

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 155

DECEMBER 2009

RIPS PIECE

At long last another Nessletter raises its head, in a short while I hope you will understand why the long pause. It has been difficult to collect my thoughts and attempt to write what I have to.

My dearest, darling wife, Doris died on 25th July '09. She suffered a severe stroke on 23rd July, it was a Thursday afternoon. Our daughter, Heather, was visiting, which was fortunate from my point of view, not being on my own. Doris had just had her hair done, a lady comes in to do it and just after she had left, Doris complained of a headache. She said it was a very bad one, then she just lapsed into unconsciousness. It was a 999 situation and paramedics were quickly on the scene, into the ambulance and away to Durham University Hospital. Heather and I followed down. Doris was in intensive care and had a scan. I was told there had been a massive bleed in the left side of her head and a lesser one in the right. Because of her breathing problems there could be no operation done, to try to alleviate the pressure on the brain. She would not have been able to tolerate the anaesthetic. It was a case of looking after her and keeping her comfortable, if that is the correct term for someone who is unconscious, she did not open her eyes again. The doctor told me that if by any chance she did pull through on her own, there was little doubt she would be severely disabled. All our family had turned up by now, and Doris taken to a single room off the ward. We stayed with her, in relays, for the following day and a half. She did not regain consciousness. Heather and I were with her when she passed away on the Saturday lunchtime, 11-55am. I had looked after her for some years, and so much wanted her back, to go on doing so for more years. But I would not have wished her back to have very little quality to her life. I think I have to be thankful that for both of us, the end came quietly, quickly and was an end.

Strangely it was a shock. Despite her continued poor health we had had a couple of months where she had been 'not so bad'. Her eldest sister had been to stay for a fortnight late May, early June, and then another friend of ours to stay for a week. We had been out a couple of times for lunch and a drive around both times. The hoist we had fitted, to lift her into her seat in the van, worked very well, and we were getting better at using it. I had taken her to hospital for her annual check by the chest/breathing consultant, 19th June. He told us that there was very little deterioration from last year, and no sign of cancer, so it was unnecessary for Doris to go back, unless there was a change. While we were not actually dancing when we came out, we were both very pleased that things looked fairly good and perhaps Doris was going to have a better spell for sometime. Then cruel fate jumped out and took her from us.

I had known and loved her for 54 years, we had been together for 38, married 35. There is now a huge void in my life. Like all those who have experienced similar loss I expect I will eventually come to terms with it, as hard as it is. I have the family, which is a help. But I sometimes wonder if I want to! Then to make things even worse, if that is possible, Doris' sister Audrey died. She had been in similar poor health, breathing problems, on oxygen, etc. if anything, she had been worse than Doris. She was taken into hospital just days after Doris' funeral, and seven weeks after Doris, she died. They had been very close, spending much time together especially in the later years. She had been included in our Loch Ness trips since 1988. I do wonder if losing Doris was the final straw with Audrey, and she pined, adding to her very poor health. Whatever it was, it is now sisters re-united.

I then received news of another family death. Doris and Audrey's brother Bill had died, five weeks after Audrey. He emigrated to Australia with his family in 1970; he had been in very poor health for some years. Doris and Audrey went over to visit in 1998, I mentioned it in the Nessletters, as that year was one of the two trips to Ness that I made on my own, after Doris and I got together.

On that subject, I made a rough calculation while thinking of our lives together. Doris and I were a couple for 38 years. One of those years we spent on the Old Pier at Abriachan, living in an assortment of

caravans, and camper-vans, for a fortnight a year. Silly isn't it. I may return to the loch, but I will need to be emotionally stronger than I am at the moment, everywhere will have memories. Having said that, I am living in our home, if anywhere has memories, very good ones, it is here.

I would like to struggle on with the Nessletters. It could be a struggle, as I have written before, I did not find writing easy, it has become no easier over the years, then as well as my personal woes, there seems to be very little happening at the loch to report about. I was in touch with Steve Feltham recently, passing on my sad news, and he had only sketchy information of one report. A Fort Augustus man, now living in Inverness, had a glimpse of a possible hump from the A84, somewhere between the Clansman and Urquhart. Just a fleeting look as he drove along, when he found a place to stop there was nothing to be seen. Being a local man, can we assume he has some experience of the water conditions, and what he glimpsed was perhaps more than a wave or wake? Not very useful, as good evidence.

The Inverness Courier, 27th May '09, carried the story of a possible sonar contact. One of the Loch Ness cruise boats, 'Jacobite Queen', while on one of its trips on May 21st picked up what seemed to be a positive target. Somewhere between Dores and Urquhart Castle, there appeared on the screen five identical dots, in a vertical line. One of which seemed to be below the loch bottom! The Captain, John Askew, said that in his fifteen years on the loch, it was the first time he had registered anything like that. Adrian Shine, of the Loch Ness Project, said; "This has me puzzled and has every appearance of a genuine sonar contact. The fact there are five items on the screen can be explained, as a single object often appears as an echo. This certainly adds to the Loch Ness mystery and will be the subject of further investigation." I am not aware of any further statement by Adrian. I did wonder if the fact that the cast of 'Allo 'Allo', which was playing at the Eden Court Theatre, was aboard at the time had anything to do with the contact being reported.

