

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 156

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RIP'S PIECE

Unsure if I should start with this, or leave it to the end. I think here is possibly better, not the temptation to skip the last address and subs bit. I wish to thank the very many of you who sent cards, letters, little notes of condolences to myself and the family, on the sad news of Doris's death. They were very much appreciated, I have replied to some, I should have replied to you all, but to those I have not, thank you very much, your thoughts have been a great help. I am managing life quite well, perhaps a little too well. I have settled into a quiet pattern of daily household chores, along with pottering and daydreaming, as I have said before, I live in a very beautiful part of the country. Losing the daily routine of providing for Doris's needs has taken much of the drive my life had. It is very easy not to do things, which I really should be doing, like settling down at the keyboard to put a Nessletter together! This should have been started a long time ago. What has given me a push today, 23rd April 2010, to make a start, not only is it St George's day, it is the fiftieth anniversary of a momentous moment in the Loch Ness saga. At nine o'clock on this day fifty years ago Tim Dinsdale took the footage that has intrigued us all ever since.

TIM DINSDALE FILM

It would be surprising if any of our members have not read the account of the film being taken. But a brief reminder may not come amiss. In early 1959, a magazine article on the Loch Ness Monster had stirred Tim's interest. Researching the subject he read Constance Whyte's 'More Than a Legend', and had thoughts of trying to get an expedition together, similar to that of Sir Edward Mountain in 1934. Finding he could not get anyone to show any support for such a venture, he determined to mount a one-man expedition at the first opportunity. So it was on 16th April 1960, Easter Saturday, he left his home in a small car stuffed with equipment, to spend six days at Loch Ness. The front passenger seat had been removed, so his Bolex 16mm cine camera, with a 135mm telephoto lens, tripod mounted, could be used in situ, from the car. After an arduous two-day drive, with an overnight stop at his brother's farm in Northumberland; no motorways, few bypasses, and the Queensferry over the Firth of Forth, in those days. It was evening as he drove through Dores, on the way to Foyers and the hotel. Some way beyond Dores he came upon a family excitedly watching something out in the loch. Pulling up he saw that they were looking at two grey humps, with clear water between them, two hundred yards away. He lifted the camera, on the tripod, from the car, fumbling with the unfamiliar set up, preparing to film 'the monster'. Then he thought to use his binoculars and have a closer look at the 'humps'. On doing so he was able to ascertain they were, in fact, a floating tree trunk, even with a thin branch plus leaf sprouting from it. I feel that this episode becomes crucial later in the story.

Tim's daily routine was to rise early, drive out and watch from various places, possibly return to the hotel for breakfast, then more watching. He also made contact with a number of local residents and arranged to meet and interview them at convenient times. On the evening of his fourth day while watching from the hills above Foyers Bay, in failing, light he saw a disturbance in the river mouth about 800yards away. He shot some film of what seemed to be two long black shapes rising and falling in the water, without first checking the disturbance through the binoculars. Moving on to his sixth, and last, day at the loch. After his usual early start and a spell of watching Borlum Bay and other areas around Fort Augustus he was making his way back to the hotel for breakfast. Knowing that he would have the loch in view for a short time as he drove down the hill above Foyers Bay, he had the camera, on the tripod, standing in the front. Halfway down the hill glancing at the water, he saw a reddish brown object about two-thirds the way across the loch (1300yds). First impression was that it was slightly shorter than one of the local fishing boats, which he had become familiar with and standing too high out of the water. Stopping the car he examined the object through his binoculars. It seemed to have turned from sideways to him when first glimpsed, to end on.

Motionless in the water, a long oval shape, a distinct mahogany colour in the sunlight with a large darker patch on the left side. He said that he could see no sign of a fin on the back and for some reason it reminded him of the back of an African Buffalo.

