

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 162

FEBRUARY 2015

DICK RAYNOR

Dick rang late March '14, he was to be driving down from home, on the Black Isle Inverness, to visit Ivor Newby soon, and asked if it would be alright to include a visit to me in the trip. For me it was an opportunity not to be missed, a chance to meet up with him again, after many years. He accepted the offer of a bed, to make it an overnight stay. Ringing on the morning of the 25th, to say he was he leaving Ivor's and heading for me, arriving early evening. After a bite to eat we settled down to talk, and I was able to look through the Loch Ness material he had picked up from Ivor. Ivor was in the process of moving to a smaller house, and had a heap of stuff he needed to find a good home for, Dick was to provide that home, hence the trip down to pick it up. It was interesting going through it, nothing startling or new, in fact I had much of it myself, old reports and articles and suchlike. Evoking so many memories of LNI days, and later times, not really important but good that it will be kept safe somewhere.

Dick has always been one to extend the research into the loch, and for some time had been thinking about low frequency sound or resonance. After coming across an account of researchers working on aspects of low frequencies, reporting feelings of unrest, unease, even dread whilst in the laboratory, seemingly with no logical explanation. Looking into this, they concluded that the low frequencies were having an effect on certain areas of some people's brains, not everyone, and with no lasting effects.

In a few instances eyewitnesses have reported a feeling of unease, or fear, during the sighting. Some people have reported that even though not seeing anything in the loch, they have experienced similar feelings in the vicinity of the water. He wondered if, in some way, there could be some obscure connection. Eventually he thought about 'culverts'; no I do not know why, his mind just works that way. These quite large drainpipes are used to allow small streams and rainwater to flow under roads and other obstructions, and are usually open ended. It came to him that given the right conditions, wind blowing over these open pipes, could produce a resonance similar to the effect of blowing over the top of an empty bottle. As he frequently drives along the A82, going to and from Temple Pier, he began to take an interest in the culverts under the road. Since then he has identified a couple of places where this could happen. There are surely more on the other roads round the loch. There are so many variables, wind speed and direction, pipe end clear of weeds and undergrowth, and so on. But perfectly plausible that on occasion, such low frequency resonance could be produced. An intriguing thought, which could provide an ordinary explanation for part of the 'spooky' elements that go along with the mystery.

There is part of a farmer's field gate, here, close to home, which in certain conditions produces a low organ-like sound. Not sure if it is actually one of the metal tubes the gate is made of, or perhaps the upright metal gatepost. I have never tried to pinpoint it, must do next time I am aware of it!

While talking to Dick about this effect, a memory came to mind. Sixty-odd years ago, as a teenager, before being aware of Loch Ness, Dad and I went touring for a few days in Scotland. Wild camping, sleeping in the back of our van, a 10cwt Morris used for the business, not too sure where but the Trossachs ring a bell. One evening, pulling off a quiet road on to a wide expanse of grass, bordered by fir-trees, a lovely little tranquil spot, we thought we had the perfect overnight stop. Primus stove out, ready to make tea and our meal, only there five or ten minutes. Cannot remember which of us voiced it first, but we were both in agreement, we did not feel 'comfortable', nothing tangible just uneasy. Looking round at our 'lovely little clearing', there was nothing threatening, all seemed well and as it should be, but we just were not happy. We packed up, Dad drove a few miles further along the road, found another similar little area, pulled off and we spent a very pleasant evening and night there. All these years later, while the details are now a little vague, that 'uneasy feeling' remains in memory. Could there have been one of 'Dick's culverts' close by?

Living in an 'AONB' as I do (area of outstanding natural beauty), I like to show it off to anyone so next morning I took Dick for a short circuit on some of the back roads. Passing by Groverake mine, closed in the '90s, where I spent so many years working underground, surprisingly the headgear is still standing. A brief but very enjoyable visit, for me especially.

Scott Justice.

Scott and his wife were at Loch Morar last summer ('13) saw something at long distance, no binoculars to check. May have been Morag, but also someone in a boat, blown up picture is inconclusive, but does show something in the water. After a short while it did seem to disappear, completely. Picture on www.lochnesssightings.com Loch Morar section.

TIM DENESHA

Early in the season, Tim wrote to let me know Nessletters had been forwarded to American members, a valuable service he provides for us, in the letter he mentioned that the evenings would be getting lighter. That triggered memories of the LNI and the loch, and after writing about the Nessletters to Tim, I continued.

