

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 163

MARCH 2016

DOUG MACFARLANE

Phone call from Doug (Largs) April 30th '15, he and Margaret had been to the loch the previous week. They stayed at a B&B Balquidder, newly built, close to Dores, he said it was a little pricey but very good value, run by lovely people and good views over the loch. Only there for three days, weather had been good, so it had been a productive visit. They took a trip on the Royal Scot, which operates out of Fort Augustus, following the West shoreline up to the 'Horseshoe', before crossing the loch and back along the other side to Fort Augustus. Doug said it is very well equipped with various types of sonar, with the displays where the passengers are able to watch what is under them. There are also audio descriptions on various aspects of the loch, and what may lurk in the depths. It is suggested that a possible explanation of some of the large sonar targets, that are recorded from time to time, could be Ferrox Trout. In some other Scottish lochs, it is claimed that Ferrox Trout of over 50lbs have been caught.

After months, a note in with their Christmas card ('15). Doug and Margaret had three short visits to Loch Ness and their son Alan had joined them for a four-day visit based at the Clansman, in September. Weather was very good and they went up to the North at Durness, and back down the East, to the loch. Alan has invested in a larger R.I.B., which came fitted with GPS and Garmen colour sounder. Doug said that '15 had been a good year on the Clyde for Basking Sharks, and they had used the new boat to find submerged wrecks, along with Dolphins, Seals and 'Baskers'. At one point they were able to sit quietly and have groups of twenty-foot plus 'Baskers' swimming all around them. They even managed to target a Minkie Whale, which had obliged with two passes under their sounder, with large traces on the screen.

Over the years Doug has followed Basking Sharks on the Clyde with his various, improving, sounders. This outfit sounds very impressive and useful, hope they can get it to the loch sometime

LOCH MORAR

A TV programme, 'Secret Britain' if I remember correctly, featured people introducing us to favourite places, often a little obscure and off the beaten track. One of the places was Loch Morar, not really obscure but somewhere you have to go to, rather than passing by on route to elsewhere. Loch Morar is a softer, prettier, loch than Loch Ness, especially the western end with the islands. It had been nominated by a father, who is a Countryside Ranger, and his young daughter. They, and the programme makers, did a very good job promoting the area and illustrating what a beautiful loch it is. The question of Nessie's cousin, Morag, inevitably cropped up. The father having some video of 'mysterious' wakes on the loch. On very calm, black, water, between islands, very dark because of the reflected trees, there were two, narrow, bright sunlit wakes. Looking impressive they made steady progress across the surface, they did not appear to be displacing much water. The footage we were shown was quite short, and unfortunately, we did not see what became of the wakes, nor were we given much information. The father said they puzzled him, not having witnessed anything like them before. I have to say I was surprised by that, as I have photographs, taken at Loch Ness, of very similar wakes. Mine I know were being made by Black Throated Divers, crossing the loch from just south of the Clansman Hotel. I saw Black Throated Divers quite often over the years, a fairly large, beautiful, bird, they seemed to prefer more open water to the Mergansers, which patrolled near the shoreline. I said surprised, as the 'Morar' wakes looked so much like mine, and I felt that the father, being a Countryside Ranger around Loch Morar, surely would have seen similar water fowl wakes. Of course it may be that actually seeing the wakes, in the flesh as it were, he was able to discount Divers, or other water birds, and did video something strange.

LOCH NESS UFO.

Newspapers always take the chance to link 'strange-ness' to Loch Ness, and in June '15 the Daily Star was one which took such an opportunity. While on a family holiday from York, Alan Betts and his wife Anna and her parents stayed at Bunloit which has wonderful views over the loch. They had been fortunate to see

stay, so Anna's mother Tatina *went outside* to take a picture of it. After returning home it was noticed, while looking through the digital images on a PC, that she had among her photographs one which showed mysterious disc-shaped objects seemingly flying low over the loch. As usual the newspaper illustration was of poor quality, making it difficult to make out the objects. They did, again as usual, give us enlarged view of the objects with an arrow to them in the main picture. Two larger oval objects, looking a little like girdle scones, darker tops with lighter bands round the middle, behind each there are three much smaller light ovals, like speech bubbles in cartoons. They are small against the mountains on the far side of the loch, in the foreground there is the grassy hillside and a belt of trees leading to the loch. Intriguing to say the least.

