

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 158

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SIGHTING REPORTS

Geriant Gibson rang 26th July, had been in touch with Jenny Mackenzie about his forthcoming stay, she has the three chalets just beyond Fort Augustus, going towards Invermoriston. When speaking to Geriant last year he referred to the chalet 'park', which to me indicated quite a number. As I could not recollect such a 'park', I suggested that it may have been a development since my last visit. However I know of Jenny's chalets, and that they have been there for many years. He has stayed there a number of times in that time, says it is one of the best places on the loch for watching. As reported in NIS 157 he was away shopping when there was a report of humps in the vicinity of Cherry Island, which would have been seen from the chalet. Jenny told him that in May '11, a visitor, possibly from Romania, newly arrived at the chalets, had by all accounts a spectacular sighting. Not only that, he had been able to video of the event.

I have had further information about this report from Peter Davenport, who also stays at the Mackenzie chalets when visiting the loch. He had been told that the visitor was indeed from Romania, on his first visit to the area. Peter says, he was told, that some landscaping work around the chalets has opened up a view of the loch from the chalet's kitchen window, it was from here that the sighting was made. What was reported was a long low black shape, moving through the water. Length estimated to be sixty feet, and video taken. In my opinion that estimated length, is far too long, suggesting a boat wake, especially to an inexperienced observer. The new view of the water is limited, which could account for no craft being noted. Also it is close to, and on the course, of anything leaving, or making for, the canal. That leaves us with the all-important video, does it have something useful on it. Not having seen the video, I am in no position to say yes or no. However I understand there has been further development. Being told that the BBC sent a member of staff from Inverness, by taxi, to collect the video. This was duly taken away, presumably to be examined and viewed in a better format, on a larger screen. Then nothing! Do we have a conspiracy to conceal the truth? Perhaps not, I would suggest that being able to examine the video in closer detail, it was ascertained that it was indeed a boat wake, or other ordinary facet, and so not the proof everyone is waiting for.

Another sighting reported in the Inverness Courier, was on 15th June '11, between 2.30 and 3.00pm, a good precise time. Mr and Mrs Hargreaves, Jan and Simon, have been running the Foyers Stores and Café, in upper Foyers, since August 2010. Many of you will know the store and café, and it has been mentioned in Nessletters before. On the day in question they were having a break out in front of the store, along with staff member Graham Baine, when Jan and Graham's attention was taken by something on the loch. Jan called to Simon to come and look as well. They were watching something that was strange and unlike anything else they had observed from that spot. Although they stand there quite often, seeing a variety of craft, from kayaks and cruisers, to larger vessels. Although it was distant from them, Mrs Hargreaves said she saw a long black neck, too long to be that of a seal. Going on to say, "It went under the water and disappeared for probably about 30 to 40 seconds, then came back up again. It was around for a good four or five minutes. It was so strange and exciting".

In the Inverness Courier Steve Feltham was reported as saying, he was excited that it was locals that had been witnesses, people who have the loch in view every day. Even though it is quite a distance from shop to loch. Also being impressed by the unusual nature of what they saw, they took the steps to report it to the Courier. This could indicate that there is a possibility that it can be accepted as a good Nessie report. I would go along with Steve on this, but would point out that the Hargreaves are comparatively recent 'locals', also the 'quite a distance' is something like three-quarters of a mile. I know from my time spent on the Old Abriachan Pier looking over into Dores Bay, three-quarters of a mile is 'quite a distance', an object has to be substantial

to stand out from the background, at that distance. Perhaps, as substantial as some type of boat? Although from the Foyers store they did have the advantage of some elevation, while the pier is water level. It is a shame that no mention is made of binoculars, it would have been a very great help if a pair had been to hand, so a better examination could have been made of what it was that attracted their attention in the first instance.

Another report, along with photograph, appeared in both the Daily Mail, and Sun, of Saturday 23rd July '11. William Jobes from Irvine, in Ayrshire, was walking along the footpath in front of the Abbey, accompanied by his wife Joan, when what seemed to be a 'head' caught his attention. It was bobbing above the water some 200 to 300 yards from the shore. He was able to take a photograph of it before it disappeared under the water. Then a dark hump-shaped object broke the surface and he was able to take more photographs. Mr Jobes, a keen Nessie hunter who first visited the loch in 1969, in one report there is a vague reference to possibly being on one of the old Loch Ness Investigation's expeditions. He said he was sure it was not a piece of wood, or a seal stating that the head was 'sheep-like'. The next day he returned to the area, and hearing a splashing in the water he observed 'a big black' thing in the water. He said the second object was much bigger than the first, although the newspaper reports do not quote any sizes.

