

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE  
 NESSLETTER 131.  
 September '95 (Sept '97)

## HOLIDAYS '97

3.30pm Sunday 27th July '97. We arrived at the Abriachan Old Pier, on Loch Ness. We were back to the usual company, after last year, myself, Doris my wife and her sister Audrey. It was good to be back at the water's side, but it was tinged with sadness. I've written 'tinged' but our sadness was much greater than that. We have camped on the Old Pier for 23 years, in the earlier years having our children with us. Over this time the owners of the land, Alistair and Isa Borland, became very dear friends. We saw, on our yearly visits, how their three boys were growing. Alistair was forced to retire early, a few years ago, by heart trouble. He recovered very well from major surgery and seemed in good health, all things considered. He could have me panting as we walked 'up the brae' to their home, Kilianan, Loch Ness side. Last year Isa had been in hospital for a few days, while we at the loch. We visited her and took her shopping, when she was advised not to drive for a while, when she got home. All seemed well. On Sunday 12th Jan' '97 Isa rang us with the very sad news that Alistair had died on the 6th. We talked for a while, and although very upset she did seem alright. We got a card and wrote a letter, posting it on Monday. Isa did not receive our condolences. We were devastated to learn later in the week that she herself had died on Tuesday the 14th. We had lost two very dear friends, only in their mid-60s, very suddenly. As I said, our pleasure at returning to Abriachan was mixed with great sadness, knowing our dear friends were no longer 'up the brae'.

Of their three sons, Neil still lives at, and operates his electrical business from, Kilianan, Loch Ness Side. He rebuilt the original croft house some years ago. I had been in touch with Neil shortly after his loss, to pass on our sympathy. Later I contacted him to ask if it would still be alright for us to camp at the Pier. He told me there was much to be done settling his parents affairs, but things at the Pier were remaining the same for the foreseeable future.

So, after that side-track, there we were arriving at the Pier. We were still settling in when Doug Macfarlane dropped in, with Margaret and son Alan. They were on the way to collect their caravan and set off for home, Largs. Doug told us he had been unable to get his boat on the loch this season, as he had been doing remedial repair work on it. So they had been using their caravan, based at Dochgarroch, and going out to the loch for watching. It was good to see them, even for a short time, nothing much to report but Doug passed on word that he had heard there was a seal in the loch. We could see that Steve Feltham's van was not on the shore at Dores. There was, however, a lot of activity going on in Dores Bay, speed boats with water skiers and jet skis tearing around. The noise from the jet skis was very much like that from motor bikes, and clearly heard right across the loch.

Monday started damp with overall cloud, loch a bit rough. We went into Inverness shopping, then along to Drumnadrochit, Donnies for lunch. Then back to the Pier. After tea we went along to ring home, then made our way to Strone to see Alastair and Sue Boyd. The first of our visits. They had arrived that weekend and were both well. The journey had not taken too much out of Alastair. This was as well, as he had a very tiring couple of days at the loch in June. We had a very nice evening catching up with news and watching the water. The chalet they rent gives a wonderful view over Urquhart Bay, which can often remain calm, even when the main loch is rough. Although there are now three tourist trip boats operating, two from the new marina and one from Temple Pier itself. These must form a procession to and fro across the bay for most of the time. They did so during the time we spent there. Although they do travel steadily, without too much speed, but do disturb a calm surface leaving wakes all over.

Among the topics discussed with Alastair was a trip made to the loch in June. He had first been contacted by Nova TV in early March. Lone Wolf Pictures, director Kirk Wolfinger, were to be at the loch for 3 weeks.

Alastair had been given to understand they were to produce a documentary style programme about the Bob Rines expedition, as well as covering the 25th anniversary of the Academy of Applied Sciences' 'Flipper Pictures'. They were also keen to do a piece on the 'Surgeon's Photograph' and Alastair's findings about it. So they arranged for him to be at the loch for June 22nd to 24th '97. Also there was Richard Smith (researcher journalist, NIS 121 and 124), who was to present the point of view that Alastair's, and David Martin's, findings were unfounded and to try to show that it was not possible to produce the 'Surgeon's Photo' with a model. To his dismay Alastair found the TV people seemed keen to create a confrontational situation between himself and Richard. That is not Alastair's style at all. He also felt that behind the scenes they seemed to favour Richard's view and would have been very happy to be able to prove it. However, they did provide Alastair with another model monster, opposed to the one he had at the loch last year. On the appointed day he went along to the Invermoriston area and spent a long time wearing waders, in icy water, setting it all up. Dicky Raynor worked into the night processing black and white stills taken of it. The results are spectacular. Alastair showed me a range of prints obtained. Among them are pictures that are so close to the 'Surgeon's' that I feel any further doubts about a hoax must be finally answered. It could be argued that to make a model and reproduce the effect of a genuine photograph is feasible. I did write in NIS 128 that I thought the hoaxers were fortunate to get such a good postcard enlargement with the original. I wonder what are the odds of getting a similar result from a genuine photograph?