As he watched it started to move away from him. He states that at that moment he knew he was looking at the extraordinary back of some huge living creature. Turning to the camera he started to film, pressing the button with deliberate control, in long steady bursts, stopping between to wind the clockwork motor. Through the optical camera sight it appeared very clear, although slightly smaller. As the object swam away across the loch it changed course a little leaving a glassy zigzag wake. Two or three hundred yards from the far shore, now fully submerged it turned sharply left and proceeded parallel to it, leaving a long v-wake. It was now 1800 yards or more away, knowing he only had a few feet of film left, he decided to dash down the hill to try to get closer. He makes much of this fruitless attempt in his book. Never the less, he was certain he had taken film of something large and very unusual swimming on the surface of Loch Ness.

Later in the day he shot some comparison film of a boat taking the same course across the loch, piloted by the manager of the hotel, if I remember correctly. These films he sealed in the cans with signatures on the tape, as a precaution against suggestions of tampering. He then set off on the drive home, with the overnight stop at his brother's. He paused at Fort Augustus to send a telegram to the British Museum, whom he thought, as the major scientific body, may be interested in the results. He got home, Reading, late evening 24th April. He then made arrangements to go to Kodak Ltd, factory is perhaps the way to describe it, there he would have the film processed under secure conditions. This took a few days to organise. I know he was initially disappointed with the result, as it was in black and white and so lost the colour, which he had been so aware of at the loch. I think he describes it in his book as 'shabby'. He first showed it to a Naturalist friend, who was impressed and used what influence he had to try to arouse official interest. Tim also spent the following weeks going around telling the story, and showing the film, to a number of scientific people. These were people of some standing from various disciplines in the scientific world. Much to his surprise, and disappointment, he was met with general apathy. The scientific world, it seemed, just was not interested in the Loch Ness Monster. It was nearly two months later, in June, that a journalist knocked on his door, saying he knew about the 'secret film' and demanding the full story. This forced Tim's hand, as now he realised it would be impossible to keep the existence of the film quiet for much longer. He went to an established firm of film distributors, and very quickly a course of action had been mapped out. So it was two months or more before his film appeared on TV newsreels and in the Panorama TV programme. The Panorama team were very helpful to Tim in the preparation of this programme. They also undertook to have his original 16mm film enlarged and transposed to 35mm, a tricky laboratory process but extremely worthwhile. It was not until six years later, through David James and the LNI, that his film was examined by JARIC. They came as close as anyone could in saying that the object filmed, 'was probably animate'.

That is the account of the film being taken, perhaps the best piece of evidence of something large and unusual living in Loch Ness. However it leaves us with a huge problem, an unanswerable question, perhaps. In the ensuing half-century why has no one been able to obtain film as good, or even better? Until his tragic and untimely death in 1987 Tim returned to the loch so many times, endeavouring to do so, then the big LNI expeditions of the '60s and early '70s, the continuing efforts of numerous individuals and groups; all to no avail. Should we be questioning what it was Tim filmed that morning? As researchers and investigators we question eyewitnesses, looking for the ordinary explanation to something that at first seems so extraordinary. If we question Mr Dinsdale as an eyewitness, it seems very likely that what he saw that day could be explained as misidentifying a loch boat. He had examined the object through his binoculars, Ah yes; but they were not very high magnification were they, just times seven. Even so, a few days earlier he had been able to check that the 'humps' he saw were in fact a floating tree trunk, with a thin branch carrying a leaf sticking out. Showing they were strong enough for the job in hand. Perhaps he was fatigued, impairing his judgement; he had been rising very early while at the loch. Possible, but I spent my early working life getting up very soon as a baker, then as a hard-rock miner for twenty years, rising before five in the morning, to be ready to go underground for six. I do not think my perception was badly affected. Would six days really have that affect on Mr Dinsdale? I do not really think so. Despite all that, a boat does seem to fit, fairly closely, what Mr Dinsdale reports.

