claire, from October 1st to 9th 82. Lough Derg, on the River Shannon, is 25 miles long and 3/4 mile wide, with one or two large bays, inlets. The water is clear and about 120 feet deep, at the deepest, over a rocky bottom. A letter in mid-October brought further news of the expeditions progress. Lionel had a boat and accommodation ready when personnel arrived on 3rd October. He had also contacted some witnesses from the locality, who had reported sightings in 1981. These were of the hump, or upturned boat variety. The objects of the expedition were sonar

survey of lake bottom, study of types of wildlife, and to search for signs of the unidentified aquatic creature that had been reported, they deliberately avoided using the term 'monster'. On the third day out in the cruiser with the sonar gear, they picked up a target. What showed up on the chart was much larger than any freshwater fish, seeming to be more than 5 feet in depth (top to bottom). Lionel finished by saying that he will let us have more news when the findings are analysed.

I have a request from an Irish member, he is reluctant to have his name published in a Nessletter as he had bother after it appeared in a local paper. He asks, if anyone knows of any reports or stories of Irish lake sightings, will they please send them to me so I can pass them on, as he is very interested in the Irish aspect of the mystery.

Another Photograph ?

One of our Canadian members, Michael Fitzgerald of Calgary, sent me a cutting from the Calgary Sunday Sun, dated September 5th '82. Jennifer Bruce, her husband Gordon, and her mother, took a holiday in Scotland earlier this year; part of the trip was a visit to Loch Ness. While there photographs were taken, one being of Urquhart Castle across the bay, from the northern shore. When the films were processed the one of the castle has a 'head and neck' in the mid-foreground. It shows a small dark silhouette that has a small pointed head, on a slender curved neck. The Bruces do not claim the picture shows Nessie, but do insist that it is not an hoax. The newspaper says she took the picture when the castle was hardly visible through the mist. The snap is of a perfectly clear day, perhaps just poetic licence, the surface calm with ripples, there is just a tiny piece of bush visible in the bottom right hand corner. I would estimate the object is fairly close to the shore, and that it is a water bird of some species. The pointed head, curved neck, indicate grebe, cormorant or merganser, there is no obvious body so it is not swan. As far as I know the picture has not been published in any other paper, but a copy was to be sent to the Loch Ness Monster Museum, according to the cutting. I take that to be the Exhibition at Drumnadrochit, perhaps I will have some comment from that end.

Books and Magazines

I have just received the latest Fortean Times. It was very late owing to Bob Rickard, the editor, having a number of personal problems. Nevertheless it was worth the wait, with the usual wide range of subjects. For anyone interested in strange phenomenon Fortean Times is a must. For full details write to them at their new address, BM Fortean Times, London, WC1N 3XX.

Insights into Prehistory. Michael Baran, an American member sent me a copy of his new book. While I realise the theories presented may not meet everyone's approval, it is an interesting book. Michael believes that the people of Atlantis and Lemuria learned to tap the tremendous force of earth core gravitational energy, and that the same energy brought the destruction of the two civilisations. After the cataclysms Cro Magnon man emerged from the underworld. This underworld is important in Michael's theories. He believes that there are subpolarian concavities and branching water-containing recesses extending through the earthcrust. These water courses are inhabited by plesiosaur-like animals, Nether Saurians. Loch Ness, along with the other lakes worldwide that are reported to be the homes of strange water creatures, are all connected into this system. Thus making the solving of the problem, very difficult according to Michael. He has researched old writings, and folklore, from many parts of the world, and he considers he has found a great deal that supports his ideas. I know these ideas are not everyone's, but any member who would like a copy should write to, Exposition Press, 325 Rabro Drive, Box 2120, Smithtown, N.Y. 11787, price is \$7.00, plus \$1.50.

Just to hand a new book by Bob Rickard and John Michell, *Living Wonders, mysteries and curiosities of the animal world*. This is a well illustrated book dealing with a very wide range of subject, of a Fortean nature. It is divided into four parts, part one, *Cryptozoology*, part two, *Hints of Teleportations*, part three *Wonderful Creatures*, part four, *Controversies and Curiosities*. These four parts are sub-divided into forty sub-headings as varied as, *Neo-Dinosaurs*, *Avian Abductions*, *Ape Men*, *The Lost Australians*, and *The Kraken Wakes*. This last category covers *Sea Serpents and Lake Monsters*, including *Loch Ness*. The information given on *Ness*, *Champlain*, and others, is full and correct. Using this as a guide, the book is very comprehensive and worthwhile. The book is published by *Thames and Hudson Ltd.*, price £8.95 hardback.