This account has a number of troubling features. No dates are given, so can we presume that it happened shortly before being reported in the papers. However when first reported, there seems to be no reference to the second sighting. Only one photograph appears in the papers, which is of water, with a low hump showing, with a much smaller black triangular shape showing, about the length of the visible hump away. No 'head and neck' photograph, which we were told was the first taken by William. The photograph seems familiar to me, I am sure I have seen one very similar in one of the 'Loch Ness Books', but cannot recall which one. The one I have in mind is of a salmon; it's back breaking the surface, with the upper lobe of the tail showing a little way behind. The lack of any size being suggested, apart from 'the second was much larger than the first'. Was the first two feet long, and the second four feet, or was it six feet and fourteen feet? Also if just an elongated hump was observed, how far out of water it is, will have an effect on the perceived size. So it could have been the same object observed, only more of it above the surface. That of course brings us to the very strange occurrence, sightings from the same place on consecutive days. William visited the loch from time to time over a period of 42 years, hoping to catch a glimpse of our elusive quarry, without success. Then it happened, what we all dream about, he had a sighting, even getting photographs, not the best but at least a record of some sort. When he returned to the same area the next day, what do you know, there it was again! After so many years visiting the loch, and countless hours watching the water, we would think William would have built up much experience of water conditions and the various objects that are observed on, and in, it. He should be a reliable witness. Asked for an opinion by the Daily Mail, Steve Feltham said he was sceptical, pointing out that the River Tarff runs into the loch close by and the River Oich, not far away in the other direction. The possibility being, that William had been misled by some kind of flotsam. Although William said he was sure that was not the case, he said he knows the difference between a piece of wood and a particular animal. Incidentally in the same issue the Daily Mail there is good, extensive, article on Steve.

The photograph, as printed in the newspapers, obviously has been cropped, so size and distance is almost impossible to judge. The cuttings I have seen use a photograph of Mr Jobes in the pieces, one of them has his photograph reversed. An indication of the care taken by papers in these matters?

On 14th September '11, the Daily Mail had another Loch Ness photograph. This one had been taken at the fish farm, close to Dores, by one of the workers; John Rowe, from Drumnadrochit. At about 8.30am the previous Wednesday, over the far shore of the loch a beautiful rainbow took his attention, and he took a picture of it. It was as he checked how it had come out, he noticed he had more than a rainbow in his photograph. In the foreground there are two conical humps, shining with the reflected light of a low sun, off to his right. Looking out to where they had been there was no sign of them; they must have disappeared almost as he took the shot. John immediately thought, had he got a shot of Nessie? He did not really believe in the stories about the monster before taking the photograph, but now thinks there may be something in them. Once more Steve Feltham was asked for his opinion, he said that the workers at the farm were not tourists, knowing the water very well. Ordinary things should not mislead them, and it certainly warranted a closer look.

However, Adrian Shine, of the Loch Ness Project, suggested a more mundane explanation. Black-throated Divers are known to frequent the area, perhaps the photograph caught two in the act of diving.

Not sure about this, it is a strange one. The objects are conical, almost coming to a point, very like the raised tail end of a duck, as it dabbles on the bottom, feeding. Divers do flip their tails up as they dive, but it is just momentary. The location of the photographer is not exactly stated. If he was out on the fish-cages, the water would be too deep for ducks to dabble like that. If he was on the shore, then that would be a possibility. Could it be Adrian's Divers are the explanation?

In recent years I have expressed my thoughts, from time to time, asking, "where are the misinterpretations?" It seems that we have had some, and they have made their way into the media. Which I think is a good sign, indicating that perhaps interest in the Loch Ness creatures is not dead, after all.

COUSIN

Another 'cousin' reported last year, from Devon. The animal, which seemed to look like a pre-historic plesiosaur was seen by Graham Oxley, a 63-year-old electrician. He had been walking his dog at Saltern Cove, near Paignton, a very popular tourist area, when he saw the strange creature. It was serpentine, 10feet long, a thin neck with small head, and flippers. He said it chased a shoal of fish towards the shore, then had returned to deeper water before he took a photograph. It had been fairly close to him, and he was certain that it was not a turtle or seal. It did not behave, or look like, anything he had seen before; in the shade it looked black, but when it swam off it looked greeny-brown. He suggested it was camouflaging itself, perhaps the reason not many people report seeing them. The usual blurry, out of focus, photograph printed in the paper, showed two indistinct, black elongated ovals, against a bluey-grey background of sea. The paper said, "scientists were baffled", but were asking tourists to be vigilant, and ready to capture more photographic evidence. Then went on to refer to the manager of the Marine Conservation Society biodiversity programme, Peter Richardson, who said "it could be another Loch Ness Monster, but at the moment it is an unidentified mystery creature".

ANOTHER COUSIN?

In mid-February '11, some national papers had a blurry, not very clear photograph, taken of something in Lake Windermere, in the Lake District. It showed four, connected humps, leaving a wake on the surface, with indistinct images of two islands in the background. The article with the photograph, told how a Mr Tom Pickles, kayaking out on the lake, reported being petrified by the bizarre shape, which was the length of three cars, with seal-like skin, but unlike any animal he had seen before. Dr Ian Winfield, a lake ecologist at the University of Lancaster, was quoted, as saying it was highly unlikely that anything as large as that could survive in Windermere. Then suggested, perhaps a European Catfish could come close.

