

# NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

## NESSLETTER 143

### JULY 2002

RONNIE BREMNER

I received some very sad news in December, '01, it should have been included in NIS 142, but space ran out. Maralyn and Adrian Shine wrote to let me know that Ronnie Bremner had died on Saturday the 1st of December. Ronnie, their very good friend and Loch Ness Patron, had succumbed to a very aggressive cancer, he was only 59. They were shocked and numbed, for while they knew there was no hope, the end came much quicker than expected. He leaves his wife Libby and three sons. Robbie, his eldest took over the running of the business some time ago, allowing Ronnie more time to spend at home, Dalmaohy, and at the villa in Minorca. I had been acquainted with the Bremners since my early days with the LNI, mid 1960s, but was surprised to learn that the family had only taken over the Drumnadrochit Hotel in 1964. They were so much part of the community, I thought they had been there since the year 'dot'. Ronnie took over the hotel when his parents retired. He opened the first Loch Ness visitor centre in 1980 with partner Tony Harmsworth. (There are those of us that would suggest the first visitor centre was built and run by the LNI at Achnahannet, in the late '60s, but that is by the way). Our eldest son, Michael and his fiancée, Barbara, worked at the hotel for the '81 season. They married later that year, moving from the dilapidated caravan sited behind the hotel, to a much nicer one out at Brunchrew. When the Drumnadrochit hotel was gutted by fire in 1984, Ronnie turned the disaster to his advantage, building a new hotel alongside the old, and converting the old shell into a new, and improved, visitor centre. He was also supporting the Loch Ness Project's scientific work, an association that was to last for nearly 25 years. He provided them with a home, and laboratory facilities, above the Exhibition. In that time the Project published more than 60 scientific papers on the loch and its environment. They also mounted Operation Deep Scan, in '87, the largest operation to take place at Loch Ness, attracting over 300 journalists from around the world. Ronnie became the official patron, after Sir Peter Scott died. I trust that patronage will continue, through Robbie. As well as having an eye for his own business ventures, Ronnie also had an eye for others, being responsible for fostering a number of local business enterprises. He had also been something of an all round sportsman, playing rugby for Highland, shinty for Glenurquhart, as well as tennis, and table tennis. It was in this latter sport that he represented Scotland. The funeral in Drumnadrochit was attended by over 500 mourners. Adrian gave a tribute to Ronnie's life, as did his sons and two of his friends. He will be sadly missed by all, and our condolences go to his wife, Libby and their sons. I think a phrase Maralyn used in her letter sums it up very well. "We all expect him to swoosh onto the car park, abandoning his car wherever it stops and his kilted, stocky frame will come swirling in to hold court from the bar of the Drum Hotel. It's hard to accept that such an energetic and vibrant personality is gone and he has left a huge hole in many lives, not least ours." That was Ronnie Bremner, 'swooshing and swirling' through life. God Bless.

ANDREAS TROTTMANN

I received a letter in February from Andreas, he told me that he had been in poor health for the last few months, only recently having returned from a four week cure in a clinic. Happily, he said, things are improving and he is looking forward to his next cryptozoological research trip. He gave me details of his planned visit to Loch Ness this year, he may also pay a visit to Loch Morar. While on his research trip, sometime during October '02, he intends to try to recreate some experiments of the early 1970s expeditions. This will involve playing back, through an underwater loudspeaker, of sounds he has recorded with his Hydrophone. The use of some specific flavoured oils and powders as an attractant. He said if he remembers correctly I had some smelly experiences with fish oils and hormones, in the '70s. He is correct, I spent time in an inflatable being towed by Tim Dinsdale's 'Water Horse', off the Horseshoe Scree, slipping around in the concoction while we were helping with the Academy's expedition in '70, or '71. The smell took a lot of getting rid of, in fact many years later when I scrapped the old oilskins I had worn at that time, they still bore the lingering traces of Salmon oil. Andreas will undertake some minor sonar searches. As well as night observations, with the assistance of an infrared beam and night goggles. He purchased a rather good device, Swiss army surplus, last year.

He also let me know that his, very good I think, 'Loch Ness Newsclipping Service' is to become a twice yearly magazine. Commencing with the next issue, Vol.8, No 1, it will be published in June and December. There are a number of contributory factors. A substantial rise in production, and mailing, costs, his various time-consuming engagements also the lack of forthcoming news clips. His health may also have a bearing on things.

