

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE
 NESSLETTER 127.
 February '95 (Sep' '96).

N.I.S AT THE LOCHSIDE

Our members have been very active at the loch, here are some of their reports. Going back to June '95 to begin.

A short letter from Nick Molloy, of South Glamorgan, he and a friend had visited the loch at the beginning of June '95. Nick has spent four years at University in Scotland, and was determined he would visit the loch before he left. They walked completely round the loch in just over two days, sleeping rough on the loch shore. When I first read that I thought, that cannot be done, you cannot get right round the shoreline, I know of many places where the shore is impassable, the mountains falling sheer into the water. Nick must have kept as close as possible to the water using the roads, going down to the shore where possible. It must have been an exciting enterprise. Nick said they had an incident during their first night's camp. Just as it was getting light, 3.30 in the morning, the loch was totally flat calm, something appeared and swam past their camp fire about 30 or so yards off shore, before diving without a trace. Still quite dark and devoid of detail, the photo Nick took failed to develop. In any event he said, 'Our sighting was more likely a seal or otter than a small plesiosaur.'

Taking up the Nessletter theme of how important correct identification is Nick enclosed a photocopy enlargement of another photo. It shows a wake left by a large submerged creature as it travels up the loch. A head is just visible at the front of a submerged body. At least that is what he has managed to convince a few people, before explaining it is a boat wake from a craft that passed five minutes before.

Colin White, from Basildon, wrote in December '95. He has been interested in the mystery since the late '70s, and finally got to visit the loch in June '95. He and his wife rented a cottage for a week. Overlooking the loch, just along from Urquhart Castle, with excellent views across the bay. But right on the A82, so noisy with all the traffic during the day. He was able to walk along to the castle each evening and do some serious watching, often completely alone until the light faded totally around midnight. He did not detect anything unusual but says the 'atmosphere' he felt while watching alone helped to boost his enthusiasm. They spent the days touring the area, enjoying the heatwave and calm conditions. Got to Dores one day and had an interesting chat with Steve Feltham, while soaking up the sun and view. He also had a long conversation with a local lady about a sighting reported a few weeks earlier. Colin said it was a very enjoyable stay, also strange how familiar everything seemed having only read about it and seen a video or two.

Brian James, from N.Walsham Norfolk, wrote in April '95 about his trip to the loch. His wife, daughter and himself spent from 19th to 24th August '95 at the Scaniport campsite on the Inverness to Dores road. Spending most of the time on the shore opposite Urquhart Castle. He did two mornings, 4.30/8.00am watching from opposite the Clansman. The weather was amazing he says, non stop sun. At 4.30am the loch was full of cloud with dawn sun streaming through and deer coming out of the mist in the road, very poetic! (Makes you sick doesn't it, Rip). Nothing seen.

Brian suggests that as a deep water dwelling animal used to very low light conditions, their eyes may have evolved great light sensitivity for catching prey in near darkness. The reluctance to surface, to experience painful high light intensity near the surface is probably only overcome by hunger. By a large food source (salmon?) running near the surface for short periods of the year. He says it would be interesting to use infra-red light intensifiers over the loch at night to ascertain if they surface more regularly under low-light conditions.

They next travelled over to Loch Morar. It was the first time Brian had been there, he assumed it would be totally isolated and peaceful. Then

they hit the Morar Bypass!! Many house were being built at the west end of the loch, with a great influx of boats. He thinks within a few years it will be a flourishing marina. He finds it somewhat depressing, as he had always regarded the Highlands as the last remaining place where one could get lost and not see anybody for days. Perhaps further north he hopes. But he also realizes the local population needs work and income, tourism helps to provide this. Mallaig needs a thriving business community for the same reason, therefore good access is needed, but balanced with the beautiful landscape. Brian asks, why massive road building schemes? He says 'A transport network is already there in place, called the railway!'