Now, where was I? Yes, long summer evenings at Loch Ness. I was very close to being stranded, out of petrol, because of them in '70. Bob Rines, plus small team from the Academy of Applied Sciences, arrived Drumnadrochit, they were to be doing underwater camera and sonar work, the LNI would support them and provide extra manpower as needed. Of course Tim Dinsdale played a pivotal role in this. Most of their gear was coming as airfreight into Glasgow. This particular day, a Friday I think, I was entrusted to go down, in my Standard Vanguard Estate a large roomy vehicle, to collect this gear and get it back to HQ at Achnahannet. Away I went, but owing to a mix up of instructions, finished up at Prestwick International. 'Ah no! I was told, airfreight is Glasgow'. I had traveled way past it, not too much bother; it was on my way back! Successfully found where I should have been, loaded gear into car. There were cameras, strobe lights, sonar units, and many boxes of electrical gear, quite a load, and quite valuable. I cannot recall if Marty Klein's yellow side-scan tow-fish was there, but it could have been. On to the A82 Loch Ness here I come, thinking about it this road runs from Glasgow right up the Great Glen to Inverness. I picked up a hitch-hiker as I drove up Loch Lomond-side, a young man from Glasgow who, most weekends, hitched up to Glen Coe for a couple of days climbing. He was to prove very helpful. Noticing I was getting low on fuel, planned to fill up at Crainlarich. That was when the long Highland evening got me. I had not been watching the time, it was still quite light, so when I pulled into a garage I was a little surprised to find it closed. Then realized that at half past eleven, it was not unreasonable for hard working Scots to be tucked up in bed. 1970, long before supermarkets and 24 hour opening, back in the days when the world was a saner place. But it could cause problems to late night travelers. Finding nothing open as we made our way through Tyndrum and up to the head of Glen Coe, it was not looking promising. My hiker wanted to be dropped off at the end of the road leading up to White Corries and the Three Sisters, which is the middle of nowhere, but he knew where he was going. He suggested my best course of action could be to go across the glen to 'The King's House', as it had a petrol pump. A large old house dating from way back, massacre times or earlier, had long ago been turned into a hotel. This substantial white building can be seen in the distance on the far side of the glen. Over the years I had often wondered about it as I passed by on the main road, on my way to the loch. I duly made my way along the narrow road, finding it all in darkness when I got there. Stretching out on the front seat I got some sleep. Being woken early next morning as the staff brought the hotel to life, giving me a cup of tea and unlocking the petrol pump to fill the tank. I then continued my journey, safely getting Bob's gear back to Achnahannet and then on to Temple Pier in Urquhart Bay.

Other memories of those long evenings and short nights are not as detailed, but are still quite vivid. They are of 'night drifts' on the loch. You may recall Tim, the theory that what we were looking for was possibly nocturnal, or at least came to the surface more frequently at night. The plan was to take a boat out at night and quietly drift around; hoping that something would surface close by. Professor Roy Mackal, very

involved with the LNI, and of great help with getting US funding and support, was taken by the 'night drift' concept. He came up with crossbow idea and developed, and made, the tissue-sampling head to go on the tip of the crossbow bolt. I did two or three of these drifts, all things considered, you did not have to be completely mad, but it helped. There you, and a couple of others, were on the loch, usually way out in Urquhart Bay where it becomes the main loch, the most open stretch to be found on the loch. The boat initially used was the expedition's 15 footer, a standard loch boat as used by the majority of the salmon fishermen. We did use 'Fussy Hen' in later seasons, an ex-ship's lifeboat acquired in '69 or '70, a more substantial boat. Anyway, there you are, wrapped up trying to keep warm, even in summer out on the water is chilly, flasks of soup and coffee, set for some hours out on the loch. Bolex 16mm movie camera, which as the light goes will not be much use, 35mm still cameras with flash, more useful, and of course the crossbow. I never had the chance to use it 'in anger' so to speak, but had test fired it in the field below Achnahannet, it was quite a weapon. Very quietly you waited, hoping for that 'upturned boat' back to break the surface within range, about 75 yards. You then take a shot at it, pulling the bolt, with the all important tissue sample, back to the boat by the attached fishing line! In the meanwhile Nessie, this thirty-foot creature we are seeking, continues on her way, completely at ease and un-bothered by being jabbed by something nasty and sharp, you hope! Not crazy, but helpful. Now back to the long evenings, it is inviting to say, there we were bobbing about in the boat, but if it became 'bobbing' it was too rough, for drifts like that you liked flat calm or very close to it. This glassy surface can produce a strange 'floating' effect, especially combined with extended twilight; you can feel almost suspended between sky and water. As it slowly became darker it could be eerie, but then you realized that it was not going to get really dark, as it started to lighten again. I am tempted, oh go on I have to, 'it dawns on you' sorry about that Tim. Not actually the 'midnight sun', but it seemed very close to it.

