

# NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

## NESSLETTER 160

### OCTOBER 2013

#### GERIANT GIBSON

Geriant has been mentioned in previous Nessletters, being an enthusiastic researcher and visiting the loch, whenever he can, to do some real watching. NIS 157 carried the account of him missing a possible sighting, by being in the wrong place at the right time. I received a phone call from him, 27<sup>th</sup> June '13, just returned from the loch, with some exciting news. He had been accompanied by three friends for this trip and he had managed to be, once again, in the wrong place. Leaving them to their own devices, he had gone to see Ricky MacDonald who runs the 'Royal Scot', the tourist boat out of Fort Augustus. Only to find when he returned they had not only had a sighting, but had also been able to get a photograph. They told him they had been on the road close to Inverfarigaig, where it is very close to the water. From Geriant's description I took it to be the stretch we used to refer to as 'The Wall', as that is all there is between road and loch shore. At a distance judged to be about 150 yards, they saw a low, dark, hump, saying some 6 to 8 feet long, a foot high in the middle, managing to get a photograph. Geriant said that while he had only seen it on the camera, it did look to be good and he was excited about it. As I said, it seemed that once more he had missed out on a possible sighting. I say 'seemed' because a little later he sent me a letter, unusual because he usually communicates over the phone. The letter reads: -

"Dear Rip, remember I told you my friends got photos of a hump whilst I was in Fort Augustus meeting Ricky, unfortunately they were playing a prank on me !! But I sent the photos to a Loch Ness site believing they were genuine and Steve Feltham exposed them as fakes. Unfortunately for me, my name was put on the photos, as I sent them in. I argued the case for Dan but now he has admitted the hoax. Trouble is they are all calling me a hoaxer and do not believe I met Ricky and was not part of the photo hoax. I told them that I told you I was not there but they do not believe me!! I am now banned from the debate site. I am angry with Dan for playing the prank and making me look a fool. I suppose that is punishment for being a Nessie believer.

In no way would I involve myself in a hoax and I am saddened I am in this position. Never mind it will not deter my Nessie hunting. P.S. I trust you will back me up, that I told you I was not there and it was not my photo."

Members know I am not connected to the Internet, so am not aware how these things operate. So all I can do is print Geriant's case, and trust it may be some help. Over the time he has been a member, he has always rung me with news of his various trips to the loch. I have formed the opinion that he is a sincere investigator, if I needed to fault him it would be perhaps that he accepts what people tell him little too easily, not a bad thing. However, it is no bad thing either, to be a bit more sceptical, and questioning, it could have stood him good stead, in this instance. As they say, 'with friends like that, who needs enemies?'

#### GEORGE EDWARDS

Well George and his photograph were extensively covered in NIS159, here it is again. Steve Feltham, and others, who suggested that the photograph was a fake, have been proved correct. The proof coming from Mr Edwards himself, who has now confessed to photographing the glass fibre hump, a prop made for a film about Nessie. This has been covered in national newspapers, Mr Edwards saying, "I am now happy to join the rogues gallery along with the surgeon who produced the best known Nessie image". Asking, "How do you think Loch Ness would have fared over the years without that picture?" I stated my views on this in NIS159, it is so sad, and begs the question, why? His picture, not the fake Nessie one, has been in national newspapers, people, tourists, will recognize him. Will this help him to get passengers for his loch cruises? 'Come aboard enjoy a cruise, I can tell you all about the times I have seen Nessie, the humps, the wakes, the long necks, the fake photos!' Not really the best recommendation from someone who like to put himself forward as a serious and sincere hunter and researcher. Maybe we will give it a miss today!

The Daily Mirror featured a photograph of Steve Feltham at the loch edge, in shallow water with the prop hump. Steve says, "His admission damages both his reputation and the lure of Nessie". Once

again it is wrongly stated that he initially acclaimed the Edwards' snap. One little thing I was pleased to see, the size of the fake hump, I was not far out with my estimation.

Two cases of hoaxing, with the first we have misguided work-mates having a bit of a laugh at the expense of a friend, perhaps understandable. I know I used to get a bit of leg pulling when I first went down the mine, from the lads, but I laughed along with them, not rising to the bait. Over time they realized that it was a serious interest I had, and perhaps the 'Loch Ness Monster' was not just a joke. They became supportive, telling me of stories and bringing newspaper cuttings that I may have missed.