## HOLIDAYS '01

As I return to last years holidays, I find this year's are very close. Anyway, back to Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> '01, dull morning but a very good calm surface. Did some early watching. Saw Adrian Shine as I passed Loch Ness 2000, pulled in for a quick word. He was to provide one of the support boats for a pair of swimmers who would attempt to swim from Loch End to Fort Augustus the following day. The coach/trainer of Adrian's swimmer had told him he would like a canoe to follow his swimmer, as he could be closer to her. Adrian asked if I still had mine at the loch, I said yes but was too sure where it was. It had been stored in a shed behind Mr & Mrs Borlands house and since Alistair and Isa died in '97, I had not kept track of it. After offering to try to find it, I drove on to Lewiston, for the ladies. We eventually finished up at Fort George, for the afternoon. I checked the old house at Abriachan as we went by, no sign of the canoe. After a good wander around the Fort, where we had been able to watch the dolphins in the firth, we made our way back to Lewiston. I rang Neil Borland about the canoe, he said he would have a look for it. I was back on the pier at seven, the loch was still calm so I was able to do a bit of watching. Neil appeared at 9.30, with the canoe, a little too late to help Adrian. Neil and I sat talking, putting the world to rights for a couple of hours.

The canoe, minus paddle, is now stored behind the Loch Ness Project's hut, by the Clansman Marina. If any NIS members were interested, it could be possible to make use of it while at the loch. Having said that perhaps I should say that if you do, and injure or drown yourselves, it is your own responsibility. As my Mam would have said, 'if you break your leg don't come running to me'.

Wednesday morning had dark threatening clouds, and a surface of small waves, not the best for the swimming attempt. At 6.15 I was able to see 'Nessie Hunter' close to Loch End. Half an hour later 'Deep Scan' passed, heading towards Loch End. I knew the swimmers were starting about an hour apart. The idea being that the slower one would have a start, for the quicker to catch up, and hopefully both finish more or less together, at Fort Augustus. It was 7.10 before the first was off the Abriachan pier, 'Deep Scan' just leaving Loch End. They passed the pier at 8.35, neither of them seemed to making the progress I had expected. I later learnt that they had both been taken from the water as they crossed Urquhart Bay, one making it almost to the Castle. The waves and cold had been just too much for this pair of experienced swimmers. Loch Ness once again proving what a formidable body of water it is.

Picked up the ladies from Lewiston, spent the morning around Drumnadrochit and up Glen Urquhart. Into Inverness for a look into the Floral Hall and gardens. After leaving the ladies at Lewiston, 5.30, I made my way round to the Urquhart Bay marina, parking in the lay-by above. Dick Raynor had been in touch and I was to get out on the water later. Taking a look down on to Temple Pier I found the Academy team very busy. The 'industrial size' ROV (NIS142) was to have a longer 'bit of string' attached. They had been operating with a shortish, but adequate, length of cable. Though it had somewhat limited the depth to which they could comfortably work. This large ROV uses a substantial cable about half an inch thick. On the pier was a large crate containing a drum of the bright orange cable, it took four to move the drum, once it had been levered out of the crate. The cable then had to be taken off the drum and laid on the deck of the boat in a figure of eight, without kinking or tangling, ready to be fed onto the winch prior to connection to the ROV. I did not make a note of the lengths involved, so cannot quote figures, but it was a long cable. Everyone was having 'fun', with differing ideas as to the correct way to achieve the goal. The Sonar Engineer, Jim Archer I think his name was, being very concerned that nothing should damage the cable, as he had 'signed for it', as it were, and it had eventually to be returned in good condition. While this was going on Justice Rines, and another, were setting up a large, liquid filled, plastic container at the end of the pier. From the container a small plastic tube went down into the water, then down into the depths, where it finished up close to the underwater camera. Justice was adjusting the tap to meter a tiny flow of the mysterious (secret?) liquid through the tube. This carefully thought out recipe of fish oils, and other ingredients, would slowly leach out in the water, hopefully attracting fish and possibly larger inhabitants of the loch into the camera's field of vision. Another useful ongoing experiment. I was able to have a look at the monitor for the camera, set up in one of the workshops by the