They found Loch Morar absolutely beautiful. A wonderful dream-like quality with heather covered mountains rising in the south, out of the mist. They intended spending a week there. He had planned watching, early morning, from the mountain path, northside. But a change in the weather, to rain, put an end to the trip. Their tent proved to be faulty and they were washed out. They gradually made their way south. Brian said they do not plan to get back to the loch until '97, but looked forward to it.

Adrian Smith, from Crawley, visited the loch and took a dive in the submarine. He went down at 11am on the 21st August '95. After going out towards the middle of the loch the pilot took them to the bottom at about 400/450 feet. Adrian said it went black very quickly, even with the outside lights the visisibility was still only a few feet. In the rear of the submarine looking down through the large port in the floor it was very daunting to have 400feet of water beneath him, and the monster may be down there!! It took about twenty minutes to reach the bottom. Then the pilot slowly took them up the side wall of the loch giving a commentary of the geological history of the loch. The dive lasted about an hour. Unfortunately they did not see the monster, or any fish, just plankton that the lights picked out.

As the submarine was soon to leave Loch Ness and go to Wales, Llyn Tegid (Bala Lake), Adrian thought it was perhaps his last chance for a dive. He had also seen reports of the submarine picking up strange noises, possibly animal. In late July '95 newspapers reported that mysterious noises had been heard in the loch. Chief Pilot, Alan Whitfield told them, 'We were diving in the north plateau when for 20 to 30 minutes we heard grunting and groaning noises. People manning our surface communications system also heard the noises and both groups had no idea what it was'. Alan has worldwide diving experience and is familiar with with the sounds made by dolphins, whales, plankton and other boats and said he had heard nothing similar before. Bill Bolton, the other pilot, reported, they had first heard the noises in the same area a few weeks previous and ignored them. They had a laugh about it at first, but now had on three or four occasions heard the noises in an area of about a square mile. These noises remain a mystery. As the submarine was not operating in Loch Ness this year, there was no one to go on listening underwater.

Back to Adrian. He has visited Loch Ness twice, first in '93 then '95 when he was there for five days. He found the piece in the Nessletter about mistaken identity interesting. He uses a pair of 8x30 binoculars when watching and finds them adequate. He had a nasty accident on the road home. Tangling with a lorry on the A66, nearly writing his car off. Fortunately he was alright, and car has now been repaired.

Brief note with subscription from John Cooper, Oxford. He had visited the loch for three days during late August '95 as a sightseer. He said the camping field at Upper Foyers is now closed to all but small cars, campers (vans?) are kept out by means of a 5/6 foot hieght bar. He nearly went to 'the display' (forgot name of village) at south end of north side of loch, but was horrified at admission charge, so went on his way instead.

Long standing member Joan Dexter, of Newark, sent word of her two day visit to the loch. She, and husband, stayed on the quiet side of the loch, at the Foyers Bay Hotel. Which they certainly recommend. They drove all round the loch, stopping briefly at various vantage points, cameras ever

ready. The weather was fine and quite warm, though a bit breezy, so not ideal viewing conditions. Joan said it was no real surprise they had no sightings. Which is perhaps as well she feels, as being Tim Dinsdale's cousin some may not have believed her! Their daughter had recommended that if they had not time to go round both exhibitions at Drumnadrochit, to choose 'the original' as Tim talked them through his film. The girl selling tickets had never heard the name Dinsdale! That, plus the 30p cost of postcards in the shop, compared to 15p everywhere else, left them with something of a nasty taste. Joan said, 'Solely a money making concern as opposed to the promotion of the monster, educationally, scientifically, et al?' However, the exhibition of pictures of early loch transport by steamers and motor vehicles, and the Cobb water speed record story were very interesting.

It had been 31 years since Joan had been to the loch and she found much changed. More cars and people, and more litter. She wonders why folk do not take their disposable barbecues, drink cans, etc home with them? Fort Augustus had changed most of all. The new Heritage Centre at the Abbey was excellent and they left it feeling they had learned more about Scotland's history in a couple of hours, than in a life time. They had seen their very first red squirrel, but no monster, just wishing they could have stayed longer everywhere.

