

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE  
 NESSLETTER 134.  
 January '99.

## HOLIDAYS '98

Sunday July 25th '98, nearly 3 o'clock, I was on the Old Pier at Abriachan. Those of you who can remember the last Nessletter, may recall I was to be on my own. I was, apart from one of our cats, he is a large Oriental Grey, but as they say, that is another story. On my own I would not need to erect the awning, at the rear of our Transit motorcaravan. Which was fortunate, as owing to recent wet weather there was an extensive pool of water on the ground where we usually park. Although the loch level appeared normal. So I just put the front of the van a little way out on to the pier, clear of the trees and bushes. It was very nice being able to sit, relax, and have a meal etc. with a panoramic view of the loch. Always bearing in mind that although I could see Lochend, two and a half miles, Dores and far shore, one and a quarter miles, and a little beyond Foyers, ten miles, with my 35mm camera and 300mm lens I would require Nessie to pop up within about 400 yards. Within that range it should be possible to obtain useful photographs, which is the object of the exercise. A close look at Dores beach, through the glasses, showed no sign of Steve Feltham's van. I thought he must have gone walkabout.

Holiday watching off to a good start on Monday morning, the loch nice and calm, until mid-morning. I knew NIS members Richard Carter, and Alastair and Sue Boyd should be at the loch. Along to Drumnadrochit (Drum) for a bite to eat at Donnie's West End Garage. Then round to Strone to see if I could contact Alastair and Sue. Had a brief word with Sue. Alastair was having a siesta. Since the building of the marina in the N.W. corner of the bay and the growth of tourist trip boats, the bay becomes quite busy during the day. So the sensible watching pattern is early morning, late evening, get your head down on other activities during the busier part of the day. This suits Alastair for as members may recall his health has not been brilliant for some years, suffering from ME. He finds that when he is up at the crack of dawn, watching Urquhart Bay, the strain can begin to show later in the day. Made my way along to Invermoriston Camp Site. Found Richard Carter's tent, but no sign of Richard. On to Fort Augustus, the pier at the Canal mouth. Steve Feltham not there, spent time watching. Then on the way back to Abriachan, called into Strone again. Had a good natter with Alastair, very good to see him.

Loch was rougher on Tuesday, but I was staying on the pier. Richard Carter called in mid-morning, for about an hour. For a couple of years Richard has been studying all the pictorial and written evidence he can find concerning the Tim Dinsdale film, taken April 23rd '68. Over this time we have exchanged a few letters on the subject, as well as getting together at the loch. He always stresses that he is not trying to do a 'hatchet job' on the film. However from his researches he feels that perhaps Tim mistakenly filmed a loch boat. The next move Richard thought, was to try to reproduce this film. In May '98 he visited the loch and with the help of Dicky Raynor had run a reel of film through a 16mm Bolex movie camera. Filming a boat on the loch, taking a path similar to that in Tim's film. We had a very good chat about this and other Nessie matters. The results they obtained were not quite what Richard hoped for. He had some fairly good film of a loch boat, crossing the loch and turning parallel to the far shore.

He had been approached in connection with a BBC Science mysteries programme, with pieces to be filmed at Loch Ness, Norway, and Canada. My notes are a bit garbled, but I think I have that correct. The result, Richard was back at the lochside for the second week in July. Along with Dicky Raynor and Adrian Shine having another attempt to reproduce the Dinsdale film, with a boat as the target. He said he was waiting for the processed film to come back. He had been surprised by the cost of having 16mm black and white movie film processed. It is strange how things change, when Tim was interested in 1968, it was black and white film that was the norm and colour that needs specialist handling. Later in the evening Dicky dropped by for a while. As usual it was a pleasure to see

and have a good chat.

After a wet night it continued to rain on Wednesday morning, but the loch was calm early on. I was able to watch from the relative comfort of the van. Steve's van had appeared on the Dores shore some time on Monday, and was still there. In the wet a change of scene seemed called for. So I set off for Dores. When I arrived at, the van was there but Steve was nowhere to be found. It was still raining, so I decided to take a quiet drive along the South shore. Just after Inverfarigaig I ran into brilliant sunshine. I made my way down to the lochside by Lower Foyers, it was virtually deserted. The South shore has always been the quieter, but this was late July, the peak of the tourist season. When you consider the traffic chaos on the road at Castle Urquhart. The number of tourist crammed into Fort Augustus and Drumnadrochit, how bustling Inverness becomes. Yet there I was alone on the picnic site by the jetty. There were a few boats moored in the bay, but nothing moving about. Loch traffic going up and down the loch was pushed closer to the far shore shore by the promontory of Foyers Bay. The Hydro Station is tucked away a few hundred yards along the shore, the old Aluminium works looked as if it is being used as a manufactory, but on the whole a very tranquil area. Perhaps, as visitors we do not make enough use of this pleasant area. Also, as monster watchers, it has given rise to a number of sighting reports, over the years, and of course the Dinsdale film was taken not that far away. I spent a pleasant hour or two watching and quietly roaming about the area. The wet weather I could see crossing the loch at Urquhart Bay, eventually eased and it looked clear and sunny to Lochend and beyond.