There was a bit of silliness, not sure of date. Cannot lay hands on the piece I took from the Daily Mirror, right now. A photograph taken from google-earth, looking directly down on the surface of the loch, showed a lovely white Octopus. It had the oval head/body shape squared off at the tentacle end, these tentacles trailing behind! Why a white Octopus should be lying on the surface of Loch Ness was not stated. However, if you saw that the oval/squared off shape was in fact a cruiser, the flared deck at the bows giving the lovely shape and the bow wave and wake providing the tentacles, at the stern, all was clear. Or perhaps not as clear as could have been, as I believe the newspapers made the original photograph a little fuzzier, just to help.

ELEPHANTS, AGAIN

Pachyderms (what a wonderful word) have featured in previous Nessletters, 151 and 35. It had been noted that the raised trunk of a swimming Elephant resembled the 'Surgeon's Photograph'. Leading to the suggestion that is what had been photographed, in April 1934. Also that Bertram Mills had seen one in Loch Ness and started the fable, and offered a 20,000 pound reward for the capture of Nessie I argued that it was very doubtful that an Elephant had ever been in Loch Ness, so could not be the source of these stories.

Earlier this year I heard on the radio a few episodes in a series similar to Book at Bedtime, the book being read was "Big Charlie". The 'Big Charlie' in the title was a large Elephant, ten and half feet tall, weighing five and a half tons, who was kept at Butlin's holiday camp in Ayr. The story was about the problems of transporting him from Ayr, to the holiday camp at Filey. Billy Butlin had called in a big-game expert to oversee the construction of a crate and the transportation. I did not hear the complete book but one thing I did catch, was that his mahout used to take Big Charlie swimming off the beach at Ayr. Therefore it is possible that Billy Butlin, if not Bertram Mills, could have witnessed an elephant swimming in the sea.

I do wonder what the time scale is, that leads to elephants being equated with "the Surgeon's Photograph". When did Bertram Mills offer the reward, before or after April 1934? Also one question that I have never asked, so do not have an answer; when Wetherell and his boys decided to produce a model monster for their photographs, why did they chose the shape they did? Alex Campbell, after his first sighting, dates differ in books, but September 1933 is quoted, reported it had a five-foot head and neck. He also said that when he got home he looked through his books and the closest animal he could find, to what he had seen.

was a Plesiosaur. This I believe was the beginning of the Plesiosaur idea to explain what it was people were reporting seeing in the loch. Did it also provide the template for Wetherell and his boys?

Just to round off these musings. October 31st, the Daily Mirror had a beautiful photograph of a swimming elephant. Taken underwater, it was off Rajan, he was almost completely submerged, trunk down with just the top of his head and back breaking the surface. Said to be the last swimming elephant in the Bay of Bengal, India. At 59 he has found a new lease of life on Havelock Island, being a big attraction with the tourists. The dive operator said it was an incredible experience to swim with Rajan.

JOHN COOPER

John, from Oxford, is a long-standing NIS member; he also has been visiting the loch since the mid-'70s. He sent me a letter, beginning of August, with news of his last visit to the loch, it had been just a visit. He, and Davina, spent two weeks in mid July allocated between Orkney, great place, then passing down through the West Coast to call at the loch.

"It was a bright but grey day, over water visibility was perhaps a couple of miles before the gentle fade into the mist. We stopped at a lay-by just after leaving Fort Augustus, near Borlum Bay and simply took in the view; it had been perhaps five years since seeing the loch at close quarters. Then fairly swiftly over the top to White Bridge and thence down to Upper Foyers, once again to have a cuppa in the yet again re-incarnated tea-shop come post office. I made comment to the couple running the store that I had been taking-tea at the establishment for ca 35 years and each time I come back the place has either been swapped around inside, sold to new owners or has otherwise taken on a new format. Present owners said they had been there two years. This time there is an amount of wooden decking around the front of the café and the post office. I suppose it may look 'modern' but I never found a problem with the old gently sloping concrete surface.

We ate our sandwich and supped tea, then we were off to drive down, via Lower Foyers, to visit the old aluminium smelter quayside. Whilst driving down I expected to see the loch very clearly, just to the downhill side of the police house, now abandoned. The trees were cut down ca 7 years ago but now nature has taken over the scene and the loch is again hidden, by deciduous growth, so no easy view of the water. Just near the police house there was, in times gone by, a gravel area, perhaps 20 yards square, where it was possible to park and see the water, again, no more. We drove slowly down the backward facing fork, where the road to Lower Foyers leaves the military road. Down through the forest, turning right by the Health Centre and down past the fish farm, to the quayside. What a disappointment....! The complete edge of the quayside gravel area now has a 4 metre high bank of gorse and other hardy growth, no easy sight of the water at all. Walking from where Frank (Searle) once had his caravan along the gravel area, the road along to the hydro building, the entire loch bank is now obscured. There is a narrow cutting, perhaps a metre, to allow access down to the wooden jetty on the south side of Foyers Pier and access to the pier itself, but that is all. I had a firm sense of 'keep out' visitors not wanted, it could not have been plainer if there was a posted sign to that effect.