Then we have George Edwards, someone who has been close to the research over the years, who knows of all the hard work and study that has gone into the loch. Someone whose income is reliant on the loch, needing tourists, who come not only because of the beauty of the area, but in many instances, because of the Loch Ness legend. Why did he undertake such a pointless hoax?

Also George is wrong, to split hairs, 'the surgeon' Dr Wilson did not produce the photograph, he presented it. The hoax was manufactured, and carried out by Marmaduke Wetherell and his boys.

#### ARABIA

Earlier this year a BBC natural history television programme about Arabia was shown. As well as the animals that manage to live in vast tracts of, mainly hostile, desert country, it also looked at the Arabian Sea. Which is home to unique type of Humpbacked Whale, the Arabian Humpback. Sorry about that, but it seemed almost every creature featured, is prefixed by 'Arabian'. Back to the story, these Humpbacks are the only ones that do not migrate, living in the same place all year round. All others of the species travel many hundreds, even thousands, of miles between breeding and feeding grounds. It is the sea which changes in this case, at certain times of the year very cold water wells up from the depths, causing an explosion in plankton, which draws in vast shoals of fish from far afield and provides food for the whales. While studying this small, and possibly decreasing, population, scientists have taken DNA samples from them. Analysis has shown that these whales have not interbred with any other Humpbacks for many thousands of years. What might this have to do with Loch Ness? In one, very brief, sequence of film we glimpse a sample being taken for DNA testing. A rigid hull inflatable is used to get close enough to a surfacing whale, (should that be breaching?) and a bolt is fired; which takes a piece out of the whale and then floats on the surface, ready for retrieval. Bolt, should give a clue, they were using a crossbow!

This was the setup we had at Loch Ness in the mid to late '60s early '70s. Over the years it was eyewitness accounts that provided the core of evidence, for something large and unusual being in the loch, backed up by a hand-full of not very helpful photographs, also not forgetting the film taken by Tim Dinsdale. I have always maintained that Tim's film is the best proof of something large and unidentified being in the loch, unfortunately it does not tell us what is there. While Sonar could be used for conducting underwater surveillance and the LNIPB supported expeditions using it, the equipment seemed to have difficulties with the conditions in Loch Ness. Seeking large metal submarines in open sea was one thing, the steep rocky underwater contours in the loch, along with thermoclines, and internal sieches, were another. Remember this is going back almost fifty years, sonar and electronic equipment has advanced so far now, with so many huge strides forward in development. Sightings of the creatures, on the surface, while not common everyday occurrences, continued to be reported. Therefore it seemed logical for the Loch Ness Investigation to use surface photography in the effort to obtain proof of these creatures. A carcass on the shore would have been the complete answer, or perhaps a sample of tissue. With that in mind Professor Roy Mackal, set about devising some system that could possibly bring that about, tissue sample, not body on shore. He developed a 'spear point', a biopsy dart, to be fitted to a harpoon or similar missile. Machined from aluminum, to take a tube, bullet shaped, hollow, which had spring-loaded barbs on the inside, about six inches long and perhaps inch in diameter (size, if memory serves correctly). This was to act similar to a tubular cheese sampler. Bearing in mind this was before DNA. What Professor Mackal required was a tissue sample, a substantial piece of skin or flesh, not just a scraping. I know Roy tested these darts in a Chicago abattoir, successfully obtaining the required sample. He had two delivery systems in mind one was the Greener Harpoon Gun, two of which were fitted on the 'Viperfish', Dan Taylor's yellow submarine. Once again, if memory is correct, a cartridge, similar to a shotgun, fired these harpoons, a formidable weapon. Also in this instance, four short 'fingers' were fixed, at ninety degrees, to the backend of the biopsy darts, to prevent undue penetration. The other means was a simple, but quite powerful, crossbow. A centre spool fishing reel was mounted on the crossbow, with the line attached to the fairly heavy bolt, which was to allow the bolt with the sample to be retrieved. I noted that the bolt used in