Joe Zarzynski sent me word of issue number 82, of the magazine *The Unexplained*. In it Peter Costello has an article on *American Lake Monsters*. One of the illustrations is the picture taken by Sandra Mansi in 1977, Joe points out that this has been printed reversed.

He also sent me the press handout for a new novel by Jeffrey Konvitz, it is titled *'Monster' (A Tale of Loch Ness)*. The plot supposes that oil is found under *Loch Ness*, two industrialists are determined to extract it, but they are opposed by a mixed group of local people, and *Nessie*, "the infamous, majestic *Loch Ness* monster who rears her mighty head, wreaking death and destruction on all those who threaten her domain". Sorry about that, perhaps it is an indication of the general tone of the novel. For those among us who collect all types of *Nessie* bric-a-brac, it is published in America by *Ballantine Books* at \$3.500.

There was also a little news of work on *Lake Champlain*. In 1981 Joe received 21 reports of sightings at his office, but so far this year the animals have been keeping a very low profile.

Proposed Trips

Two members have expressed ideas for possible expeditions. John Negus wrote to suggest that it may be possible to organise a coach trip to the loch, either camping there or staying in inexpensive accommodation. This would help to combat the high cost of travel, and maybe enable some members to visit the loch who otherwise could not afford to. John lives in Bath and offers to organise such a trip if there is enough response. Coach leaving Bristol and picking up at other locations as necessary. Anyone interested? Please contact me and I will pass letters on.

Peter Macfarlane (Doug), who was one of the members I met at the loch this year, has a suggestion at the other end of the price range. He wonders if there are any members who fancy clubbing together to hire the *Caley Cruiser 'New Atlantis'* for a week, or more. This would give members the chance to be on the water and to use sonar equipment. Any members interested should contact Doug at 14 Auchen Maid Drive, Largs, Ayrshire, KA30 9JJ.

On a similar theme, I had word from Douglas Strathie of Falkirk, who, with his family, has visited a number of the 'monster' lochs around Scotland. While at *Loch Ness* they hired a cruiser from *Fort Augustus* for the weekend. He says it was a marvellous experience, well worth the £30 per day. They had travelled as far as the new moorings at the *Clansman Hotel*, on the first day. On the second day they had gone back to *Urquhart Bay*, where they were fortunate enough to meet up with some of the *LNMP* team, including *Adrian Shine*, and were shown around the boat and the sonar gear.

Well that is another Nessletter, thank you for your letters, ideas, and support. Please keep them coming, after all you are NIS. My address, R.R. Hepple, Huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham. Tel: Wearhead 359. Subscriptions, U.K. £2.50, North America \$9.00. Rip.

Further tribute to Norman Collins, from David James.

"When Dick Fitter, Peter Scott and I were thinking of setting up the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau to carry on the work started by Mrs Constance Whyte, I wrote a coat-trailing article for The Field, which both summarised her findings and my own interviews with her prime witnesses and others I had dug up for myself. By chance, the day after this was published I was one of a group of M.P.s being entertained to lunch by A.T.V. in view of impending T.V. legislation. Before we went in to eat, Norman, whom I had never met, said he had changed the seating arrangements, since he had just read my article and wanted to discuss the matter further. It may be doubted whether the lunch had a profound effect on the future of Independent Television, but it certainly did on our fortunes, since he became first Chairman of our Board and moreover, at his instigation, A.T.V. financed our first two tentative season's work.

Norman was a man of wide interests--publisher, successful novelist, Director of the B.B.C. Overseas Programmes in 1944, and first Controller of B.B.C. Television, and then the founder of I.T.V. Outside his profession, he was involved, usually in a commanding position with the National Playing Fields Association, the Adoption Committee for the Aid of Displaced Persons, the Council for Nature, the Sadlers Wells Foundation, the National Book League, the English Stage Society and the Central School for Speech and Drama. Yet it may be doubted whether anything was closer to his heart than Loch Ness, since he was a considerable naturalist and ornithologist in his own right.

But it is as a friend that I shall ever remember him. Particularly during the early years, the Bureau had its fair share of controversy and there were those who were actively hostile; but with Norman on one's side, one could be assured of constant wisdom, sympathy and support and long after the Bureau handed on the torch to others he remained in constant touch. Although he did not live to see the creatures identified, we owe it largely to him that monster-searching became a reputable pastime and that there are recognised research groups working in Loch Ness, Lake Champlain in the U.S. and Lake Okanagan in Canada and that their work is being increasingly recognised by scientists of international repute."