

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 148

APRIL ~~2005~~ '05

RIP'S PIECE.

It is far too long since I laid finger on keyboard and put a Nessletter together. I always seem to be apologising to you, our loyal, tolerant, members, but I am doing it again. Although perhaps this time I have fairly good reasons for my tardiness.

My wife, Doris, had a heart attack after retiring to bed on August 16th '04, two days after we returned home from our holidays at Loch Ness. Resulting in a late night call, which brought the doctor, then ambulance and a thirty mile journey to hospital, where she was for three and a half weeks. Going from the Acute Care Unit, eventually finishing in a more regular ward. The medical staff were wonderful in their care for her, no operations were needed, the problem being stabilised with drugs. She is now on a daily dose of 'Warfarin' to keep the blood at the correct consistency, having blood tests to check it every three or four weeks. It was classed as 'non-acute', but it was a very worrying time. That rather took away the desire to do any writing.

Then having got Christmas and New Year over, I thought I must pull myself together and get a Nessletter together. The night of 7th January we had very sever gales, I cannot remember anything like them in the thirty odd years we have lived here. The result was the fibre-glass waterproof layer on our extension roof was blown off. Under that were plywood sheets over a sheet of industrial polythene, which survived the storm, this has managed to keep most of the water out. I have various pieces of plastic fastened up around the two small bedrooms and passage, to catch, and direct drips into containers. Along with a length of guttering sticking out of the airing cupboard taking water into a dustbin. When the damage was discovered there was a panic removal of things out of the 'back' rooms into the front, which is in the cottage and still has it's roof. My filing system (?), which at the best of times is a haphazard collection of brown folders, is now scattered around the front bedroom, along with everything else. So I can now add chaotic to haphazard. The computer/word processor has it's own little plastic tent, which I am now under!!

So one way or another the putting together of Nessletters has taken a bit of a back seat, although I have every intention of carrying on with them. All I can do is thank all our members for their forbearance.

EELS

As I finished NIS147 I said I had an account, from the Inverness Courier, of a large eel on the shore by Dores. Early in '04 three young women, two Canadian visitors and a Scottish friend, aged around twenty, were walking along the shore near Dores, when one of them saw what she termed as an 'Anaconda', drawing the attention of the others to it. They saw what they described as an enormous eel, some 28 to 30 feet long, lying among the rocks at the water's edge. "It's tail was sticking out from behind a large boulder the body stretched along the pebbles with the head lying behind a smaller rock". They thought whatever it was, was dead, then it appeared to move it's tail. At that point they ran off screaming(!!!). They went back to their car, and after a time decided it was not Nessie and unlikely to do them any harm. They then made their way back to the water's edge, to take photographs, only to find it must have been alive, as it was no longer there.

The story was told to Christina Palmer, of Beauly, who is a family friend of the Scottish girl. Mrs Palmer had a sighting in 1998 while on her husband's birthday cruise aboard the Jacobite Queen. This was carried in Nessletter 134 Jan. '99. I had met up with Richard Carter while at the loch and he had been to try to interview Mrs Macintosh Palmer. She had been reluctant to talk about it then, and although she agreed to fill in a sighting report form for him, left him standing in the rain on her doorstep while she did so. She reported that while standing at the back of the boat she saw, at about 150 yards distance, a large, black, slightly triangular, hump, size given was 40 to 50 feet in length. It came up then disappeared and came up again, moving for some distance across the stern of the boat. In the Nessletter I suggested a possible explanation. The sketch that Mrs Mackintosh Palmer did for Richard in the sighting report, showed Castle Urquhart in the background. It looked as if the Jacobite Queen was on the return journey, having turned at Urquhart. What could have been seen was their own wake, made going to the Castle, crossing behind them.