However we must consider that Tim was not only an eyewitness; he took film of what he witnessed! Film, that does not show a boat, according to a very reputable professional body, JARIC. As I said earlier, why has no one been able to equal, or better, his results? Could it be that, not only was he mistaken, but the camera also produced misleading images? In the late '90s there were efforts made to reproduce the results obtained by Tim. In May '98 Richard Carter, assisted by Dick Raynor, using a 16mm Bolex movie camera and telephoto lens filmed a loch boat, crossing the loch taking a similar course as that of Tim's 'object'. The results they obtained showed quite clearly, a boat crossing the loch. Richard was back at the loch the second week in July '98, when once again assisted by Dick and also this time Adrian Shine, they tried again to replicate Tim's results, by filming a boat crossing the loch. Once again they obtained very good, clear, film of a boat on the loch, (NIS134), I was privileged to view both these films and there was no doubt what was filmed was a boat. Even screwing up your eyes, and other ways of altering your vision, did not enable you to say, perhaps, it is not a boat. Unlike Tim's film, showing an object crossing the loch, which does not leap from the screen saying, this is a boat! These attempts were undertaken using similar camera and film to that Tim used. One thing that was different was the place from which the film was taken. Although chosen to match the distance from the water and the height above the surface, these sequences were shot from the opposite side of the loch. Also trying to achieve the same lighting and water conditions, which they did, would be nigh on impossible. This has to be borne in mind, when comparing their results with Tim's film.

One rather strange anomaly of Tim's film that these other films seem to show, it is a little fuzzy. Not out of focus, just a little indistinct. This does not really strike you when viewing Tim's film, but when you see the results that Richard, and the others obtained, using a similar film/camera combination, there is a sharpness to the images of their boats crossing the loch, that Tim's 'hump' does not seem to have. It was pointed out to me by Dick Raynor, I think, that in Tim's book 'Loch Ness Monster', the photograph of him and his camera, taken on the day he got the film, shows that the 135mm lens is not standard Bolex equipment. This should not matter if it is fitted to the camera with the correct adapters. Would that cause film, shot with this equipment, to be a little fuzzy? I do not think so, the comparison film that he took later that day is clearer. The disturbance, in the river mouth, filmed on the fourth evening is sharp, and clearly shows water washing over two, just submerged, rocks. I am sure he would have seen that, had he looked at them through the binoculars before filming them, and not done so. This still leaves us looking for an explanation to the fuzziness. Discussing it with others, two possible explanations came to mind. The camera was mounted on the tripod in the front passenger position. Was the film taken through the passenger window, or did Tim wind it down? Had he been driving round, on a chilly April Highland morning, with the window already down? He gives a fair amount of detail in his book, of that morning's events. But does he itemise every minute action? If the sequence was shot through the window, could the indiscernible film of road dirt on the glass, even imperfections in the glass itself, caused the fuzziness? I did wonder about driving with the window down, possible, especially if the car did not have a heater. Not as strange as it sounds to the younger generations. My first vehicle, after years riding motorbikes, was a Ford Anglia van purchased new in the early '60s, to be used for our business as well as myself. The heater came as an additional option, and at about twice my weekly wage, I did not take the option. Heat being provided by a Primus camping stove, quietly roaring away on a rubber mat in the back! Health and safety not an issue in those days.

In his book Tim describes his journey North, and questions his decision to go so early in the year. "Inside the car was deceptively warm and pleasant, but when I opened the window a freezing wind swirled about, bringing a taste of the rigours to come". The car had a heater. On the morning in question, Tim is driving back to the hotel with the car nice and warm and cosy. He sees an object half way across the loch reaches over and winds the window down. He is examining the object through the binoculars; cold air rushes in and contacts the warm lens on the camera, causing a film of condensation. Resulting in a sequence of film that is a little indistinct. Two possibilities for it being a little fuzzy.