Another short note in with subscription, from Richard Phelps, of Sidcup. He had a week at the loch in November '95. He had no sightings although the weather was extremely good. One of the days was warm enough to watch the loch in just a thin shirt. He met up with Steve Feltham and had some good discussion with him, over a pint. He said he hoped to be up again over the Easter weekend and possibly later in the summer. As yet I have had no further word from him.

One of our newer members, Tony Grice, lives near Cupar in Fife. This puts him about 150 miles from the loch. Taking note of a promising weather forecast they set off at 6am on Friday 15th December '95, reaching Fort Augustus about 9.30am. There was no wind and a covering of hoar frost over everything. The Abbey was open but little was happening, and the Gregorian chants wafting around were piped. So they pushed on north. Came to the campsite at Invermoriston, and despite the large plastic Nessie in the corner, decided they would like to stay there later, perhaps May/June. At Drumnadrochit they visited the 'official' Loch Ness Exhibition. Tony had seen the old one and found this much better than expected. They wandered into the hotel for a snack. Overhearing part of a conversation by someone briefing a media rep on the exhibition, the loch and the coordination of university projects there, they presumed it to be Adrian Shine.

On again, to take a few shots across the loch, using a 500mm lens, to compare with the same scenes through a standard lens. By now a very light NE wind was disturbing the calm loch surface. Into Inverness, then down to Dores, about 3pm and turning dusk. Steve Feltham's van was there but no sign of himself. In the Inn for a little refreshment they were told he would not be far away. They walked along the shore out to Tor Point, with the unrivalled view to the south. No sign of Steve. They were home again by 7pm after a good day out.

I have turned an envious shade of green writing that. In 1971 I was at the loch from January and the quiet and calm of some winter days endow the whole place with an unwordly feel.

Tony wrote again on the 9th of March '96. He had just returned from the loch after staying there for a couple of nights. Arriving around noon he met Steve at Dores. With a loaned, small cruiser type of boat Steve had been doing some echo-sounding. Tony asked if Steve could recommend good vantage points for watching. Steve suggested Fort Augustus, as there had been a recent sighting report. I reported that and briefly Tony's trip in NIS125. Anyway Tony stayed at the Foyers Hotel that night. He did some calibrating shots of water fowl in Foyers Bay, before sunset, with camcorder (x8 mag.) and camera with 500mm lens. From about 100 feet above the loch the birds were clearly just halfway across the bay. About 400m horizontally distant from him. He says it will be interesting to see just

how small they turn out. The next day Tony read of the reported sightings by the mini-bus driver and school children (NIS125). He said he is quite impressed by reports from local people who are not specifically looking for Nessie, and in spite of that take a second long look, knowing what they are seeing is not the normal run of things. For his second night he stayed in the Abbey, Fort Augustus. Very good value for money, he says, and very well looked after.

He says he is going to undertake a scaling exercise. Using the video-camera and still camera with 500mm lens he will take shots of a 1.5mt long white painted piece of wood from 9mt, 35mt and 500mt. He can then measure image size on TV screen, and projected slides of a monitored size, then plot graphs of image size against distance. When viewing the loch from reasonable elevation, he says you can say approximately how far an object is away, one third or halfway across the loch for example. Using an OS map, distance can be measured, then applied to the graph. The image size can then be compared directly with that of the piece of wood. He says not absolutely accurate but it could prevent gross errors of size estimation.

When he returned home there was some strange news awaiting. A friend of his wife's hearing where he had gone, mentioned there was a 19th century diary in her family, kept by a relative who had been a vicar. Apparently there is an entry about him seeing a 'sea-serpent' in Loch Morar. Tony says he will try to follow this up and keep us informed.

Received a short note from Wayne Morris, of Snodland Kent. Telling us he was to be on a boat on Loch Ness for a week 25th May to 1st June. No more information but he said he would inform us of how things went. No further word as yet.