the Arabian Sea was buoyant, being retrieved from the water rather than reeled in. Obviously taking a DNA sample, rather than a tissue sample enabled a lighter bolt to be used. Now all that was needed was to get within firing range of the quarry! The method worked out to try to achieve this, was 'night drifting'! Two or three expedition members going out in the expedition loch boat, this was one of the 15ft craft favoured by many of the local salmon anglers. With the right calm water conditions, a promising weather forecast, they would go out in the evening, Urquhart Bay usually, and quietly drift around, into the night. Because the sighting reports seemed to point to evening, or early morning, being the most productive time to watch; it was speculated that the animals were perhaps nocturnal. So there we were waiting for one of the creatures to go by, on the surface, within range. Twang, Swish, reel in, sample safely obtained, job done!!

Looking back, all these years later, how blissfully naive we were, a cheerful group of enthusiastic, dare I say, idiots, doing our damndest to solve one of the great mysteries, with the means available to us at the time. A grand bunch of like-minded people united with a single purpose, happy days, happy memories. Now, all this time later, we see scientific people using very similar equipment to do a similar job. Perhaps we were not so far off in our efforts, after all. We were ready; it was our quarry that did not co-operate!

## TONY HEALY

Extract from NIS138 1994.

*Next a book with nothing at all to do with Loch Ness, but it could be of interest. 'Out of the Shadows, Mystery Animals of Australia', Tony Healy and Paul Cropper. Published by Pan Macmillan Australia, ISBN 0-330-27499-6, A\$19.95. This is the first book to document Australia's mystery animals. The authors have over fifty years of research between them, undertaking expeditions to search for many types of Cryptids in numerous places world-wide. They met up when on the trail of the Kangaroo Valley Panther (NSW), in 1981. Since then they have combined their files and shared all information. The book looks at extinct animals, last Tasmanian Tiger (Thylacine) shot in 1936, mainland Thylacines died out 3000 years ago, yet reports keep coming in of these creatures being seen, and other evidence being found. It also looks at the case for the Queensland Marsupial Tiger, and Alien Bigcats. Also analysed is the evidence for the 'Yowie' and the 'Bunyip'. Forensic evidence, sketches, photographs, paw prints, eyewitness accounts, for all these cases, presented in this book. As I said nothing to do with Loch Ness, but very interesting and well researched. Tony Healy has visited Loch Ness, twice breaking his journey to stay with us. He is very down to earth and I feel that whatever evidence he presents about various aspects of Cryptozoology can be accepted as very well thought through.*

Tony and Paul then co-wrote a book on the Australian version of 'Bigfoot'. 'The Yowie. In search of Australia's Bigfoot', published in 2006 is a very comprehensive book on the subject. With over 300 eye-witness reports, well documented, also looking at various explanations and theories, going into the history of the 'Yowie'. This goes way back into the Australian Aborigine folklore, they warned the early European settlers about the wild men that inhabited the forests and mountains. They had a number of different names for them, but all seemed to fit the general description, large, hairy, ape-like, and very similar to the North American Sasquatch. I should have passed on this information some time ago, a very interesting and readable book. Not 'Nessie' I know, but I think most of us have an interest in other unusual creatures.

I received a letter from Tony early in 2012 to say that he was undertaking a prolonged trip to the UK, and other parts, and hoping that we would be able to meet up somewhere or other. I was very pleased at the prospect of meeting up with Tony again; it had been so many years since our last meeting. Even so the letter I intended to write, for more information, or to set up a meeting, did not get written.

Then on the morning of 18<sup>th</sup> June '12 received a phone call from him, asking would it be all right if he called in to visit me, a little later, I was delighted; of course it would be all right. He said he was to travel west, he had visited us twice many years ago, and remembering where we were, it would be on his way. Lovely, I thought, but 'west?' Loch Ness, west, Aberdeen, Loch Ness, Durham, surely south. It turned out he had already done to south bit and was in Penrith, edge of the Lake District. His destination that day was West Hartlepool, where he intended to visit the old sailing ship 'Trincomalee' which is afloat in it's own dock, as part of the Hartlepool Marine Experience. A couple of hours later there he was, it was so good to see him again. I have checked the diaries and Nessletters; his last visit was in 1999, then further

back his first visit to us was in 1979. That is 33 years ago, which is rather startling, where have all the years gone? Then I realise, I am now writing about something that happened over a year ago, perhaps my perception of the passage of time could answer that query. He had been over to Ireland for a time, then a spell at Loch Morar, and four or five days at Loch Ness. We had a very good half-day together, catching up. After the 'Trincomalee', he was making his way down to Norfolk to follow up some interesting 'big black cat' reports he had heard about.