In Nessletter 140, I give some details of the work Adrian Shine had carried out on Tim's film, which I was able to see in July '00. In the sequence of the film where the object travels parallel to the far shore, Adrian is sure it is a boat and the helmsman is visible. Knowing the value I place on that footage, he had wanted me to see what he had done, hoping I would be able to see what has led him to his conclusions. After watching it a number of times on the TV, that is one of the advantages of video, you can very easily rewind

and watch again as many times as you want. I could see what he bases his argument on. There are brief glimpses of a slightly lighter patch above the wake, perhaps where you would expect the boatman to be. But I am still not convinced. He has taken 16mm film and transposed it onto videotape, that in itself may adversely affect the quality. Also (I am not an expert remember) with digital TV doesn't interference or lack of signal show as blank, or pale pixels? I wondered if that is what Adrian has, a spot or two of interference, giving pale patches where you could expect the boatman. Also if the helmsman is visible, albeit briefly, at 1800yards, why is he not apparent at 1500yards, the range when Tim commenced filming?

Adrian had similar thoughts as myself about the 'helmsman' in his video version of Tim's film being interference. A year later I was able to see the further work he had done on the film, (NIS142). Using a complex computer programme he had taken a number of 'frames' as the object is moving more or less parallel to the far shore, giving almost identical 'frames'. Increasing the transparency of each, so they almost disappear. Then superimpose them all together, using the bow-wave as a reference point. Result, any constant feature in every frame shows up, while anything that is only on the odd one, i.e. interference, does not. He showed me the process and then the results. The pale blob where a 'helmsman' could be expected was still there; which seemed to indicate that it was not interference. Adrian continued his work on the film, trying to clarify his findings. Once more I was able to view the tape, if anything it was a backward step. The pale 'blob' remains there, no clearer than before, but there is a new feature. A little way behind the 'helmsman' there appears a thin, dark, upright shape rising out of the water; could that be interpreted as a 'water-skier'? Of course not, but an indication that the techniques being used by Adrian are not providing him with the clear-cut results he is seeking.

I have already queried why the 'boatman' may be discernible at 1800yards, but not at 1500yards, when Tim commenced filming. Also, I believe, the argument goes, the dark 'dapple' that Tim saw and describes in his book, is in fact the 'helmsman', sitting to one side in the stern of the boat. If this is so, why does the 'dark' shape show up later, as a 'lighter patch', in Adrian's film? If it was a boat, why was it not apparent when he got closer to it? By trying to get closer he also lost his elevation getting closer to water level. Being at water level affects perspective, I know that sitting, as I have done for so many hours, on the Old Pier at Abriachan, at water level, boats, water skiers even, can be very difficult to make out against the far shore. Although at that point the far shore is a mile and a quarter away. The 'far shore' opposite Lower Foyers is three quarters of a mile away, quite a bit closer. Can it be argued using his binoculars, even from water level or close to it, a boat should have been discernible moving along near the far shore.

After all his efforts the results Adrian hoped for, still elude him. I have said before, that because he has not been able to work with the original film, or an early generation copy, that he is working with video copies a number times removed from the original, that perhaps gives rise to the results he is getting.

In that vein, late last year I received a letter from Henry Bauer, author of "The Enigma of Loch Ness", long standing NIS member, who has contributed to the Nessletters over the years. He is also Professor Emeritus of Chemistry & Science Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University.

Part of the letter reads; "I do not recall whether I ever mentioned a Web-page I posted with computer enhancements of a right-to-left portion of Tim's film, showing definitively nothing on the surface, no boat, just a heavy wake. Resolution of course at film-grain level, but scanning and enhancement and interpretation by a senior faculty member here, and of course the source of the film is a 16mm copy given to me by Tim, far superior to Adrian's photographing from a TV from a commercial documentary. There is no 'head of a boatmen'. The Web page with pix is; <http://henrybauer.homestead.com/DinsdaleFilm.html> .

