

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE
 NESSLETTER 125
 OCTOBER '94 (MARCH '96)

RITA GOULD

At the end of NIS124 I said I wanted to include a piece in explanation. Very shortly after NIS 123 went out I had a telephone call from a very irate lady, Rita Gould. She had taken exception to my remarks about her. Also, she said, friends had been in touch to say they thought I'd made her look a fool. I will say now, I had no such intention, and apologise if that is how it came out. I was, perhaps, too anxious to use a remark by Steve Feltham as an example of how careful we reporters/hunters/researchers must be. Over the years I have produced the Nessletters I have been aware of how delicate the line is between various viewpoints. I have endeavoured not to antagonize anyone and present all views and give all free access to put their ideas to the NIS members. During our long conversation I was able to placate Rita and offered to include either a piece of my own, or something she could send me, in the next Nessletter, to set matters right. I was also worried that not only was Rita annoyed with me, but also Steve. I think I was able to put Rita's mind at ease that, if there was a fault, it was mine. Jealousy was mentioned, as a reason to belittle other's efforts at the loch. I accept that over the years some researchers have been very possessive about the loch and their own findings/theories, being very jealous of anyone else doing anything there. I also accept that my chances of obtaining 'the' evidence, only spending two weeks annually at the loch, are remote. 'Cat in Hell's Chance', is a saying that comes to mind. I want someone to get 'the' evidence, I do not mind which of the many it may be. Choose from Alastair, Andreas, Adrian, Doug, Richard, Rita, Steve, Tony among the regular watchers (sorry if I have missed you...), or any one of the vast numbers of visitors that Loch Ness attracts. The important point, to my mind, is that it must be irrefutable. A piece of video tape or film, a skin sample (!!), leaving no room for questions or ifs and buts. That is what we require.

As a result of the telephone call and my offer, I received a long letter from Arthur Mills, Rita Lorraine-Gould's co-researcher at Loch Ness, also her photographer. I then received a short letter from Rita telling me that Arthur, her partner, had written and thanking me for the opportunity to reply. A little later Rita telephoned, she said perhaps I should not include Arthur's letter and just to leave matters as they were.

However I feel that I should present Rita's credentials and try to explain my remarks. Arthur said Rita has been visiting the loch for over forty years and has taught him all the moods and changes of light and water and how deceptive these can be. They know every inch of the area. Rita works full time in the research of anomalous phenomena, working with many branches of the media, here and abroad. She is a prolific writer, under a pseudonym. Is a university graduate and has been through the Royal College of Music. Arthur said he knows this is nothing to do with Loch Ness, but it shows we are dealing with a very clever and nice lady.

I said that initial impression was of someone very keen but liable to allow enthusiasm to carry her away, and that was a cause for concern. That remark, as much as anything upset Rita and Arthur. I am very sorry it did, and as I said earlier perhaps I was too keen to illustrate a point. That is, we have gradually had much of the meagre stock of photographic evidence explained away over recent years. We always fall back on the mass of eye-witness evidence. Therefore we must be as sure as is possible that what we present or accept is beyond reproach.

Now let me tell of two cases of over enthusiasm I have carried with me through the years. Both were by very respected persons in the Loch Ness mystery saga. In 1969 I was on my two week holiday with the Loch Ness Investigation. September it would be, it was late afternoon, weather dull, loch surface steely grey with small waves. A few of us were by the watch caravan enjoying a chat with one of the early Loch Ness pioneers. He no longer came on expedition but, when at the loch, used to pop into

Achnahannet H.O. whenever passing. A car tore into the car park, the driver, a tourist, jumped out and in obvious excitement ran to tell us he was sure he had seen something underwater close to the shore by the milepost, as he drove from Drumnadrochit. We ran onto the camera platform and looked up the loch. The milepost, one of those set up for John Cobb's water-speed record attempts, is on the water-line at the foot of a steep headland and stands out clearly. It is a mile away as the other is on the shore below Achnahannet. We are some 250 feet above the water, but at a mile all that can be seen is a steel grey surface reflecting the grey sky. The tourist points to an area, saying it was along there. Then our visitor becomes excited, almost jumps up and down with it, saying he is sure he can see 'something underwater'. A crew member has the camera, with 1000mm lens, trained on the area and slowly shakes her head. I am certain there is no way anyone can see under the surface, but our visitor remained very excited for a long time. As I said he was an early LNI member, a fishing correspondent, with years of experience of Loch Ness and other waters, as well as the author of books on the subject, very much respected. When you experience something like that, first hand of a very respected Loch Ness veteran, it makes you very careful about sighting reports.