pier. The quality was impressive, as to be expected with the peaty underwater conditions, there was not too much range but even that was fairly good. Everything being in place to record any interesting, or unusual, events. Bob was being host to a television crew who were filming the Academy's work. Among all this activity and bustle, I came upon Duane Marshall working quietly away. I first met Duane when we visited Bob and some of the team earlier, at Tychat. I do not think he will mind if I say that he is one of the more mature team members. He was sitting by a bench littered with pieces of wonderful technology. He was assembling the equipment designed and built by Ike Blonder for the 'Territorial Imperative' experiments. This plays back sounds recorded in the loch, as well as other various sounds, to see if any reaction can be stimulated. This equipment had been shipped over in it's various pieces, seemingly without detailed instructions, and Duane was quietly using his own expertise to put it together. It was nice to be among Bob's people again, helping with a bit of muscle here, and, hopefully, a useful suggestion there. Time was getting on and I had to leave to walk the couple of hundred yards along to the marina to meet Dick Raynor.

As well as myself, Sue and Alastair Boyd were to accompany Dick out that evening. We loaded Dick's equipment onto Nessie Hunter, batteries, lights, cameras, tool-bags, etc. Then away we went out into the bay, starting over by the Castle, then by Goat Rock and along to the river mouth. Lowering the simple camera/light rig that Dick has developed, into the water, we quietly drifted along watching the bottom pass by on the monitor screen. Dick let me try my hand at controlling the camera, it was not as easy as he makes it look. As the rig moves over the loch floor, with varying depth, it is necessary to let out, pull in, the rope/wire to maintain the distance from the bottom. If you are not quick, and smooth, enough you either lose sight of it, or drag the camera along in the mud. As I say Dick has it to a fine art, watching the screen and with well practised arm movements, out through the wheel-house window, he seems able to 'fly' the camera along the bottom. Wanting to try a 12 volt/50watt bulb on the rig to see what improvement it may make, without disturbing the existing set up, posed the question, how to get the power down there? Dick's solution was very simple, wire the bulb to the battery, a sealed unit, on a short length of wire, then tape them both to the end of the rope, just above the camera, lower the whole thing into the water. The improved picture showed the advantage of the brighter light, but also showed that too much light would result in 'bright spots' and 'whiting out'. The breeze began to increase and was pushing the boat along too quickly, that is a weakness of Dick's method, he relies on calm conditions to quietly drift the camera over the loch floor. Also it was becoming dark so it was decided to go ashore. After we took his gear off, Dick had his chores to do to make the boat ready for it's first tourist trip in the morning. We then retired to the chalet at Strone, for tea and biscuits, and a general discussion about Nessie matters.

It was midnight when I drove down the track onto the Abriachan Pier, Dick still had the drive home out on the Black Isle. I had enjoyed a very good evening, in good company. Being fortunate to be able to see, and help a little, with Bob and the Academy team, then to get out on to the loch with Dick, Alastair and Sue, and do a little experimentation there.

After some overnight rain, Thursday morning was dull but dry, the surface was fairly calm. Collecting the ladies we went back to Drumnadrochit, getting the trike and wheelchair out of the van, we took a quiet walk around the two cemeteries. We always like to visit the resting places of our old friends. Later on the way back from Dores we called into the Abriachan Nurseries, there is path through to the Old Kilianan Cemetery where Alistair and Isa Borland are laid. We had been round to Dores, after lunch, to try to meet up with Steve again. We were in luck, finding him on the shore. I had a very good natter with him, nothing specific, just general Loch Ness stuff. He said he is still being told of sightings made by local people, although there seem to be very few. What he has noticed is that all of them, the witnesses that is, stress that they do not want their experiences made public. Steve puts this down to the natural reticence of the local people, plus the increased media hype over the last few seasons, making them more reluctant about being involved. I did not see his bus. You would think that in a small village like Dores, a red double-decker bus would be hard to hide, but he has it nicely out of sight. It would be very nice if he could make the time, and find the cash, to convert it to living accommodation, and mobile exhibition, as he planned.

Back on the pier for seven, the loch was calm with no wind. A very good evening for my last in '01.

Early Friday morning the was calm again. So I managed a last couple of hours watching, as I breakfasted and packed things away ready for the trip home. The loch was roughing up as I left the pier just after nine. To Lewiston for the ladies, stopping off at the Lodge to leave Dick's gear, all their bags and stuff packed in, and we were away. Catching sight of Adrian and Maralyn as we passed Loch Ness 2000, a quick

pull in enabled us to say our good-byes for '01. As I said last time, no sign of my main quarry, but a very good, and fruitful, trip, meeting up with so many old friends, and making some new.