Alastair said the June trip had been short but very hectic and had taken a lot out of him. Being of such short duration he did not see much of the other activities of the expedition. Many of the Academy personnel from the old days seemed to have been involved, Bob Rines, Charlie Wychoff, Roy Mackal among them. Bob and Charlie had seemed very secretive. I did hear similar reports from other sources. Being told, sometimes the TV camera crew did not know before the previous evening, what was to be done next day. I heard rumours that it was possible they had seen something large with an underwater TV camera. Also that one night a large target had reacted to the sonar they were using, by quickly moving away and diving deeper. Both these are second or even third hand tales. I suppose if there is to be a TV documentary it is reasonable to keep a low profile until release date, to obtain maximum effect from the content.

Early Tuesday was ideal watching weather, mirror calm surface and high cloud. Had a fright about 8.15 when there was a big splash 400 yards out. It had been caused by a dark coloured bird, which I was unable to identify as it flew away. The loch was roughing up as we left to do the touristy thing in Inverness. Around tea time Richard Carter called in. Cameron Turner was with him. We had a good chat. Richard, without his family, was camping at Invermoriston with Cameron. There was no sign of the arrival of anyone from the publicised Enigma Research Society expedition. He told me he had been using a hydrophone and tape recorder he had been loaned by Dicky Raynor.

After heavy rain late on Tuesday night, Wednesday started with a little sun, but soon started to drizzle. The loch was very rough. Mornings like that I can roll my tent flap up and watch from cover. I can see as much surface as my 300mm lens would be useful for. Later we went along to the Abbey at Fort Augustus. There was a Highland Gathering in the grounds. Which was one of four organized monthly, from June onwards, caber tossing, throwing the hammer and other events, stalls and exhibits. Very touristy, certainly drew a crowd, despite the rain, all helping to keep the Abbey viable. Back packer lodge and very reasonable B&B still available there. There is also a boat, 'The Catriona', which runs loch trips from the Abbey pier. As I have said before, the Abbey offers a good base for Monster Hunting. Checked the Canal Pier, but Steve Feltham was not there. Called into Strone, Alastair and Sue, on way back to Abriachan.

Thursday was another rough morning. We just went along to Drumnadrochit and Donnie's for lunch. I was hoping to connect with Adrian Shine (Loch Ness Project) but he was occupied elsewhere, as he had been each time I had tried to find him. Back at the Pier in the afternoon, we

had more visitors. Paul Cowell, his wife and two sons called in. If I remember correctly I first met Paul at the loch in '73, just before the NIS. He was one of our first members. Now living in Dorset, it had been some years since he had visited the loch. In the early days he had lived in Pitlochery, working as an electrician in the theatre. We had a good half hour reminiscing. A little later I became aware that Steve's van was on the shore by the Doras Inn.

Friday, loch rough again, high cloud but dry. We went down the A9 to Moy, for the Field Sports Fair, the hunting shooting and fishing show. It usually falls on the Friday we are going home, so we usually spend some time there then set off south. It was a little strange to return to the lochside after Moy

On Saturday morning Richard Carter called in about 9 o'clock, with a tale from Loch Lochy. Which I will leave for now. Then it was Inverness for shopping. We also went to the museum to have a look at an exhibition of work based on Native American culture. We then made our way out to Doras to see Steve. His van had been on the shore when we left, but he had gone when we arrived. We have enjoyed the game previous years, not 'hunt the monster' it is 'hunt the monster hunter'.