The other experience was in 1970, or perhaps '71, late August. I took a L.N.I. van from H.O. along to the Strone camera station, which was on top of Basil Carey's garage, to bring the equipment and crew in. There was no longer photographic light, although the sun was setting into Glen Urquhart. The main loch was calming after being rough most of the day. Urquhart Bay was very calm and dark, like a sheet of black glass, or so it seemed. The crew said that nothing had been seen, but that it had been a strange watching day, as if something could happen at any moment. We put the gear in the van, then walked through the garden to the roadside to have a last look at the bay. One of the local residents was with us, one who had lived in the area most of her life, and had had a number of good sightings. Once again someone whom I have great respect for. As we stood quietly watching the water, she pointed and said, 'there in the river mouth, something flapping'. Sure enough there was a regular flap/flash off the mouth of the River Coilte. Was there something there at last? She said yes it must be, becoming excited, that must be it's flippers paddling away. I could see what she was seeing, it was strange, slow steady flashes about two or three seconds apart. I could see nothing breaking the surface, no splashing, surface almost black, then a flash of light. We watched for a little while, she was very excited. I, and the others were puzzled and also beginning to think we were witnessing something unusual. The flashes continued, in the same place. If it was the monster paddling along why hadn't they moved? Then I saw what it was. A series of smooth, quite large waves, a swell. Originating in the main body of the loch, coming round Castle Point and losing the driving force of the wind, they were dying away as they progressed across the bay. Becoming smooth and low, running into the inner bay, they did not show as they passed below us. It was only as they reached a point off the inner shore the sunlight reflected briefly from the top of each one. Very impressive. I was/am sure that was what we were seeing and said so. But the explanation was turned down and she remained certain she was seeing the monster's flippers. There have been other instances, when I have seen tourists get excited over something fairly normal, but that is understandable.

I have made much of these two accounts and used too much space, but I am trying to illustrate how my outlook on the loch has been formed over the years. It was very disturbing to witness two people whom I thought much of, who were respected as good experienced eye-witnesses, allow themselves to be carried away by enthusiasm. I know how easily it can happen, so I take every opportunity to warn against it. My remarks about Rita caused offence, I am very sorry. Roads to Hell paved with good intentions, and all that.

SIGHTINGS

The Inverness Courier of Friday 8th March '96 carried an account of something seen in the loch, by two groups of Abriachan children and their bus driver. At about 8.15am, the previous morning, Jimmy Burnett driving a

mini-bus operated by Drumnadrochit based Loch Ness Tours, was coming down the hill from Abriachan onto the main road. He reported, 'I'm always looking out at the loch and as I came down the hill I definitely saw something in the loch. His first run is pupils for Charleston Academy, on the outskirts of Inverness. Then twenty minutes later he takes children to the Dochgarroch Primary School. He said, 'whatever it was, it was still in the water as I took the second run at about 8.40. I stopped the bus and the children all had a look. Although it was a good distance away, there was a ripple in the water and a hump was visible.' He has been driving along the lochside for 30 years but this was the first time he had seen something that could have been Nessie. Eleven year old Eilidh Barr, one of the children on the minibus, was among those who saw something in the loch. She said when the driver stopped the bus he pointed towards Dores. They saw a single hump in the middle of some ripples. There was no head to be seen, but, being high up the hill they did have a good view of the loch. Patricia Green, head teacher Dochgarroch Primary, was not a witness herself, but is sure her pupils saw some type of creature.

I usually report these sightings and leave members to come to their own conclusions, but just a comment or two. The old favorite explanation, boat wake, comes to mind. However the height above the surface should have made it obvious it was a boat wake. Also as Jim twice saw something in more or less the same place, 20 minutes apart, I do not think it was a boat wake as it would have travelled some distance in that time. Even though that time span alone is a bit off-putting. Bearing in mind what I have already written in this Nessletter. Jim has 30 years experience of observing the loch, as he drives along, should know all the various pit-falls leading to misinterpretation. This is an interesting report.

One of our members, Tony Grice from Cupar, Fife, visited the loch for a couple of days in March, travelling up on the 7th. He met Steve Feltham when he got there and in conversation was told there had been a sighting a few days earlier. Steve said, John, a local fisherman, told him he and a friend had been standing on the shore, near Fort Augustus, and had seen something strange. It was a bow wave, of the sort a near-surface submarine would make, about a mile away across the loch, with salmon jumping from the water in front of it. Apart from the salmon nothing was seen above the water. No further details.

In April another of our members, John Holmes, from St Austell, was staying in Foyers. Late afternoon on the 23rd, he was between Dores and Inverfariagaig when he took a piece of video. He was looking down onto a very slow moving vee-wake. He did not see anything on the surface and supposes it could have been a large salmon, or perhaps a seal, just below the surface. He said it is funny, really, in all the years he has been visiting Loch Ness, that was the closest he had been to seeing something odd.