However, it was soon pointed out that it looked like a table lamp reflecting in a window, a similar case had been featured in *Fortean Times* 330. Mick West, creator of *Metabunk.org*, in that instance found that the photograph had been taken from indoors, the resulting 'UFO' image caused by dual reflection of a lamp from a double glazed window. But this picture had been taken outside, hadn't it? Mick West contacted the owner of the Bunloit Farmhouse and asked her to take some new photographs, from indoors looking out over the loch in the same direction as in the original photograph. He also asked her to try to get some reflection from the light, and if possible take video, so the relative position of things could be seen. The owner, who wishes to be anonymous, did as asked, although moving the table lamp a little closer to the window. The resulting comparison, while not an exact recreation, shows a larger image of the same shape and colour as the original, leaving very little doubt that that is what the original was, and that it had been taken from indoors.

Once again careful scrutiny and investigation shows a 'mystery' to be perfectly explainable, also how important it is in any investigation, that the full facts are available and taken into account.

Dr DENYS TUCKER

Files newly made public under the freedom of information act, are said to shed fresh light on Dr Tucker's seven year long legal fight over being unfairly dismissed from the London Natural History Museum in 1960. He said his dismissal was the result of his support for a case for something large and unknown inhabiting Loch Ness. The authorities feared that if he won his claim they would be severely restricted in any future dismissal of a civil servant.

Dr Tucker joined the NHM as a scientific officer in 1946, after serving as a pilot during WW2. He became an eminent zoologist in the department, impressing his colleagues, being described by some as the 'most brilliant' to have worked at the museum. However this reputation was somewhat tarnished when in 1959 after a trip to Scotland, he reported that while on the shores of Loch Ness, he had witnessed an 'unnamed animal' break the surface. He wrote to the magazine 'New Scientist' saying that the creature could only have been an *Elasmosaurus*, and that Loch Ness held one of the most exciting and important findings in zoology.

This did not go down well with his superiors, who obviously thought that it was inappropriate for one of their leading researchers to be looking into the case of some legendary, mythical, beast. In October 1959 the NHM wrote to employees warning them that the trustees "do not approve of the spending of official time or official leave on the so-called Loch Ness phenomena. They have no intention of curtailing the granting of special leave for approved purposes, nor of interfering with the manner in which members of staff spend their private leave." The letter then continued to say, "They take this opportunity to warn all concerned that if as a result of the activities of members of staff the museum is involved in undesirable publicity, they will be gravely displeased." When Dr Tucker did not retract his statement and continued to support further research at Loch Ness, research that has continued over the decades, he was dismissed in 1960. The Museum's director, Dr Morrison-Scott cited Dr Tucker's disciplinary record. Among some other questionably behavior, he kept a pistol on his desk, and in one instance he was said to have waved it at a colleague, Dr Tucker died in 2009, aged 87, and had never held another academic post. He remained convinced that the establishment was attempting to cover up his findings at Loch Ness. Oliver Crimmen, the curator of fish at the NHM, met Dr Tucker shortly before his death and said, "he seems to have been an impossible character to keep within the confines of the orderly Civil Service atmosphere. He paid a heavy price."

I have not seen the full findings of the case, but from what I have read, there does not seem be much the Museum could not have handled in a simpler fashion. Surely it could have said that Dr Tucker was a brilliant scientific officer, doing very good work for them, unfortunately like so many brilliant people, he was somewhat eccentric. In view of his invaluable work for the Natural History Museum, they humored this eccentricity in his private life, although they disassociated the Museum entirely with the strange views he held in this matter. Problem solved.

Perhaps an error of judgement, to summarily dismiss such a colourful character, someone who had a distinguished wartime career, and expect a quietly cleared desk and departure. The result was a seven-year legal battle, involving an Archbishop, a senior MP, and members of the aristocracy. Dr Tucker's case was eventually thrown out by the Court of Appeal, but at what cost to the NHM, both financially and in prestige.