I made my way back to Dores and after a while Steve showed up. A friend had taken him shopping in Inverness. Along with the usual groceries he had a length of flexible stainless exhaust pipe. As usual it was good to see him, and he looked as well as ever. He told me the van had been without MOT for most of the year and he had been more or less stranded on the Dores shore. He said that, strangely, he had not really minded, as usually he gets the urge to be on the move in early spring. When I said I thought he had been away away over the weekend. He told me it had been the Dores Gala and he had moved the van on to the playing fields, for safety, away from bonfires and barbeques on the beach. We had a good natter, although he had nothing special to tell me.

There was one item that could lead to interesting developments. One of the more recent residents in Dores, owns a microlight, a two seat model, and is a qualified pilot. He had brought it out at the weekend, and Steve had given him a hand to rig it. The playing fields proved suitable as a take off and landing site, and he had taken a few flights. He then offered to take Steve up. Which Steve said had been a wonderful experience. I found this very exciting, and urged Steve to take every opportunity to get into the air, over the loch. As members may recall, for many years I have thought aerial hunting could bring worthwhile results.

Early Friday morning the loch surface was calm, but there was complete cloud cover, again. Made comment in log book, 'where is the sun'? Richard Carter dropped in about mid-day. Minutes later Steve arrived by inflatable, from Dores. We had a very good couple of hours. Richard had some good enlargements from his 16mm 'Dinsdale' film. They were obviously pictures of a boat. I am sure Richard is wasting his time and effort, and have told him so many times. I am certain that whatever Tim filmed that April day in 1968, it was not a boat. Richard is a very sincere researcher and as such should be given our support. He told me he was chasing up two sighting reports, hoping to interview the witnesses.

Saturday was another good surface morning, again with complete cloud cover. Steve's van left the Dores shore. The loch was still calm when I moved off the pier, early afternoon, and drove down to Fort Augustus. Via Donnie's West End. Went to the Abbey to try to see Tony Harmsworth, no luck. Then on to the Canal pier. Steve was there working under the van. He can safely jack up and prop the vehicle on the tarmac. He was fitting the new piece of exhaust pipe. He had been for MOT test in Inverness, and knew the work that needed doing. His friend, Melanie was there so a pleasant time ensued. Drinking coffee, watching the loch and discussing Nessie with a disembodied voice. Dropped into Strone again, on way back to pier. I

was disappointed to learn I had missed Doug and Margaret Macfarlane, they had been there, when I passed on the way to Fort Augustus. On a day's visit to the loch from their home in Largs, Ayrshire.

Sunday morning the loch was clam, even with some sun shining through broken clouds. By 9.30 a bit breeze and surface starting to chop up. Richard stopped by, stayed about one and a half hours. He had managed to contact the witnesses he had been seeking and had the completed sighting report forms. One of the sightings had been reported in the Courier, and I had intended to follow it up while at the loch. When, on a previous visit Richard told me he was chasing them up. I awaited results, as that is something Richard does very well.

The report form confirmed the newspaper report. Four young men, one from the Black Isle, another from Inverfarigaig and two brothers, Mark and Adam Sutherland, from Aultranagoire, just off the Inverfarigaig to Errogie road, were out very early on the morning of 17th June '98. They had climbed the 1000ft Dundearduil to take photographs of the sunrise, this being around the shortest night of the year. They got to the top about 4.30am and used all their film taking the panoramic views they were after. There are very good views of the loch, if a little distant, from there as well. About half way down, they stopped and Adam saw what he at first thought was a reflection of a sand bank in the loch. Being a complete sceptic he thought it could be the basis of a good Nessie hoax. He borrowed Peter Gillies' binoculars, 12x40, and found he could see a bit of a brown coloured hump sticking from the water. He said it was about the size of an ironing board. But also that it carried on into a huge oval shape below the surface and also appeared to have a very, very long tail extending in a curved line, to the left. It was about 300 yards from the shore. Which added to their position and distance from the loch, would make distance from object about half a mile. After a few minutes it submerged and over the next 5 to 10 minutes drifted slowly 250 yards northward, up the loch. It changed orientation slightly, although still remaining roughly pointing NE. It remained at the second position for about 10 minutes, but did go deeper than could be made out through the water, for a short interval. The whole time the object was in a patch of water free from waves or interference, allowing them to see through the surface. Their height above the loch was also an important factor in this. General shape was given as 'huge oval' or 'egg shaped', colour was light brown. No size was given, but, in the sighting report Mark used the rather strange phrase, 'the length of the appendage stretching out to the SW, seemed longer than a 'beautiful' (mathematically) length'. I think this a term used in architecture referring to the length:breath ratio. Taking the sketch on the form, as a possibly guide, the 'tail' is five or six times as long as the 'ironing board' hump. Which would give fifteen feet plus for the 'tail'. At the other end not much of 'the neck' could be made out. They thought it had its head down catching fish. They discussed if it could be anything else they could think of, but all saw it and are convinced it was a Nessie.