We then moved on along to Dores, passing the location of the Magician's house, now an ugly development site. Whilst driving Foyers all the way to Dores there was only one brief view of the water, perhaps 50 mtrs and that from a Lay-by. Arriving at Dores we drove down on to the beach parking area, immediately seeing the familiar old library van but no sign of Steve Feltham. Apart from a dad and a couple of children down by the water's edge and a few customers at the rear of the Dores Inn, all was quiet.

Which brings me to the end of my loch-update, sorry it is rather down beat but this is how we found things."

I dropped John a quick note, telling him of my sad loss, also that as it happened most of my family had been at Nairn for a week a little after he passed by the loch. The arrangements being made early in the year, caravan booked, monies paid. We talked it over and it seemed a shame to lose out on their holidays, even among all the sadness and grief. Therefore after the cremation and formalities were over and their Mam at rest, off they went. I do not think Doris would have minded, she would be in their thoughts, and of course

they were going to Nairn, where she always loved visiting. Our Heather and partner, Geoff, had taken a run around the loch at that time. She was keen to show him the loch and places she known from so many holidays. They even stopped at the Foyers café/post office for a meal. I was able to tell him that Steve Feltham had been had been at a rock festival event at Belladrum, over on the other side towards Muir of Ord.

John replied, in his note he said that perhaps if not working full time he would try to get to the loch more often, also the loch is so very far from Oxford. It seemed so very long ago, that as a young man mid to late 20s, he took his old Dad's boat up to the loch, with his home made, hand built Sonar, doing an amount of active small scale research. He said," funny how things turn out, I still have that old sonar kit in my garage, it is now such old technology that it is indeed a little cringe-worthy but never mind it did it's job back in 1976/7/8 when I was 'on the water."

The comments John made in his first letter are similar to those I have expressed in Nessletters over the years. I am sure that people would be surprised by how little of the water is seen as you drive along the loch side, also how little is made of the water front at Foyers. I know there is a body of councillors set up to protect the South side of the loch, to try to prevent it being turned into some kind of theme park, but I feel something, tasteful, could be done with the area down there.

BOB RINES

Dr Robert H. Rines died on 1st November '09 from heart failure, at the age of 87. They are the simple facts to a remarkable man and his life. Bob Rines, as he was known to those with an interest in Loch Ness, had a very full, varied life. He was born in Boston, grew up in Brookline, his parents were both lawyers, from an early age he showed exceptional talent as a musician. Graduating early from high school, he studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, achieving a bachelor's in physics by 1942. Throughout his student he was writing music, but with World War Two in full swing, he joined the Army Signal Corps as a radar operator. He developed electronic gear to improve radar and sonar images, while serving. This modulation technique was used in the military's Microwave Early Warning System. Eventually being used in Patriot missiles and the improved equipment used to locate the wrecks of the Titanic and Bismarck. After his service he was employed in the federal patent office, while working for his law degree at Georgetown University, Washington D.C., which he obtained in 1947. He went to work in his father's law practice, as a patent lawyer. Throughout his life he was an inventor, with more than 80 patents to his credit. This interest caused him to found the Academy of Applied Sciences in 1963. He wanted to bring expertise from many different fields together, to tackle a multitude of problems. He felt that too often, people in these various fields did not communicate, did not even realise what the other person was doing. His interest in Loch Ness and the 'Monster' had been stirred in 1958, when on a visit to Inverness he read 'More Than a Legend' by Constance Whyte. Nothing was done about it until 1969, when, after hearing a lecture on the subject, by Professor Roy Mackal, at the MIT, Bob offered the Academy's assistance in the search. Professor Mackal, by then had been working with the Loch Ness Phenomenon Investigation Bureau, (LNI). Bob's first expedition to the loch with a team from the Academy, was in 1970. Over the next 37 years he returned with teams, and varied, equipment, trying to obtain the 'proof of existence' that we all long for. On 23rd June '71, Bob and his secretary Carol, who became his second wife, while visiting Basil and 'Freddie' Cary, along with others, witnessed a 20ft long hump moving through the water in Urquhart Bay, some two thirds of a mile away. Which laid to rest any remaining doubts he may have had about what they were seeking in the loch.

This is a very sad loss; Bob leaves a wife, two sons and a daughter, our condolences go out to them. I should return to Bob next time, there is much more to his endeavours at the loch.

Once more I have managed to reach the end of a Nessletter. Considering the sad news contained in this one it should have a black border. As usual thank you for being NIS members and continuing tolerance. If you have a change of address please let me know. Also please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed, more so now, subscriptions are UK£3.00, the USA \$10.00. The address is still R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldsford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel. 01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963 (not always on).