Interesting to note that while in 1998 Mrs Palmer seemed reluctant to talk about what she had seen, she is now a regular contributor to the letters column of the Inverness Courier. If Loch Ness is mentioned in

any respect, it is fairly certain that a letter from Mrs Palmer will appear. She is prominent in the Courier article about the three girls' 'Giant Eel'. She said it was definitely not Nessie, from her own experience, but could have been a large Eel. In the next issue of the Courier, Steve Feltham had been asked for his thoughts on the account. He said, "Lengths of alkathene pipe from the nearby fish-farm. It is black about two or three inches in diameter and comes with an adapter that looks like a hump. There are great shards of it about and when it is flapping about on the shoreline, it can look a lot like a live Eel". He went on to say there had been about 60 feet of it in the water, and great chunks of it on the shore. However, Mrs Palmer was certain that the girls had not misidentified such a length of pipe. Commenting, "It was definitely mobile, they knew what it was. One of them goes fishing on the lakes in Canada with her father and has seen some pretty big fish there". She believed they had seen something like that, but wondered about the size. She had been told where the girls had their sighting and intended visiting the scene for a closer look.

As I have previously theorised, there is a good case for large, very large, eels in Loch Ness. This could be an interesting account of one, but there are some questions. To me the most striking omission in the report is 'bulk'. The girls are adamant what they saw was very long, but there is no mention of girth, of the bulk of the object. Somewhere, in the chaos described above, difficult to find right now, I have figures that resulted from the Eel catching, and measuring, programme carried out by the Loch Ness Investigation, in the early seventies. I am not certain, but from memory, the length/girth ratio was in the order of 4 or 5 to 1, this was found to be about the figure in all the mature Eels caught, regardless of length. I would suggest that if what the girls saw, was a very large Eel, what would have left a lasting impression would have been not so much length, but breadth. It would have been almost six feet round, lying on the shore, or in the shallows, like two or three oil drums welded together, a substantial object. Also I find their behaviour a little unusual, we have three young ladies, not really 'girls' as I have referred to them, one who has experience of fishing on Canadian lakes and big fish there, so presumably quite sensible. Why did they behave like three 'squeally' schoolgirls? Perhaps move to a distance considered safe, while trying to establish what they were looking at, but to 'run off screaming'!! Why was it not there when, having settled down, they returned to have another look? No exact location was given, but they went back to their car, this suggests they were parked in one of the lay-byes along the road out of Dores, some distance from the shore. The reference to, rocks and boulders, in the account also indicate that shoreline, rather than the beach towards Tor Point which is mostly well washed small stones. A length of alkathene pipe should have still been there, when flotsam is brought ashore like that it takes a change of wind direction, and possibly loch level, for it to get back into the water. I would suggest that in their panic they did not note the precise spot, so returned to the wrong place? Steve Feltham, who suggested they had seen a length alkathene pipe, was pictured in the Courier article holding such a length of pipe. I have received a photograph of lengths of it lying on the shore along from Dores towards Tor Point, from NIS member Jared Christie, he also said there were more lengths of it lying among the bushes nearby. Last August I also saw lengths of it lying on the shore close to the Jacobite pier at Urquhart Castle. It is certain that the fish-farm, now lying disused, has left a legacy of pieces of this pipe scattered about in many places around the loch shores.

It could be argued that there is more chance of obtaining evidence of 'Giant Eels' in the loch, than for 'Nessie', and that this was such an instance. However I feel that whatever we are investigating, we must be very careful, and through in our deliberations. There are still questions about this report that leave, whatever it was, unidentified.

BRIAN HERRING

Brian is a long standing NIS member, and a stalwart member of the Loch Ness Project. He has sent me some very interesting material over the years, much of it still lying unused. In January this year, in response to NIS147 he sent some Natural History references he noted from Inverness papers, for Adrian and the Project, while doing his own research into floods in the Ness Catchment.

Inverness Courier 16th October 1833.

Short report of an enormous Eel taken at Wester Lovat on the River Beaully 6ft long 24 inches circumference. It weighed 48 pounds after cleaning and skinning.

Inverness Courier 28th May 1857.

Report of a Sturgeon taken on River Conon at Dingwall. Length 6ft 3 inches weight 62 pounds. Said to be the only one taken in the last forty years. That one was reported in the Inverness Journal, 14th August 1812. Sturgeon; lately caught in one of the salmon nets of the River Conon. Presented to the Rt. Hon. Lord Seaforth. Weight 2 cwt (224lbs), length 10ft 10 ins, nose to tip of tail, 9ft eye to setting on of tail.