Back at the Pier for the afternoon. There was much activity over in Doras Bay. Speedboats and water skiers, along with jet-skis, tearing about the Bay. The jet-skis, in particular, produce a very intrusive noise which carries a long way over water. It was now clear why Steve had moved on. This activity must be regular summertime weekend behaviour. It was late evening when Dicky Raynor dropped in. He had called on our first evening, but only for a couple of minutes, to say Hi! as he had been away from home for 12 hours that day. He was with us for about an hour and we had a good natter about many things, catfish included. He told me the hydrophone he had loaned to Richard Carter was one from the days of the Loch Ness Investigation, perhaps one of Ike Blonder's, with a few metres of wire linked to an old cassette recorder, with 9v battery. It is always stimulating to discuss Loch Ness, and it's mysteries, with Dicky.

Sunday was a fairly good watching morning, and it was 10 o'clock before the first boat passed. We spent a quiet day at the Pier. It turned out a good day to do so, little wind, sunshine, and the loch surface never rougher than small waves. Early evening, and Richard Carter called in again. He had been in touch with home and his wife was unwell. Richard said he understood it was not serious, but had decided to cut his stay and head for home, just in case. He had been around saying good-byes, and leaving the listening gear at Temple Pier for Dicky. I asked Richard if he knew what had happened to the Enigma Research Society X-expedition. It seems nothing had materialised. Even Richard Askew, the organizer, had not turned up, all very puzzling. Illustrating the problems of trying to put together a large Monster Hunting Expedition, similar to those in the 60s/70s of the Loch Ness Investigation. Over the years I have been sending the Nessletters out, I have, occasionally, asked for reactions to a large organized N.I.S. expedition. General response had been cool, members seem to prefer to do their 'own thing'. Although they all seem very pleased to be able to meet up with other members or other hunters, while at the loch. We had a further bit chat and he was away. Some time later Dicky called again. He brought the hydrophone gear down to see if I wanted to try it for the rest of our stay. But we found that Richard had taken the tape with him, so the gear would not function. We did not have a blank tape between us and as I had only four days left, I decided not to take Dicky's offer, as it would have been a day before I could get a tape.

I asked Dicky if there was any further word about the 'Edward Deep' in Urquhart Bay. He said he understood that Bob Rines had spent time using underwater TV trying to find it, without success. Also that Adrian Shill had been trying, with similar lack of results. Dicky said it was now being suggested that the 'Deep' did not exist. That what was showing as a sonar return from a hole was a spurious sonar signal, possibly a sonar reflectio from the steep loch side wall. It seems the sonar only shows the 'Deep' if the boat approaches the area from a particular direction. I wonder about that, but I am not sonar trained, after all. We await any further developments.

Monday started with loch rough and low cloud almost down to water level. Inverness, and then set off round loch. Lunch in Fort Augustus, very nice sunny day by now. Then, at last, caught up with Steve Feltham, parked on the pier at Canal mouth, spent a couple of hours with him. When we joined Steve Rita Gould and her friend Arthur Mills were there. They now live at 'Shorelands', which is at the northern end of the Inchnacardoch Bay area, with a very good view over the water, although almost at water level. They said they often pop round to see Steve when they see him at the Canal end. That shows the extent of their view. We had time for a short chat, before they left. Rita said it seemed to have been a quiet season, monster-wise. It was just an impression, but did I sense that Rita was perhaps a little disappointed, that having made the big move to live at the loch, Nessie had not popped up for her? It was nice to bump into them again.

Steve looked well, but had trouble with his back. It had been very painful for some months and he has to go to Inverness Hospital, 'Raigmore', for treatment every week. This could explain why one or two NIS members have been unable to connect with him this season. He has been having traction, which he found beneficial. So being Steve, he has rigged up his own system in the van. A length of rope over a rail and a bucket filled with stones, so he can treat himself, between official visits. He is still keenly watching the loch, but has been without his video camera for a little time. It is now fairly elderly and has had a hard life. When it failed Steve sent it away to the makers, (JVC I think). First word was that it was 'dead'. However one of the technicians who has helped Steve before, has a magic touch says Steve, has promised to try to breathe further life into it. He could of course do with a new one, but at the moment finances will not stretch to that. Anyone out there feeling flush and generous?

We talked about sightings. Steve said that of the few reported, there were perhaps one or two that could be credited with any worth. In June there was a tale that two of the American film crew, who at Strone, above Castle Urquhart had one morning, seen a dark object moving quickly in the water, south of the Castle. Steve's understanding is that, it was just fooling around between the pair, that got out of hand. Bystanders heard them and it was taken as fact and publicised.

In early February a family staying at a hotel in Foyers reported seeing something in the loch. An object travelling quickly through the water off Foyers. Said to be in view for about two minutes. Steve told me that on the particular day there was a Force 8 gale blowing. If that is so, the water surface would be too rough for any kind of objective sighting to be made.