While watching they made their way down to the road, then on to the shore. From the road, as they walked along, they could still make out the shape. But felt certain that was because they knew where to look. Saying, 'a passer-by would not have noticed it, possibly a reason so few people see the monster'. From the shore nothing could be seen. Back on the road, the object was observed getting deeper in the water and interference on the surface eventually ended the sighting; which had lasted 45 minutes from 05.15am.

I do not know what to make of this account, as members may recall, I do not like reports of people seeing things under the surface. Because for most of the time you cannot see through the reflections on the water. Here we could have the combination of factors to make it possible. Height above the surface, which was calm and smooth, also the light would be coming from behind them as the sun rose. So vision through the surface may be accepted. The length of the sighting is off-putting, 45 minutes is far, far longer than the usual report. Even allowing for the 'hump' only being above the surface for a few minutes. A few minutes is still longer than the average sighting. However I have long thought that the animals

may spend much time fishing and feeding close to the surface. The noise produced by the waves of a rough surface enables them to judge where it is and remain below it. While the quiet of a calm surface may mean an animal could break through it for a time, before being aware of it. The only non-monster explanation I can put forward is a patch of dis-coloured water. The episode happened fairly close to the mouth of the Inverfarigaig River. It could be that muddy water from the river was brought to the surface of a calm loch before being mixed in by wave action. As I write I am reminded of an exciting evening the LNI had in Urquhart Bay in '71, getting samples from an upwelling of yellowish water well out in the bay, which was as clear as ever. It turned out, after analysis, to be a mass of fir tree pollen, and other fine debris, swept un-noticed out of the River Coiltie, down into the depths, before swirling to the surface in a most impressive manner. Cries of 'Hessie droppings', or words to that effect, rang out from the watchers atop the Carey's garage, above Strone Point. It was obviously discoloured water and not a solid body in the water, even when viewed from Strone. Alas there was a fairly mundane explanation.

There are various aspects of this account, seeing through the surface, duration of sighting, perhaps distance from object, which seem to be against it being a good sighting. However there are acceptable explanations to these objections, so it may be we have, an unusual, but acceptable sighting.

The other report from Richard had was of a sighting which took place just two days after the first, 19.6.'98. I had not come across this one until I arrived at the loch. I was very interested in it as the first I heard was someone had seen, from the stern of a boat, humps travelling across the loch. That is the rarity, rather than humps going along the loch. Which is the general direction of boat wakes.

Richard had traced the lady concerned, Mrs Macintosh Palmer, and went to visit her at home near Beauly. Hoping to interview her and get a sighting report form filled in. Not too keen to talk about it, she did agree to fill the form in. Taking it indoors to do so, leaving Richard on the doorstep, in the rain.

On Friday 19th June '98, by coincidence the day the Sutherland report appeared in the Inverness Courier, Mrs Mackintosh Palmer had been aboard the 'Jacobite Queen', chartered for a birthday party trip on the loch. She was standing in the stern with one or two others at 8.30pm, in the area of Urquhart Castle. When, 'approx 150 yards from the boat, came up and disappeared, then re-appeared and swam some length. I guess it was about 40 to 50 feet long. Looked black in colour'. She did not have binoculars or still camera but did have a Canon Video camera, and took some footage of it. Richard was not able to see this. The weather was very good with good visibility. No other boats had been seen in the area. A sketch on the sighting report, showed a slightly triangular hump, then the same hump and disturbed water, crossing past the boat's stern.

Very interesting at first look. However one possible explanation did come to mind. I asked Richard if he had been told if at the time they were going towards the Castle, or away from it. He said it had not been mentioned. A further look at the form and the sketch, showed the rough outline of the castle in the background. They were leaving the castle on the return leg of the cruise. Watching the 'Jacobite Queen' on it's trips on the loch it usually stays a little closer to one shore before making a sweeping turn at the Castle. Then returns keeping closer to the other shore. I am sure that what was observed on this occasion was the wake, made on the outward leg, passing behind the boat on it's return journey.

As I end this Nessletter, I will make room for a piece of very sad news. Donnie Cameron, West End Garage, died on 3rd November '98. Over the years I have mentioned him in the Nessletters, and he has been a good friend to me and many others involved in the hunt. He will be sadly missed.

Thank you for being members and your continued tolerance. Please remember your news and views are always needed and welcome. Address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel.01388 537359. Subs (6 issues) UK £2.75, N.America, \$10.00.