## SIGHTINGS

As already mentioned, there seems to be a dramatic fall in the number of sightings reported. From time to time there are rumours that 'something' has been spotted, usually the vague 'huge hump' or 'long neck', but no information. Even my reliable sources at the loch have been unable to provide good reports. This is highlighted when the William Hill's prize for the 'best Nessie video '01' went to Robert Pollack for a piece of video he shot in August '00. This was covered in NIS140 (July'01). When he wrote to me in August '00, the video was the last thing he mentioned, and he was not brimming with enthusiasm about it, being very unsure what he had on tape. Because of the prize, the tape and Robert, featured on the Richard and Judy TV show 13<sup>th</sup> March '02. Seeing the tape on the show, it was clear why Robert had been unsure what was on it, shot at extreme range it was very jumpy, and even when the TV people 'grabbed' a frame and tried to enlarge and hold it still it was really impossible to be sure what the 'dark blob' was. I could not make out the 'pole-like' object, it seemed more round to me. They had a wildlife expert to give his opinion, but he was seeing the tape for the first time, so was somewhat handicapped, but did say it did not seem to behave like a seal. Good luck to Robert, for collecting the £500, but it illustrates how William Hill, and their 'judges' are struggling to find recipients for their prizes.

Could this be the place to pop in a piece of commonly given advice about filming. Ideally a telephoto lens, especially a powerful one, should be used with a tripod. However these can be a bit clumsy to use, and could slow down reaction time. Books recommend using a firm solid object to rest against, a tree trunk, a fence post, a large rock, the bonnet or roof of a vehicle, some also suggest carrying a small bean-bag to throw down to cradle the camera. Another tip is to have a length of cord dangling from the camera, hold this under a foot and brace the lens against the pull. Robert's video would have been much improved if it had not been so jumpy. ~~When monster watching, practice using your camera in all sorts of conditions, also take photographs of ordinary things in the loch, to build up your own library of pictures, this will provide material for comparison when you do get something 'strange'.~~

## NIS AT THE LOCHSIDE

In March'02 I had a letter from James Kitwood, from Leeds. He said I often mention the chalet at Strone, they use one set much higher up the hill, Creag Nah Iolaire, it is let by Borlum Farm, has great views, and comes highly recommended. James and his wife stay there Spring bank week, and the last week in October every year. They will be there this year, Ford Mondeo, navy and new shape, reg: X862HJH.

He has not seen anything peculiar on the loch for years, but had an interesting Fortean experience October '01. Walking their dog high above Urquhart Castle, which was below on their right. Making their way down they came parallel with a tree, slightly below them on the slope. Suddenly they heard something climbing down from the tree. Whatever jumped down, was partly shielded by foliage but for a fraction of a second he saw a black leg. It was nothing like the leg of a deer, (not that he suggests deer climb trees!!) they had seen deer before in the area, but when startled they tend to crash away through the undergrowth. Whatever they had disturbed, disappeared almost without trace. His first thought was, it's a cat, but it seemed much too big for a domestic cat. He had read reports of Alien Big Cats around the loch and so at that point he acquired an allergy to cats. When he was sure whatever had been there had gone he climbed down to the tree but there was nothing to be seen. Throughout the episode their dog was clearly agitated by whatever it was. Who needs a water monster?

Also in March '02 I received a letter from Gordon Strange, from Cupar Fife. Gordon has done some good work over the years, a couple of years ago he put together a comprehensive data base. He also manages to spend time at the loch-side. Last year that consisted of several short visits, which only gave him a couple of hours at his usual spots as he was travelling by. He did get a week at the Invermoriston camp site, in mid-summer. He had a few good watches but nothing of a particularly unusual nature. A very big concentric circle splash just off the Inverfarigaig shore, was the 'highlight' of the year. The water was not really calm, and he was on the cliffs above the village, some 600m from the splash. Despite that the sound of the splash and the concentric circles, could clearly be heard and seen. He is not saying this was a sighting, as it could just have been a very big fish! On the other hand-----.

He has been able to take a seasonal pitch at Invermoriston, for their own caravan. Which will make a great base for future expeditions and a useful holiday venue for the children. Starting with the first week of the Easter holidays, early April '02. He hopes to fit in some early watches from the forestry track up the hill.

Robin Fenner, from Chelmsford, wrote in April '02. He was requesting recommendations and information about B&B and self catering cottages in the area. He and his wife hope to visit the area in September '02. I passed on some information, I hope it helped a little.