This trip was almost a weekend jaunt, compared to his earlier research trip featured in Nessletters 36 and 39. Returning home to Canberra from that one, he had been away from home almost two years to the day, visiting 22 locations that are reported to have strange water creatures. Leaving home in Australia, April '78, stopping off in Fiji, then on to North America, spending a year visiting areas reported to be home to strange phenomenon. Meeting many of the people researching the case for 'Bigfoot', and down to Florida to hear more about the 'Skunk Ape', from thereabouts. He spent eight weeks in Scotland, time divided between Lochs Ness and Morar. I missed him while there, as he was over at Morar when we were at Ness. As I wrote at the time I was very pleased that he took the trouble to find us on his way South to London. He was to arrange for his trip to Nepal, where he was hoping to do some work on the 'Yeti', being joined there by Ted Ernst Jr., at that time vice president of the American Anthropological Research Foundation, they had met when Tony was in 'Bigfoot' country. After Nepal Tony was to make his way home via Malaysia, where he had hopes of gathering information about the strange creatures reported to live in the Tasek Bera, a large swampy lake in the middle of the forest, only accessible by a difficult river journey or by helicopter.

Tony had an interesting trip, this time around; as well as making fresh contacts and visiting new places, he had renewed old acquaintances. He was able to interview Val Moffat, and get her sighting report first hand. Tony says Val is a lovely person, open, friendly, trusting, and had recognised him immediately. She lives at 'Castleview', Drumnadrochit, I should have checked with Tony, but I am fairly certain this is a cottage just below the road, a short distance from the nasty corner, at Strone, before Castle Urquhart. It has an uninterrupted view across Urquhart Bay and out into the main loch. She is said to be psychic, which could be claimed to be a family trait, her grandmother, and mother, and now her daughter and granddaughter, all being attributed with it. Her granddaughter says she has experienced apparitions of her, long dead, grand mother.

Val and a friend, Jenny, were in her sun lounge, at about 2pm, no precise date but sometime early 2000s. Jenny said, 'Val—what's that out there?' looking out Val said, 'Oh, that's Nessie!' telling Tony with a laugh 'as one does', but then realised there was indeed something of interest, out there. There was one hump, a well-proportioned single hump; it was about half way across the mouth of the bay, not apparently moving. Within a minute or two it just sank straight down, it did not appear to dive, just quietly, slowly, submerged. Val told Tony, that Jenny said she had seen a seagull, which seemed to land on it then quickly, take off, but that she did not see that.

The conditions were good but not dead calm. Tony had not noted size, if one had been given, but said, half way across is quite a long way so it must have been substantial. Val has a web address, [moffat241@btinternet.com](mailto:moffat241@btinternet.com), which Tony said may have a fuller account. The 'seagull' stirs a memory, I seem to recall an old report which mentions either a seagull being on the back, or more macabre, being snapped from the air, by one of the animals. I am sure there are NIS members with much better recall than myself, who could, will, be able to give chapter and verse. This is another of those interesting reports, which while keeping us going, do not add significantly to our overall knowledge.

After our very pleasant time together, a couple of photographs for the album, Tony continued on his way to West Hartlepool and Norfolk. It had been so very good to see Tony again, after all those years.

At long last another Nessletter together, my apologies for time taken. No real acceptable reason, just the usual situation, which I have written about in previous issues.

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 always made welcome, subscriptions, if you are good enough to continue to subscribe, are:- UK £3.00 USA \$10. The address remains:- R.R.Heppele, 7 Huntshieldford, St John's Chapel, Weardale Co Durham, DL13 1RQ Tel: 01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963.