Two other rather vague reports Steve had come across, were from March and April. A couple reported two humps appearing opposite Aldourie Castle. Another visitor reported humps in the water in the Foyers area. Without further information and more details, both these reports must be regarded as questionable, perhaps down to boat wakes.

Another report from March could have been a boat wake. However Steve says that Arnold (I've misplaced his surname) who now works in the Steading Bar, Glenurquhart, is a very reliable witness. He spent eight years driving buses from Cannich to Inverness, along the lochside. So should know the loch in all it's moods and the strange waves and wakes it can produce. Arnold reported seeing two humps in the loch, on Wednesday 21.3.97, just north of the Clansman Hotel. Given his background and experience, this one seems good.

A day later (22nd March '97) Richard White, a travelling petfood salesman, who has lived in Inverness for many years, saw a number of dark humps in the water about 200 yards from the shore. At about 11.30am he was travelling along the Dones/Foyers road, almost opposite Castle Urquhart. He noted a disturbance on the surface, which was calm with ripples, with a number of dark humps in it. Richard took 8 or 9 photographs of this. Steve has seen all these pictures and they are undoubtedly of a boat wake. There is however, a 'but'. In one of the prints, there is a small black object, in the centre, among the boat wake disturbance. Steve recently sent me a photocopy of an enlargement of this print. I would say the 'object' is inches tall, rather than feet. Steve says his guess is that as

the wake passed over it something ordinary, a plastic barrel or black polythene bag, has flipped over. I think it could be a diving bird, a merganser or similar, which has surfaced amid the disturbance. Whatever it is, it was not responsible for the disturbance Richard White photographed, that was caused by a boat.

Steve also told me of two sonar contacts that would seem to be good. The 'Royal Scot' runs regular tourist trips from it's base by the swing bridge over the Canal at Fort Augustus. It is equipped with sonar, and passengers, if they wish, are able to see the screen, as part of the cruise. Just off the Canal mouth there is a deep trench-like feature, which of course shows up on the sonar every trip. On Wednesday 2nd July '97, they had two very strong contacts from targets at 400 feet, near the bottom of the trench. As usual there were fish traces scattered around, in the water column. Two days later they again had a good contact with an object at about the same place. There was also another one further up the trench side, at about 300 feet. Steve said he has seen the print outs from the sonar and they are most impressive. The print outs are on display on board the boat, for inspection. He also understands the sonar equipment is very good. Best on the loch.

Apart from his back trouble he seems to be thriving on the Monster hunting life. The van had been off the road for a time earlier in the year. He is still producing his model Nessies, providing much needed income. I heard he had been seen one evening parked at a viewpoint on the road from Fort Augustus to Foyers, way up behind the mountains. I pulled his leg about it, saying his chances of spotting Nessie from up there were not very good. He said he has gone up there for the night once or twice this season, just for a little peace and quiet. Saying there are not many homes you can drive into the hills, stop and say this is my mountain! While we were with him there was a steady stream of people passing to look at the beautiful view from the Canal mouth. Some of these stopped to talk to him. It reminded me of camera watches, on the LNI vans, and how tiring a constant flow of visitors and questions can become.

Tuesday morning saw a very calm loch with low cloud on the hills, which for a time dropped on to the surface. Later things had brightened up, and we set off to do touristy things in Nairn. Later returning along the loch to Drumnadrochit and then on to Strone. To visit Alastair and Sue again. In early evening as we came back through Drum' there was a pipe band on the green. Back at the Pier, the loch was calm again with no traffic.

Wednesday was another fairly calm morning, with high cloud. We later took a run along to Drumnadrochit, and then up Glen Affric. On the way called at the Clansman Marina, as I was sure I had seen the Project's new boat in mid-loch off there. Was told it had been Adrian. He had a film crew out but was then on the way to Urquhart. We saw them in the bay as we passed Temple Pier. As I said earlier I had looked for Adrian at various times, without luck. Although one day I had been close enough to say Hi!, as he passed by on his way to another meeting. The Project's hut and old boat, 'Ecos', at the Clansman Marina had a quiet air of neglect about them. I found out earlier that the Project had a different boat. A chunky cruiser type they have named 'Deepscan'. I presume this was courtesy of Ronnie Bremner, of the Official Loch Ness Exhibition, who supports the Project and their work. Boat trips aboard 'M.V. Deepscan, research vessel for the Loch Ness Project' were being advertised, in the hotel, weather and numbers permitting. So it appears Adrian has a fresh work boat, but it is also used to create income when not needed by the Project. Or could that be the other way round? The Project has the craft when it is not needed to take trippers out?