That triggered similar memories, and brought this response from Tim. "When I was with the old LNI in the summer of '69, my buddy Michael Raffanello and I went on a 'night drift'. We had practiced a bit with the Roy Mackal crossbow, and set out one evening in the 15 footer. A very calm evening with glassy smooth water. We definitely experienced that curious 'floating' effect that you mentioned, the boat very slightly rocking, and smooth water reflecting the 'gloaming twilight'. Along with the crossbow we had a camera or two with us. About midnight, as you know, it still was not completely dark, when a heavy fog descended on us, we were out in Urquhart Bay and fairly quickly became disoriented, not being able to see more than a few feet from the boat. We realised that the fog made photographs out of the question, but we still had the crossbow! But not knowing exactly where we were, or even which way we were facing, we decided to let the boat drift until the fog lifted or dawn arrived, whichever came first. We had not planned to stay out the whole night, but really had no choice. Gradually we both dozed off, lulled by the gentle rolling movement of the boat and the soft, repetitive, slap of the very slight waves against the side of the boat. As I recall, I as in the bow, and Mike was in the stern, we both dozed like that for I would say about an hour. When suddenly we were both startled awake by the boat starting to rock in a very pronounced way, and bigger waves slapping more loudly and quicker against the side of the boat. Neither of us spoke, we were jarred awake at the same moment by the sudden change in the boat's movement, and the condition of the surface. The fog was still thick about us and there was absolutely no wind, we would have felt it and seen its effect on the fog, but that was not the cause of the change. We wondered if we were drifting close to the shore, that causing wave change, but couldn't see anything. Suddenly, from beyond Mike's left shoulder, which is where the waves were originating, we heard quite a loud 'SNORTING'! It sounded like a horse snorting, thought without the whinny, and it repeated several times. It was a substantial sound, not a little splash or trickle, but a sound like water and air being expelled from an opening, like a horse's nostril, or maybe a blowhole. We didn't have a clue what it was, but couldn't see a thing, so decided the prudent action would be to row in the opposite direction from it; or did we just panic at the thought that the 'water-horse' had surfaced near our little boat, half or less than half it's size?! Not being able to see in the thick white fog did not help, we would have had to be within 3 or 4 feet of Nessie (if Nessie it was), to have used the crossbow, much less take a photo. Getting that close to a creature of that size, which we could not see, in a small boat in water that was near 1000feet

deep – well, as I say we headed the other way. After a couple of minutes we stopped rowing, the water was quiet again, and certainly no repetition of that sound, which we both agreed sounded like inhaling/exhaling. I've heard seals and sea lions make such a sound, and as you know one of the theories to explain Nessie involved seals in the loch. What it was that night we will never know. Mike and I drifted for hours longer, until the mist began to glow with dawn's light, a very beautiful effect. Then a shoreline became visible; we rowed to it and found ourselves, fortunately, not far from Achnahannet. But, less fortunately, the biopsy dart had gone unused. We did not attempt another night drift.

Speaking of the disorientation out on the water at night, I recall speaking to a couple of divers who described how disorientating it was to dive in the loch, because of the heavy suspension of peat in the water, and it's consequent darkness. They claimed the light did not penetrate more than ten feet or so, the peat washed in by the many burns largely remaining in suspension. These were experienced scuba divers, and relied heavily, even entirely, on the rising bubbles from their mouthpieces to tell them which way was up. In the absolute darkness, and having no sense of gravity underwater, they said it could be terrifying when you lost your orientation to the surface. They had both experienced getting turned around, and being convinced in some crazy way, that their bubbles were somehow travelling 'down'. They said it took a huge act of faith to check their sense of where the surface was and just trust the bubbles, even though following them sometimes felt as though you were travelling down to the bottom. What a relief it was when the bubbles led into brightening water, and once more you knew where 'up' was! Sounded quite terrifying. Loch Ness – such a beautiful, yet mysterious place and sometimes terrifying place. How I treasure my time there."

Tim said it had been fun recalling all this and being carried back to a delightful time in his life. I am sure most, if not all, who have spent time at the loch, have similar memories, especially those of us fortunate enough to have been involved with the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation, the old LNI, I certainly have, great times. Tim and Mike had a much more exciting time on their 'night-drift', than I ever had. An aspect of it I found intriguing was they were in Urquhart Bay to begin, and finished up being close to Achnahannet when the mist cleared. Indicating a current flowing out of the bay and then South. In 1971, when one of the Academy of Applied Science's camera rigs, that Bob Rines deployed in the bay, went missing, we spent all day searching for it in the bay. No sign of the marker buoys on the surface. Two scuba divers came out from the Inverness Diving club and searched the bottom in the area where the rig had been sited. With 'Fussy Hen', I dragged a grappling hook around, in the hope of snagging the rig's mooring ropes, if not the rig itself, all to no avail. It seemed to have gone without trace, perhaps taken away by poachers during the night. In the evening as I was returning to the little harbour below Achnahannet, in 'Fussy Hen'. I found the rig, a long way round the Castle headland and southwards up the loch. The marker buoys on the surface, with the camera/light rig hanging underneath, by the mooring line, in mid-water. Pulling it aboard I turned and made my way to Temple Pier, where Bob and the Academy people were. They had seen 'Fussy Hen' crossing the bay, the camera rig's strobe light still flashing. It was a great relief to them to have the rig recovered. This must have been the same current, part of the complex water circulation in the loch.

It has taken me months to put this Nessletter together, my apologies. No real acceptable reason, just the usual situation, which I have written about in previous issues, and will not bore you by repeating here.

Now, back to business. Thank you for being the NIS, and tolerating the intermittent service. Please remember your news, views, and thoughts are very important, even more so now. Visitors always made welcome, subscriptions, if you are good enough to continue to subscribe, I am sorry will need to rise to cover the increased postal costs will be:- UK,£5.00 USA \$10. The address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldsford, St John's Chapel, Weardale Co Durham, DL13 1RQ Tel: 01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963.

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