SONAR

Newspaper story, mid-January '16. Former fisherman, now pleasure boat skipper, Keith Stewart reported picking up an unusual shape while using his sonar in the loch. Not really a believer before, but when he saw an image on the screen of a long, humped object, lying on the bottom, he does wonder what could be in the loch. Also when he later looked for it, in the same area, he could not find it. He later came across a trench in the loch bottom which his equipment indicated was 889ft deep. This is 150 feet deeper than the previous maximum depth of the loch. One 'expert' suggested this could be the result of an earthquake in 2013, and be the new home of the Nessie family.

Once again I must show my lack of knowledge about sonar, but I think I am correct to say that sonar does not give a 'shape', it registers the difference in density. A larger object, having more mass, will perhaps, be denser so give a larger, more defined trace on the screen, but not the shape. Remembering the Simrad expedition many years ago, and the extremely good equipment they used to produce their impressive 3D map of the underwater contours of the loch; which showed the work done by the Murray survey in 1903/08, and the results they produced were accurate. Even compared to work carried out using modern state of art equipment. I do wonder about the 'new deep' being found, there is no location given, not even a vague area so it is difficult to have an informed opinion. But you may remember some time ago another 'new deep' being found at the outer fringe of Urquhart Bay, and different explanations being given, and a rogue sonar signal bouncing off a steep underwater wall was perhaps the explanation. This 'new deep' at 889ft is 135ft deeper than the accepted deepest, not an insignificant amount, how has it lain unnoticed till now? The suggestion that it was formed in 2013, by an earthquake, is questionable I think. Any movement of the loch floor by almost 150 feet, even a comparatively small area, would surely have resulted in some disruption at the surface. Then of course the 'new hidey hole' for the Nessie family!!! Much more investigation needs to be done into all aspects of this report.

STEVE FELTHAM

In July last year Steve and Nessie made the national newspapers, with startling headlines such as "Nessie's a Fish!". One article went on to say that, after 24 years at the loch-side hunting the monster, he was now convinced that the creature is actually a giant Wels Catfish, as found in Eastern Europe. The reporter asked him if now he would give up the hunt and go home. It was also said that some locals feared damage to the tourist industry, as such a claim would kill the Nessie mystery and cut visitor numbers. To be fair the Daily Mirror did have a much better piece, which did make clear that Steve did not claim to have solved the Nessie Mystery. He had just said that after all his years of research, there were a number of different theories to explain what the eye-witnesses reported, among them Sturgeon, Eels, and Wels Catfish. At the moment Steve said that perhaps the Wels was the leading contender, but that it did not explain many of the reports.

Steve appeared on the TV programme, 'This Morning', the day after the Catfish headlines. Being asked some sensible questions, he was able to give a very good interview and make his position clear. He said that a few days previous while sitting outside making his model monsters, which provide his income, keeping a watch-full eye on the loch. A free-lance journalist, who Steve knows, as he cycles out from Inverness from time to time, joined him. As the conversation ranged over the subject, Steve was asked what he thought may be in the loch, and he put forward the 'Wels theory' as a possibility. Steve has witnessed some happenings in Dores Bay, which he thinks could be caused by the large catfish. The journalist picked up on this, saying, 'I could get something for the paper out of that'. The result was the lurid headlines, which appeared over the coming days.

Steve likened the situation to the Grand National, half way through the race, one horse is leading, at that point you do not say there is the winner, and try to collect your winnings. You must wait for the race to finish, and although he suggests the Wels, is leading the field of options; the race may still have a long way to go. He does not claim the hunt at Loch Ness is over, there are still very many questions to be answered, one being the sighting reports of 'long necks'. The Wels gives answer to some of reports; it definitely does not provide one for 5 foot necks being reported. As for him packing up and going 'home', where would that be? He has been at the loch-side for coming up 25 years, he is a respected member of the Dores village community, is in a long term relationship, has no secrets, and says loch-side life is his thing. He