Another, newer, NIS member David McDonald, from Ballbrack Eire, visited the loch with his girlfriend in June '95. While having a drink in an Inverness Hotel, they fell into conversation with a local lady in her mid-30s. She told them, in early May '94 she had been driving from Inverness to Drumnadrochit. It was about 8.30 in the morning and she had just passed the Clansman Hotel. She noticed a large black hump in the water about 200 metres from her side of the loch. Quickly pulling over she got out of the car. The hump was stationary in the water, but then started to rotate to the side and that was when she noticed a triangular shaped flipper for a few seconds. It submerged leaving a few large ripples on the surface. She told them the episode lasted approximately one minute and she was sure it was an animal, because it had a shiney-like appearance on the body like a seal. She said it was too big to be a seal and could not find an easy explanation.

Douglas Bell, and Cdr. Bill Bellars, (OBE, RN), are two of our members who wrote after I said (NIS123) that I was not sure if Father Gregory had seen anything himself. Bill included newspaper cutting of the report. In October 1972, Father Gregory, with a friend in the Abbey grounds, noticed a thrashing in the water some 250 yards out. He said the monster's head broke the surface and reared up at least eight feet. It was in view, with familiar hump, for at least 15 seconds before it disappeared below the water at speed.

COUSINS

In December '95 Jeff Rumble, Truro, wrote with news of, as he put it, our old chum Morgawr. 'Seen this time by a resident of Falmouth who reported the creature to be off Rosemullion Head. About 20 feet long, small head and long neck, thick and bulky body, tapering to the tail. In fact, very similar to Sheila Bird's sighting 10 years ago. Local 'experts' consider the warm weather to be a factor, September.'

In March '96 Paul Thomas, from Avon, sent me a short note about a local press report of a strange sea beast, with a 'sinuous' neck. During the first week in March it had been seen off Chesil Beach, in Dorset. As he was going to Portland Bill he made some enquiries, with little success. An artist, painting on the cliff tops, said he knew nothing of it, but had seen people with cameras and binoculars around. In the local inn, Paul's questions were either ignored or greeted with hilarity. From what he could ascertain, there have been some sightings but it was all a bit vague. It seems it is rather unusual for such a beast to be sighted in March, it is usually summer months round that way. Paul says it seems weird why some people treat such reports as a joke. It is a bit way-out, but not that funny.

NEW SOCIETY

For some time one of our newer members, Richard Carter, has been writing to me. He had ideas to form a group or something similar, of Loch Ness hunters. This has culminated with this press release.

THE LOCH NESS SOCIETY

Following the release of the Hollywood film LOCH NESS, a new society has been formed to further investigate and conserve Loch Ness itself and the 'Nessie' mystery.

The new society aims to bring together all the thousands of people who visit and share an interest in the Loch. It intends to launch further and more up to date techniques in the search to solve the mystery of the monster. It will also involve itself in the many environmental and conservation issues around the shores of Loch Ness.

There will be an annual expedition to the Loch in the desire to re-kindle the spirit of the old Loch Ness Investigation Bureau expeditions of the 60s and 70s. In those days thousands of people from all age groups and backgrounds took part in camera watches, boat surveillance and collating the many eye witness reports.

This new society has been formed by Richard A Carter and Ian Kelloway who among many others have been interested in the Loch and it's mysteries for many years. They have become aware of the lack of organisation to which people can relate and partake in organised activity and which can update current information. It is a shame that there has been less and less promotion of Loch Ness, which attracts millions of visitors each year, and it is our intention to reverse that trend.

The address given is; 34 Weston Crescent, Horfield Common, Bristol, BS7 8UT. This is not Richard's, but his phone number is given as; 01484 844450.

It will be interesting to see what response Richard gets. He is overstating the number of members involved in the LNI expeditions. At it's peak LNI membership reached just over a thousand (1970). Of these no more than 100, possibly nearer 150, volunteers would take part during a season. Being at Achmahannet H.O., albeit in elderly caravans, with a group of like minded people led to the LNI spirit, comrades in adversity. To me the initial attraction of the LNI and expedition, apart from the feeling that I was doing something to help, was being able to use a 35mm movie camera with a 1000mm telephoto lens. I think Richard has overlooked the continuing work done by the Loch Ness Project and the volunteers that work on it's expeditions. I know their first aim is not monster hunting, but if anyone wishes to stand a chance of seeing the Loch Ness Monsters, where better than working on Loch Ness.

Another Nessletter finished, as usual thank you for being members and please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed. My address:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Bishop

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