Letter from James Kitwood, of Leeds, he was at the loch for the same week as Wayne. He stayed, with his girlfriend, in a self catering cottage at Borlum Farm by Drumnadrochit. His usual strategy is to watch the water from dawnish (when he could force himself out of bed, he said) until 9.30am and then from 8.00pm until too dark for the video-camera he has, a Hitachi with x36 zoom. He did not film anything conclusive, but had an interesting experience on the Monday. He was watching the loch from the car park at the Dones Inn, when he saw something dark in the water, and took some film. He says that due to the distance, what he took appears, to him, similar to the Tim Dinsdale pictures of 1968. However there is no wake and it appears the object's cross-section changes during the film. Giving the impression the object may be moving around. James says that he compares it to the Dinsdale pictures mainly because it is a black grainy object filmed at a distance. He guesses the distance of his object is about 200mt, although he knows the Dinsdale pictures were at best part of a mile. After 30 seconds of filming he went shooting along the road past the salmon farm entrance to see if he could get closer. No surprise, he says, that the surface was calm again when he got there. He could not hazard a guess at size. He went on to say that to be fair he had seen some ducks close to the shore earlier the same morning. Feeling that if someone insisted that what he had seen was a duck or a group of ducks, he could not put a good case against their point.

I do not know if James has seen the film taken by Tim, or if he has just seen the still taken from the movie. I think perhaps the latter. I have not seen what he took but it does not sound much like Tim's film. I have said before in Nessletters, I was privileged to see it projected in 35mm cinema format. It is a large moving object. Very impressive, if only all our members could see it in this format. James said that he estimated a distance of 200mt, then rushed off beyond the salmon farm. That would have taken him even further away along the shore from the object. However it is good to note someone having moments of excitement. Also to know that as excited as he was he was able to provide a possible ordinary explanation, as things calmed down. As did Nick Molloy related earlier. There have been too many obvious mis-interpretations over past months.

James also had an interesting talk to a lady where they were staying. He was apologizing in case he was disturbing her as he was going out in

the car very early, also why he was doing it. She told him that 30 years ago her husband had seen something huge in Urquhart Bay, which he could not identify. More interestingly, she told him that the day before her son had been fishing on the loch and had returned home with a story. While out in the boat something black had come up by it and disappeared almost immediately. James had hoped to speak to him, but found they had gone the next day. He understands they own Borlum Farm but have other properties, so spend little time there. I am not sure about that, I understand Borlum is owned by the MacDonald-Haigs and they seem to be around most of the time, with the farm as well as the riding for the disabled facility there. James finished by saying he hopes to get back to the in November or December.

Almost up to date now. One of our newer member, Neil Smithies of Chorley Lancs, sent word of his latest trip. He and a friend were there for three days in late August '96. They stayed at the Abbey, Fort Augustus, watching from the jetty in the early morning. Then moving round and up into the mountains above the Horse Shoe scree to get a spectacular, almost ariel, view of Loch Ness. They later travelled on to Dores to visit Steve Feltham, and enjoy a pint with him. Returning to the Abbey to do the evening watch from the jetty, with haggis, chips and pickled eggs. (How's that for style?) Neil says Sunday morning was amazing. The loch was as calm as he has ever seen it. The reflections in the water were almost indistinguishable from the real thing. Perfect monster spotting weather, but no joy. Neil says it was a wonderful few hours before the rest of the world got up and spoilt the tranquility.

I am pleased to note that some of our members have tried the facilities at the Abbey, finding them satisfactory. When I saw what was being done at the Abbey in '94 I suggested that it could make a useful base for loch watchers.