Inverness Courier 13th July 1871 p5.

Report of Sturgeon captured in Salmon nets off Clachnaharry Pier. App. Length 7ft, thickest 40 inches, weight 130/140lbs. Found to be a female with about 20lb of roe. Account went on:- Last Sturgeon caught in Inverness about 35 years ago, but a few weeks since, one caught off Sutherland coast and sent to London. Brian notes that this is interesting because it was a female with roe - was it heading for fresh water to lay the eggs? He does not know how long the female Sturgeon carries the eggs.

Inverness Courier 2nd November 1871.

Sun Fish found aground at Capelinch near mouth of River Ness. Weight half a ton plus, length 7ft, breadth 7ft 8ins, girth 9ft 6ins, outer covering hard, like gristle. Uncommon in the area.

Inverness Courier 22nd February 1872.

On the morning of Wednesday 14th, a Kessock ferryman observed a large fish tumbling and splashing among the sea weed on the shore. He immediately attacked it with the only weapon to hand, a small anchor. The fish was a huge Eel, when captured it was found to weigh nearly 60lbs, it was 6ft long and upwards of 2ft in girth.

Inverness Courier 17th March 1870.

A Sturgeon was caught by two fishermen in a pool near the mouth of Thurso River, last Friday. About 4ft 8ins. Lived about 14 hours after being taken from the water.

Inverness Courier 6th September 1837

Strange Fish:- An extraordinary fish was caught off Bow Creek mouth early Monday morning (4th). It's mouth resembles much that of a shark, being 10 ins by 8ins, when opened, and furnished with six rows of sharp teeth. It is a flat fish, measuring 48ins from nose to extremity of the tail, and 30ins wide. It is also armed with two horns 6ins long on it's head, starting at opposite angles length-wise on the body. It has been examined by many expert fishermen, as well as other persons, none being able to say what fish it is.

Brian also noted that in the 1950s the Scottish Fisheries Laboratory in Aberdeen collected reports of exotic fish landed by fishermen and published details in the Scottish Naturalist. Several Sturgeon were caught in the Moray Firth, although not as far in as Inverness. one was 3 metres long and sold for £90.

The latest information he has, a report from 1991, indicates that Atlantic Sturgeon are a threatened species. Nearest breeding population thought to be in the Gironde Estuary, although rare reports of Sturgeon in the Thames, Seven and Humber estuaries and the Moray Firth. A local minister near Inverness in the 17th century reported a Sturgeon taken at Inverness and sold to Cromwell's soldiers for £6 sterling.

Thanks to Brian for these accounts. Large Eels, but not the giant 15 or 20 footers that theory suggests may be in Loch Ness. However, none of the above were taken from the loch. Interesting to note that 'girth' is given in the reports, and that it is substantial. Eels 6 or 7 feet long being 2 feet or more around.

SIGHTING REPORT

There was an article in the Inverness Courier, Friday 20th August '05, a holidaymaker had reported seeing humps in the loch Eighteen year old Tom Clegg, from Worcestershire, was travelling between Invermoriston and Fort Augustus just before 4pm on Tuesday 17th August. He said, "I saw three dark humps in the water. They were three to five metres in length, maybe, the skin seemed very smooth. It was maybe about 150 metres out into the loch. It did not look like anything I had seen before". He watched the humps for five or six seconds, before they appeared to slip below the water. He is convinced he witnessed an animal of some kind, rejecting the suggestion that he may have been misled by a boat wake. Saying, "That was the first thing I checked for, but there was not a wake. There were no boats in sight". Steve Feltham is quoted in the article saying it is very easy to get confused by boat wakes, especially when driving along and not being able to see where they come from.

I think Steve is correct in his analysis, and that it was most probably a boat wake that was seen. We are not told if Tom was actually watching the loch, or as I suspect driving, or being driven, along the road. If that is the case, as I have pointed out before, there are very few places along that stretch of road which provide a good, open, view of the loch. Mainly there are just short glimpses of the water through the trees. The craft that caused the wake and made the humps can be up to fifteen minutes away, well out of sight, when you pass the opening and see 'the humps'. However I am pleased to see this report in the paper, it is one of those that I was recently enquiring about. I was asking where are the misinterpretations? Earlier last year there had been two even more vague undetailed reports, so perhaps there were three in '04.