I think this clearly illustrates the problems we have at Loch Ness. Because there is no unequivocal evidence, two respected, well-informed people, examine, more or less, the same piece of 'evidence' and come to differing conclusions. We are all seeking the truth; well I think the vast majority of us are. Thankfully there have been a very few over the years, who have looked on Loch Ness and the mystery, as a way to self-promotion and possibly making 'a few bob'. Those who were not averse to adjusting the reports, never letting the facts get in the way of a good 'monster' story. Perhaps our expectations of what the truth will be lead us down different avenues of inquiry. It is to be hoped that when there is an incontestable answer to the mystery, it can be accepted by reasonable people. Although I suppose there will always be those that will not be convinced, one way or the other.

Henry makes the point that because he has access to film that is very close to the original, it should give more reliable results than those produced by Adrian, with the many times removed film available to him. I think that is a valid point to make, although I understand that situation is beyond Adrian's control. I am in the fortunate position of having seen the 35mm version of the film projected onto a cinema screen. As I have said, Kodak professionally transposed this from Tim's original 16mm film. Which is as close to original as it is possible to get. They did not enlarge it, or use any other techniques; one thing it does have is a very slight blue tinge. The effect was very impressive, I wish you all could have seen it. Gone is image that left Tim initially thinking, 'that's a bit shabby', replaced by a substantial object travelling across the surface of the loch. Unfortunately, it is still not possible to identify what it is. I tried to be objective at the time, despite being surrounded by LNI personnel, all firm believers, most of us possibly still dreaming of Plesiosaurs. I tried to see what was on the screen as a natural, normal, everyday object, but could not. I could not see a boat, I tried but it just would not become a boat. Can it be argued that it could not be identified, because it is a large 'unknown' animal, therefore it is not something we are familiar with!

While putting this Nessletter together, checking details I came across a letter in the front of Tim's book 'Project Water Horse'. I received it a number of years ago from someone who was very involved in all Tim's work. The relevant passage reads: "I still remember going to that cinema in Inverness to see the 35mm format screened – I think that was the first time I KNEW that it really was an animate object, there were so many time over the years I wished I could deny it!!" That is a sentiment that I could agree with, it might have been better to 'see' a boat in Tim's film. Then we could have all stopped at home and taken up embroidery and stamp collecting, (I was going to say philately but I couldn't spell it). The year of our lives together, that Doris and I spent on the Old Abriachan Pier, would have been spent somewhere else. Wherever that was, I am sure it would not have been as enjoyable, nor would we have made so many good friends.

Having said all that, the question I posed earlier remains; half a century on where is better film, where are the indisputable photographs, the unequivocal evidence?

I was very taken by this piece when I first received it ten years ago. It is frightening how the years just disappear. I had intended to use it as part of a fortieth anniversary of Tim's film, now it comes to hand for the fiftieth. It is beautifully constructed to cover all aspects of the film. I will leave you to judge whether I should insert 'Fairy' between Millennium and Tale?

A Millennium Tale from Loch Ness.

It was the Easter weekend and the angler decided to try his luck. His boat was at Foyers, but recent rain meant that the River Moriston was the most likely place to find the fish. He drove down to the area near the mouth of the River Foyers where most of the anglers kept their boats. His, like many of them, was clinker-built in Inverness by McCuish & McPerson, and had been bought new by his father.

He took the engine from the boot of the car and fitted it to the transom. It was a 'Silver Century' from British Seagull, and he had only had it for a few weeks. It was more powerful than his previous model and it gave him confidence for the longer trips he was planning. After fitting it to the boat, he titled the engine down so he could check the petrol mix in the long-range tank. He removed the filler cap, with its air vent tightly shut, and saw that the tank was $\frac{3}{4}$ full. There was more than enough for his intended journey. He tilted the engine back up again and continued to load the boat in the shallows. Oars, waterproofs, kapok life jacket, spare petrol, bailer sandwiches, tea and the bottle were all there, along with the fishing tackle. He was ready, and after pushing the boat out a little further he climbed in and set the oars in the rowlocks to get away from the shore. He then shipped the oars and went aft to start the engine.