Another of our newer members, Richard Bateman, from Croydon, wrote with news of a 'hearing'! With his girlfriend he visited the loch from 1987 to '91, business pressure then kept him away until '96. They stay at the Inchnacardoch Hotel Lodge Hotel, in a room overlooking the loch. It was in '91 they had their strange 'sighting'. It was just after dawn and the loch was totally calm and quiet, not a boat or person in sight or earshot. Not even the bread lorries had started rumbling past the hotel. They were watching from the open window of their room, which has a sort of vee-shaped section of the loch in view. The base of the vee being Inchnacardoch Bay. Suddenly there was an enormous 'Kersplunk' noise from just out of their range of view north of the area, as if a huge object had been dropped in the loch. Richard said they thought they were imagining it, until large waves started washing up on either shore. Initially about a foot or so high, even the lapping of the waves in the stillness of the morning made quite a noise. They took almost ten minutes to subside and the loch become totally calm again. They kept expecting to see a boat come into view or children or whatever, but the area remained quiet until the inevitable lorries started to run.

They had watched for about half an hour prior to the incident, and no boats had passed or been heard. If it had been a boat just out of sight dropping something very large into the water, they felt sure they would have heard voices, or the boat moving away or something. Richard said, 'I can only guess at the size of object that could cause a noise then a disturbance in the water like that, but we're not talking salmon!' He cannot remember the exact date, which he says is a shame as perhaps somebody else had seen something for cross reference.

Over the years there have been many sighting reports from the Inchnacardoch Bay area. In this instance perhaps two from the early years of the century are most appropriate, being land sightings! In 1912, no closer date given, a group of five or six children were walking along the shore by the bay, when they saw a very strange animal cross it and vanish into the water. They compared it to a camel, but smaller, long neck, humped back, fairly long legs and a sandy yellow colour. In 'The Monster's of Loch Ness' Roy Makal says the incident was reported by one of the

children twenty years later, as a childhood memory. That would be when the monster made news in the 1930s. He suggested it could be a case of mistaken identity, but did not offer what animal was misidentified. A similar case is related by Nicholas Mitchell in 'The Loch Ness Story'. Mrs Margaret Cameron, as she was when telling the story, was a teenager in 1919. She with her young sister and two brothers were playing on the shingly beach at Inchnacardoch. It was a warm Sunday afternoon in September. They were waiting for friends, amusing themselves skimming stones over the water, when they heard a loud crackling in the trees on the other side of the little bay, 150 yards across the water. The crackling got nearer, then suddenly, a large creature appeared from the trees and moved down the beach to the water. As it was coming directly at them they could not tell if it had a long or short neck. The body was huge and it moved with the action of a caterpillar as it came out of the trees. With a shiny skin, the colour of an elephant's. At that time as a girl Mrs Cameron had not seen an elephant, but later, when she did, remembered the similar colouring of the other animal. They saw two short, round feet at the front. They thought it may be as long as twenty feet but had not waited to see the tail end appear. They ran home in a state of fright, worried they may be told off, as they had always been told to stay away from the loch because of the 'Water Horse'!

Something like that breasting into the water could create a disturbance similar to that witnessed by Richard. Have the creatures continued to go ashore at Inchnacardoch from time to time for seventy years? It is an intriguing thought. Another question, why?

I did intend to mention sightings this time, as there have been a number of reports. None that really good, being boat wakes in the main. But I have run out of space. Perhaps room to pop this in:

Recently had a letter from Wendy Dinsdale. She has now retired and has started to sort through Tim's office. She says a rather tedious task, as he was a great hoarder. She said it was quite literally just a few days before receiving the last Nessletter, with reference to second hand and out of print books, she came across two boxes of Tim's books. So she has limited numbers of the following books for sale. Loch Ness Monster, paperback; Project Water Horse, hardback; The Story of The Loch Ness Monster, childrens book. She says she does not want to make profit, being happy to let them go at cost plus postage. Which for Loch Ness Monster, would be £10. Write to Wendy at: 17 Blewbury Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks., RG3 5HJ for further details. SAE etc please.

Thank you for being members and especially those who write. Please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed. Also when you are going to the loch let us know, as I suggested in a previous Nessletter a cheap rate call may put you in touch with others up there. Also if you feel like making the side trip to find us, in the centre of Britain, as you travel to or from the loch, you will be made welcome. My address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldsford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel.01388 537359. Subs. U.K.£2.75. N.America \$10.00.
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