I received a letter from Steve late last year after the 'Catfish' story. He apologized for taking so long to answer my last letter to him. It is a little comforting to know I am not the only one who takes so long to write, although Steve does have many better reasons, than I have. He said life had been very busy. He thought that perhaps, after seeing the wildly inaccurate news story, a lot of people thought 'well if he is leaving better go see him and buy a model'. So it has not all been bad, and things are now a little quieter. No decent reports of anything in the loch this summer ('15), precious little last summer. He said, "maybe Bob Rines was right to be looking for carcasses on the bottom, in his later years". Mind you the summer was that bad up here was that, probably not many people were watching, he was. He was just back after spending a week as a guest of The Highland Club, who are owners of Fort Augustus Abbey. He had stayed in one of their luxury flats, overlooking the monk's graveyard, and the loch, very nice indeed. Every night he went and stood, sometimes for hours on that old grassy jetty by the boathouse. Very strong feelings in the moonlight, looking across the mouth of the canal to the spot where he pulled up in 1991, of coming full circle and reminding him of how much he loves Fort Augustus. He said he did not know the monks had a proper outdoor swimming pool, over the hedge by the lighthouse! Neither did I. Even more stunning, he and Hilary, were able to spend an hour up the clock tower, on the roof, watching the sun set!! He said, it is over a decade he and Hilary have been together. He still lives in his research van, on Dores beach, she in her house in Inverness, unusual, but seems to suit them both.

He was invited to the launch of the new book, 'A Monstrous Commotion (The Mysteries of Loch Ness)' by Gareth F. Williams. (this late November '15). Who reckons Nessie was invented in a London pub in 1930. After the launch they are going out for a meal, Gareth, Adrian Shine, Dick Raynor, Steve, and partners. Going on to say, "it is ironic really that all four of us round that table will at some point have played a small part in hammering nails into Nessie's coffin. Dick when he changed his interpretation of his piece of film. Gareth in his new book, me accidentally getting myself wildly misquoted around the world, that Nessies don't exist because I think Catfish are the explanation. Which is not true at all, they are just one of many guesses, and Adrian, well Adrian at any opportunity. I will be the one defender of the evidence. Remember Rip, when Adrian got you and me and others round to Drum to try to convince us that Tim filmed a man in a boat, this time I might be the lone voice in the room".

In with his letter was a very nicely done promotional postcard. One side is Steve's story and thanks for buying one of his handcrafted Nessie models. The other is The Highland Club, sales and holiday lettings contact details; +44(0)2034783897, www.thehighlandclub.co.uk, nsteele@thehighlandclub.co.uk, with mutual benefits. Steve signed off saying, van is still water tight, and he is still fit. His letters are rarities but so good to receive, as I always say it is good to know someone is watching the water for us.

I do indeed remember the times, good times, when groups of us were brought together, with many differing points of view, usually through the good offices of Adrian, and enjoying lively discussions. Being able to view, on one occasion, the efforts to replicate Tim's film. Adrian, with others, had taken great pains to use similar equipment, similar water and light conditions, filming a 'man in a boat' crossing the loch. Unfortunately, from their point of view, that is exactly what they achieved, good footage of a man in a boat, crossing the loch. It was not Tim's film. There did not seem to be any differences in equipment etc, so I do not know how the sequences were so different. Perhaps it is just that on April 23rd 1960, Tim Dinsdale did film something large, and unusual, moving across the waters of Loch Ness.

Again it has taken me so long to put this Nessletter together, perhaps I should just put the year on the heading and leave the month. 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. Although now being an octogenarian am I able to hide behind that, probably not? 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, I feel embarrassed to mention, if you are good enough to continue to subscribe:- UK 5.00 USA \$10. The address remains:- R.R.Heppele, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ Tel: 01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963.

Rip



Thank you for buying one of my hand-crafted Nessies. They are individually made by me, Steve Feltham, full time 'Nessie Hunter' on the shores of Loch Ness.
 In 1991, I sold my house in Dorset and moved to Loch Ness to pursue my lifelong dream of finding Nessie. I live in a converted mobile library on the loch's shore at Dores Beach.