He opened the fuel cock under the tank, set the simple choke flap in place, and pressed down the tickler until fuel dripped out of the carburettor and into the water. He noticed the sudden calm patch he had created, but hoped no one else would. He wrapped the starter cord around the exposed flywheel, and set the throttle to one-third. On the first pull, the engine spluttered into life and he quickly reached over the stern and lifted the choke flap. There was remarkably little smoke from his new engine, and he was gratified by his sensible purchase. Nevertheless, he would be cautious and motor a little towards Foyers Bay before crossing the loch so as to be in view of the people at the Foyers Hotel as he crossed the loch.

As he came into sight of the hotel, he turned to his left and began to head out across the loch, and at that moment the outboard slowed down and stopped. His heart sank with the engine revs. He had been so sure the engine was a good buy. He had read the instruction book, and knew what to do. Five times he wrapped the cord around the flywheel and pulled on it, yet five times he was rewarded with the distinctive sucking sound which told him the engine was not about to start. He knew these engines only needed petrol and a spark to run until the end of time. He had checked the fuel already, so now he would have to take the spark plug out. He realised that working over the back of the boat was a bit risky, so he took off his waterproof and put on his life-jacket, a black, ex-Army thing he had bought for two shillings at Fraser's Auction Rooms. Like most safety equipment, he hadn't actually tried to use it before now, and it took him a minute or so to work out how the enormously long tapes had to be passed round his back before being tied again at the front. Feeling safe, he found his plug spanner and went to tilt the engine forward into the boat. As he did so, a loop of his life-jacket tape snagged on the engine, and as he glanced down to free himself, he immediately cursed his stupidity. The loop had caught on the fuel tank vent, and he knew instantly that it was still closed so no air could get into the fuel tank and the increasing vacuum had caused the engine to stop. He opened the vent, and was rewarded by a gentle hiss as the air rushed in.

He sat down for a moment to look at the engine again, and as he did so fuel began to drip into the boat from the carburettor. He quickly tilted the engine back to the normal position again. A breeze was picking up and, anxious to get on with his trip, he wrapped the starter cord round the flywheel, and sure enough, given the petrol and spark, the engine started first pull.

As he headed across the loch, the angler left the tiller to its own devices as he scooped the petrol-tainted water from the bottom of the boat. His nerves were a bit on edge, and he wanted to roll a cigarette, but he needed to get rid of the petrol first. Each scoop of water he threw over the side of the boat caused a minor calm patch on the otherwise rippled surface. His wake had a zigzag look to it as he corrected the course between attempts to get the last of the bilge water into his baler. Finally, he was finished, and as he drew near the northern shore he took off the cumbersome life jacket, turned again to the left and headed for the River Moriston. As he headed into the small waves the bow began to splash rhythmically, and he felt content again.

A mile away, on the road near the Foyers Hotel, a man was pointing a cine camera through the passenger window of a parked car. With deliberate and icy control he was shooting long bursts of film, like a machine gunner.

Neither would ever know how their lives briefly crossed that day.

At long last I have succeeded in getting this Nessletter put together, you may have noted the date I first started it. Many weeks into it I, through an unknown sequence of actions and keystrokes, managed to lose five pages of text. Just like that, one-minute I was merrily typing away, next, a blank page, I had the file name but nothing on it! Lapwing Computers, a local business, came to the rescue. 'Mr Lapwing' had to take my machine away, after failing to find NIS156 here at home, a week later he returned it. He had been able to 'retrieve the data', thank goodness. But, there is always a 'but', everything I had edited out of 156 while writing it over the weeks, was there, all jumbled up on eleven pages. It was reminiscent of the 'Morecambe and Wise' television sketch with 'Andrew Preview'! I had all the right words but not necessarily in the right order! Time-taking to re-edit it, easier than trying to re-write it. Once again thank you for your tolerance. Thank you for being NIS members. If you have a change of address please let me know. Please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed, possibly more now than ever, visitors would also be made welcome, subscriptions, if you are good enough to continue to subscribe, 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 1RQ. Tel.01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963.

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