Early June and I received a letter from Val Smith, Llandaff near Cardiff, asking me to mention in a Nessletter that he, and son Jonathan, will be at the loch between 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> July. Staying at the Clansman and moving around the loch in a silver Ford Fiesta X396FHB. By now Val will be home again, sorry about that, but good to know you have been there 'hunting'.

Alastair Boyd has just been in touch. He and Sue will be at the loch, the chalet at Strone as usual, from Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July for three weeks.

I am pleased about that as we, Doris her sister Audrey and myself, will be at the loch from 28<sup>th</sup> July for our usual stay. I will be using the Old Pier at Abriachan, and the ladies will have the little flat in Lewiston. Still in the old red Ford Transit, gas powered, trust the 'old girl' will remain as reliable as previous years.

## PLESIOSAUR

Last year Alastair Boyd let me have a cutting from the Daily Express, 28<sup>th</sup> June, '01. It concerned findings at Coober Pedy, Australia, the world's biggest supplier of opals. For many years, this area of desolate Outback moonplain, has produced fascinating fossils, often opalised, giving enough detail for scientist to reconstruct even muscles. "Opalisation is beautiful preservation, things are uncrushed, three-dimensional", said Ben Kear a palaeontologist from the South Australia Museum. These fossils are showing that where the sun now scorches the ground, giant marine animals such as long-necked plesiosaurs and dolphin-like ichthyosaurs lived in polar conditions. An environment not previously imagined for these reptiles. The area is also producing an unprecedented number of baby and juvenile fossils, which make up about 95 percent of all the finds. Suggesting to the scientists that it was once a rare breeding ground for these creatures. These finds at Coober Pedy are providing exciting proof that giant marine reptiles did not, as was assumed, just live in the world's tropical landscapes. Ben Kear said, "This is the first evidence from anywhere in the world where you have these kind of marine reptiles living in environments with icebergs. You're talking about a reptile which is warm, like a mammal".

I think this is interesting news. Over the years, as more research has been done at Loch Ness the argument that, perhaps, there are plesiosaurs in the loch has been weakened by the fact that the area was covered by the ice sheet during the ice ages. It seemed never to have had necessary tropical conditions. Even when the ice receded and Loch Ness was connected to the sea, before the land, released from it's burden of ice, rose cutting the loch off. The sea was somewhat arctic. But with the news of the Australian fossils, perhaps that fact is not as damning as it would seem.

If my new piece of equipment works, hopefully you will have noted an improved print quality. Also I will be able to let you have Bob Rines' and the Academy of Applied Science's 2001 Research Plan, which was part of the Loch Ness Expedition 2001 workbook. Bob kindly gave me a copy when we met last year, all the team members were issued with one. As there were various teams there at different times during July and August, it kept everyone in touch, going into detail of dates and team members and the work they expected to be doing. There was also a section at the back to make your own notes as the days went on, very comprehensive.

Anyway that is this Nessletter finally put together, I have changed the month on the heading twice, if not thrice. As usual thank you for being NIS members. If you have a change of address for any reason, do not forget to let me know. Please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed, also that subscriptions are now UK£3.00, I will leave the USA at \$10.00 for now. I have an arrangement with one of our American members, Tim Denesha, which is a great help with their postal costs. My address is still R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel.01388 537359.

Rip

## 2001 RESEARCH PLAN

April 3-12, 2001 Expedition Phase (Completed April 12, 2001)

### Summary of Principal Objectives and Tasks:

The refurbishing and re-deploying of the Charles W Wyckoff Urquhart Bay underwater video and sonar-triggered illuminated station for all-year monitoring locally and by Internet access

- A. To upgrade the Wyckoff underwater station with high intensity discharge (HID) ballast-operated gas arc lamps each providing 12,000 lumens of light as compared with the 2400-lumens of the current halogen filament underwater lamps, and to re-configure underwater platforms, and diver test the installation. (AAS staff—Justice C. and Robert H. Rines, Gordon Menzies, Duane Marshall, Frank Dougherty).
- B. To upgrade the target approach detector (TAD-sonar) and/or replace with new printed circuit board version with sonar-chart indicator. (Duane Marshall).
- C. To replace or supplement the current VCR recorder for the underwater video camera, hopefully supplementing with computer storage and Internet connection. (Ralph Rodriguez—C-Bridge and the AAS staff, above).