For a number of years there have been, occasional, unsubstantiated reports of something large in Lake Windermere. In keeping with lake-monster tradition, this was the expected, out of focus photograph, giving no real indication as to what it was. Was this the first photograph of such a thing? Well no, as it happens, about three weeks later there was another photograph in the paper, of something with four humps. This was a very clear photograph of a car tyre that had been cut and spread out, lengthways, perhaps nailed to a plank of wood, lying in a few inches of water by the shore. So another bogus photograph, by someone amusing themselves. Perhaps an indication of the straitened times we live in, they could not afford to travel to Loch Ness, and made do with Lake Windermere.

MURRAY BARBER

First week in September '11, I had a visit from Murray, and his wife Shelagh, on their way up to the loch. Murray is a long time member of the NIS; also goes way back into the days of the old LNI, had very good couple hours reminiscing. He said he would drop me a line to say how the visit went when they made it home to Bournemouth.

This is it. "We had a very good week at the loch, apart from the weather, but managed to get to most of the places we normally visit. We did not manage to see Dick (Raynor), as his boat was out of commission, being repaired. We did see Steve (Feltham), who remains his normal happy self. I admire him as it cannot be much fun in his little cabin in the depths of winter!

We told you we were staying in an apartment in the Fort Augustus Abbey. The flat we were in was very good, being in the old bell tower with views looking down the length of the loch. I would recommend it, although the 122 steps, from the ground to our bedroom were quite a hike, especially carrying all our gear in and out. They have done a pretty sympathetic conversion of the main building into apartments, and retained most of the original features. The various add on wings do strike a discordant note as they are rendered in yellow.

As usual we saw nothing of monsters and the fishing was useless. I do include a cutting from the Scottish Daily Mail, which we got up there, detailing a recent sighting? I rather think it was a pair of ducks, but you may be interested. No doubt the lure of the loch will take us back some time in the future."

It had been good to see Murray again, they had called in to see Doris and I on one of their trips north, many years ago. The Abbey flats sound interesting, the view from the tower must be spectacular, although I think you would soon learn to make sure you had everything with you, when going out. I used the cutting he sent, above, it is intriguing but perhaps has a mundane explanation.

ODD ENDS

Long-standing member Mr Olliphant Callum, little note, UFO sighting, June 1971, location, South Ferring, West Sussex, the time approx 11pm. "I was standing with my mother and brother gazing out to a very calm sea, under a perfectly clear sky. My brother pointed out to a satellite, moving East to West through the myriad of stars. However we soon realized that the speed of this object negated any thought of a satellite, as it moved between the stars like a knife through butter. Imagine our surprise when it literally came to a dead stop! It sat there for a second or so and then shot off North to South, at a right angle to the previous trajectory. It then stopped again, paused, and came towards us in the reverse direction, South to North and disappeared over our heads. A mystery n'est pas?"

Note from Ulrich about the Milne sighting, NIS 157. It was in the Scottish papers first, Alex Campbell (possibly the unnamed upside boat witness) wrote it up for the Northern Chronicle, 27th August 1930, and Inverness Courier, 29th August 1930.

RIP'S PIECE

At last another Nessletter put together. I was/am dismayed at how long it has taken me to achieve this. It is not the service I set out to offer, all those years ago. Even worse in this age of instant communications, the Internet and various social sites, Twitter, Gibber, and so on. So very different from the days I typed the first Nessletter. We did not have a telephone, the nearest was a public call box in the village, fifteen minutes walk away. I have just checked, the first Nessletter with a telephone number was February '77. That last sentence is perhaps a clue to the problem, so many memories, too much daydreaming. Since Doris died, time has become more or less irrelevant. We had been together just over two years, when I set out along the NIS and Nessletter road, at the time not dreaming how long and winding it would be. She was by my side for all that road, putting up with, even supporting my eccentricities, until July 2009. Strange as it may seem Loch Ness, and the mystery, was not a subject that we discussed in any great depth, I think the best way to describe Doris' outlook, would be ness-agnostic. Like an understanding parent, "Mam, Mam, there are fairies at the bottom of the garden". Then with a pat on the head she would say, "yes Pet that's right, play gently with them, do not frighten them away". Now I walk it on my own. Oops! Sorry about that, must not get maudlin, also perhaps not really accurate. I have received positive support from so many of you, so do I have company on that road? Now, back to business. Thank you for being the NIS, and tolerating the intermittent service. Please remember your news, views, and thoughts are important, even more so now. Visitors also made welcome, subscriptions, if you are good enough to continue to subscribe, are: - UK£3.00 USA \$10. The address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldsford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ Tel: 01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963.