Early Thursday morning. Who had stolen the loch, or anyway most of it? The few yards of water I could see through the mist, was like a mirror. It was 8.30 before the shore at Tor Point and the white houses on the Dores shore became faintly discernible. At 9.30 we had sun on the Pier, but Dores was still faint and Lochend not visible. No loch traffic seen, or heard, till mid-morning. We went to the agricultural show, at Muir of Ord, on the Black Isle. Afterwards, tea time, we went along to Strone for a good-bye visit to Alastair and Sue. Called at Exhibition on way back to

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the Pier. At last caught up with Adrian, for a few minutes. He had been having a very busy time. Film crew from the BBC Natural History unit had been around for a few days. Doing a series on X-animals I understand. Adrian had also been spending suitable nights working on the loch, with the underwater TV camera they had left with him for a few extra days.

I am out of space so must wrap it up now. Good time at the loch, met up with many friends, saw our family of merganser a few times, but no sign of the seal, or my main quarry.

#### LOCH LOCHY

When Richard Carter popped in on the Saturday morning, he told me the article in the Friday, 1st Aug. edition of the Inverness Courier was not of his doing. At that time I had not seen a copy but did later. The article said Richard Carter, an independent researcher and regular visitor to Loch Ness, was amongst a group of three who spotted an 18 foot object in the depths of Loch Lochy. We were told the sonar sweep of Loch Lochy was co-ordinated by the Official Loch Ness Monster Fan Club, and was to look for the deepest point in the loch. The Monster Fan Club president, Gary Campbell, was part of the three strong group who were amazed to see an image of an 18 foot object swimming at 160 feet depth. Gary Campbell told the Courier he had spoken to a local resident, who pointed to the same area of the loch as the scene of a previous sighting. Adding, 'it seemed uncanny how it all tied in. I know I saw something in Loch Ness last year but it could have been a trick of the light. But since we were using sonar equipment, it was like, 'NOW!' The Courier also used it's leader column to remark on 'Lizzie's' sighting. Saying that although the tourist season was in full swing there had been no reports of Nessie, the loch's most famous resident. Suggesting she had perhaps gone on vacation. Bringing out the hoary old theory that it would be possible for a Nessie to 'limpet' herself along the length of a suitable keel so that she could be carried from one water level to another. So getting from Ness to Lochy.(!)

Richard's version of events was:- Earlier in the week he had taken his boat, an 8 foot dinghy, down to Loch Lochy to do some echo sounding work. Cameron Turner was with him, and one other, at the time of telling me Richard did not mention the other was Gary. They had been out on the loch. Richard, driving in the stern, his hands full with a small, well loaded boat in 3 to 4 foot waves. His two companions, amidships, echo sounder on the front thwart, where he could not see it. The two, who according to Richard had not seen an echo sounder before, became very excited, literally jumping about, over a 'large target'. In the difficult, I would say dangerous, position, Richard was unable to get a good look at the screen before the episode was over.

Richard said he was certain nothing of any significance had been targeted. With the water as rough as it was it was doubtful if any readings, even of simple depth, would have been reliable. He suggested a possible explanation for any blip that may have shown on the sounder. His machine does what most others do, that is automatically change scale as the water depth increases. As it switches from one to another it can produce a rogue blip. He was most emphatic about two things, nothing of any real interest, or value, had been noted, and he had absolutely nothing to do with the story appearing in the Courier. I did wonder how the paper had got hold of the tale, but as Richard was only with us for 15 minutes I did not have a chance to ask. He had not said Gary was with him, only mentioning Cameron. When I saw the article and it's inclusion of Gary Campbell in the three, all was clear.

As I finish this Nessletter I have a suggestion from one of our members, Nessletters by Email. He is happy to allow us use of his facilities, and do the necessary to send them. If any members are so equipped and would like to receive issues, sometime in the future, this way, please let me have your Email address, by snail mail for now. We will see what response we get and if it can be organized. As usual, please remember your news and views are always welcome, and needed. My address is still:- R.R.Heppele, 7 Huntshieldsford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel.01399 537359. Subs. U.K.£2.75. N.America, \$10.00.

Rip.