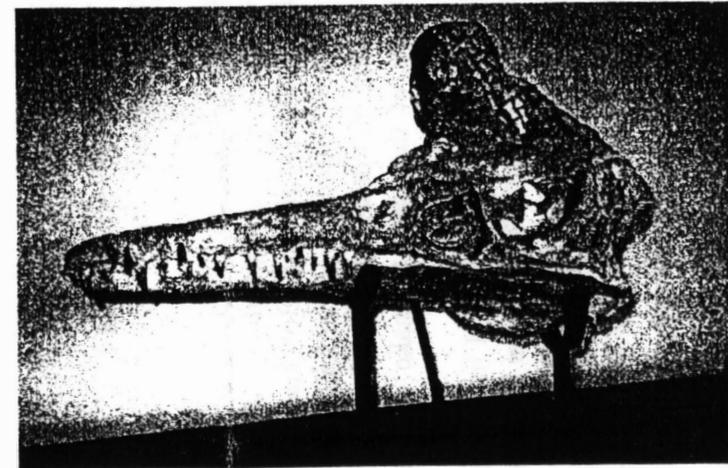
[These objectives were achieved in the April phase.]

July 15-August 15, 2001 Expedition Phase

### Summary of Principal Objectives and Tasks:

- A. A thorough side-scan "scouring" of the loch, some with integral short-range video recording, and including new chirp sonar "acoustic net" sweeps and with principal attention to the detection and tracking of large underwater moving targets. (John Perry Fish, Arnie Carr and Jim Archer --American Underwater Search and Survey—and the AAS staff, above; Bill Charbonneau - Benthos).
- B. ROV mid-water, bottom and side exploration, including in support of A, above; digitally photographing and video recording underwater topography, artifacts, and most hopefully skeletal remains, (Chris and Mike Nicholson, Deep Sea Systems International and AAS staff, above) Also with strobe and fish oil "attractant" program (Emory Kristoff)
- C. ROV supplementing the Wyckoff Station Urquhart Bay under-water monitoring watch and at other loch sites.
- D. To support additional possible and ancillary projects:
  1. Albavision (Alison Wilkie)-AAS and CBC N.H.-Channel 13 video documentation (Gordon Jackson and Caroline Choate - AAS).
  2. Liaison with geologists, archeologists, etc. re most likely areas for possible skeletal remains, etc. (Frank Dougherty, Dr. Stephen Cribbs, et al).
  3. 60 Minutes II Project (Harry Moses, Sabina Carlefranco).
  4. Logistics (Billy Zimmerman, Lisa Rines Toth).
  5. Possible assistance to Adrian Shine (coring, sub-bottom sonar profiling and penetration).
  6. "Territorial Imperative" system installation -- recorded underwater sound playback "attractant" (Ike Blonder).
  7. Completing '97 magnetic field anomaly discovery and 3D-plotting.

1. *Nature*, Vol. 258, No. 5535, pp. 466-8, December 11, 1975; Dinsdale T. *Project Water Horse*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975; Rines, Edgerton, Wyckoff and Klein, "Search for the Loch Ness Monster," *MIT Technology Review*, March/April 1976; *National Geographic*, June 1977; Mackal Roy P., *The Monsters of Loch Ness* Swallow Press, Chicago 1976; Meredith, Dennis L., *Search at Loch Ness*, Quadrangle, New York Times Book Co., 1977
2. Edgerton H. and Wyckoff C., *IEEE Spectrum*, pp. 229, February, 1978.
3. *MIT Spectrum*, p.p. 14, 15, Winter, 1998. *NOVA (PBS), The Beast of Loch Ness*, released February 12, 1999 (*Academy of Applied Science 1997 expedition*)
4. *Inverness Courier*, July 1999, Jim Love, *Applying time and technology to the loch's enduring secret*. Rines, C. *Justice Loch Ness Scotland Research Expedition, Term Project Paper*, Notre Dame College, May, 2000.
5. *New Yorker Magazine*, pp. 142 -47, November 27, 2000, Larissa MacFarquhar, "Inventor Hunts Loch Ness Monster"



This Pliosaurus Skull from the Upper Jurassic period was discovered in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. From there it made its way to a specialty shop in Santa Fe, N.M. where David Rines found it in the Spring of 2001. After verifying its authenticity with a professor at the University of Texas, David had it shipped to New England to his grandfather as a Father's Day present.

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**Loch Ness Research Program**  
**July-August 2001**