ANDREAS TROTTMAN

Late in March received a letter from Andreas, our Swiss NIS member, with some snippets of Loch Ness news. He had recently been informed by Mrs Gwen Powell that her husband Dr Gordon Powell, had died, aged 94, on 1st February '05. He had a good sighting in June 1936, and had remained a firm and objective believer. Andreas had corresponded with him for many years, exchanging opinions and views. I had also been in contact with him years ago, and featured his views in the Nessletters. Sad news

Andreas also heard that in March '05 there were a number of large seals reported in the River Ness, Loch Ness and even the Oich estuary.

In July '01, using a simple Hydrophone (DolphinEar pro), he recorded a rather strange 'singing' underwater sound at Lower Foyers. He once heard a similar sound from a Whale, but was not able to compare frequencies. At the time of recording there was an occupied cruiser berthed in the vicinity. Two oceanographic institutes (one kindly contacted by Prof Paul LeBlond) were supplied with copies of the tape for analysis. Marine Scientist Rodney Roundtree replied:- I have no idea what the sound source is for the file you sent me. Never heard anything like it, except when a student jumped into the water and tried to sing underwater one time while I was recording. Paul LeBlond wrote, Dear Andreas, I have been waiting in vain for a response from my ocean acoustical colleagues at the University of Victoria I am afraid that they might be reluctant to pronounce themselves.!

Andreas is hoping to travel up to Loch Ness, in August. Presumably accompanied by his wife Angeia.

NIS AT THE LOCHSIDE

Word from Val Smith, from Cardiff, who will be at the loch with his son Jonathan. They will be staying with Steve and Heather Murray, Cherrytrees, Glachmor, Milton, Drumnadrochit. They are earlier this year, 25th June to 26th July, driving Ford Fiesta X396 FHB. The three weeks because Jonathan finishes University this year and they do not know what he will be doing in '06.

Doris is sure she is well enough for the journey, so we hope to be at the loch from 23rd July to 5th August. The first week the ladies will be at the Foster's croft, Abriachan, again. The second is provisionally booked in Drumnadrochit. I will be parked at the Old Abriachan Pier, as I have done for so many years.

AWARD

The Society for Scientific Exploration has presented the Dinsdale Award every two years since 1992 for "significant contributions to the expansion of human understanding through the study of unexplained phenomena". The 2004 award was made, in Las Vegas, to Dr Robert H. Rines, founder of the Academy of Applied Science, through which he has given wide ranging support to innovative explorations in science and technology. Noting particularly the pioneering work at Loch Ness, which achieved underwater photographs of apparently large unidentified animals.

Previous awards were:- '92 Helmut Schmidt, for pioneering electronic and computer techniques for the study of human/machine interactions. '94 William Coliss, for unique and comprehensive cataloguing of scientific anomalies. '96 Halton Arp, for work on non-Doppler red-shifts and their import for cosmological theory. '98 Ian Stevenson for distinguished studies of cases suggestive of reincarnation. '00 Kilmer McCully, for elucidating the role of homocysteine in arteriosclerosis. '02 William Roll, for studies of 'recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis' e.g. poltergists.

Well, at last, this Nessletter put together. In the meantime Barry, 'the roofer', has been and laid a new roof. He has returned, and done remedial work on the two small leaks that persisted. I have taken down my plastic sheets, and the tent over the WP, gathered up the buckets and containers. Next comes the redecorating, the new carpet, and an attempt to restore things to some semblance of normality. We have been fortunate, nothing of importance has been damaged. The water that came in was clean rainwater, more or less. It is hard to envisage the mess and devastation left behind a real flood.

As usual thank you for being NIS members. If you have a change of address please let me know. Also please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed, subscriptions are UK£3.00, the USA remains \$10.00. The address is still R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1R. Tel.01388 537359.