

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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BLUE NESSIE

A newspaper report, with photograph, from mid August '16. Calley Tulleth, from Fife, on holiday at Loch Ness staying at a spot with a good view of the loch, was on the balcony when she saw the surface ripple and 'this blue thing swimming across'. She picked up her phone and started snapping away, as she tried to zoom in for a better shot, she said, it just disappeared. The 28-year-old mother of three, said that it looked so much like the Loch Ness Monster, she just cannot stop thinking about it.

As usual newspaper photograph does not give much to go on, and the report is sadly lacking in relevant details, but I think there could be enough. The image in the picture has all the characteristics of a boat wake, and I am sure that is what was seen and photographed. An explanation for the apparent colour could be reflection, it appears to be a fine day with a clear sky, a blue sky, which given various angles and such, reflects off the wave crest. Another well intentioned, but misinterpreted, report.

TWO HUMPS

Early September '16, 'an astonishing' new photograph of Nessie was published in a number of newspapers. It had been taken by Ian Bremner, of Nigg, Invergordon, a whisky warehouseman. It showed a head on a short neck, low in the water with two humps close behind, and water splashing at the front of each hump. Being a keen photographer he spends many weekends driving around the area, taking shots of the wonderful scenery and wildlife. One Saturday afternoon he had gone from Dores towards Inverfarigaig, on the road along the shore of Loch Ness, the area has Red Deer and he was hoping to get some shots of them. But he had captured this 'astonishing' photograph of Nessie. However, even without very close inspection of the photograph, it is fairly obvious that it is of seals. Perhaps even three shots of one seal, nicely stitched together. The first, the head very much a seal and the short neck, the other two are of an arched back curving into the water, good distinct prints, which show the pattern of the animals fur very clearly.

The question to be asked is why? I would suggest the seals were photographed elsewhere, there are so many areas where they are found, rather than Loch Ness. The 'cover story' holds up quite well, but there are not that many places along the Dores to Inverfarigaig road, that have a good clear view of the loch. Hoping to photograph Red Deer, quietly driving along the mainly single-track road, would not attention be focused on the woods rather than the fleeting glimpses of the loch? It would seem this is a deliberate fake, rather than a genuine misinterpretation. By whom, Mr Bremner, or was he the messenger, with someone else's message? Similar to Mr Wilson and Mr Wetherall.

DICK RAYNOR

Telephone call from Dick on 4th May, one reason for the call, to say it was fifty years, to the day, since he first arrived at the loch. That comes as a bit of a surprise, half a century, oh my! A bit chat about his personal life, which seems to be going along very well, nice to know. Then on to things Nessie, of which not a great deal. There have been recent reports of Nessie, but nothing worthwhile. One was by a lady who took a photo of head and neck in Urquhart Bay. Close to river mouth, which made it into the online editions of some papers, in early May. Dick knew just what it was, there is an old tree trunk, branch, in that area. He was able to take a close up of it, to put online, and show what it was. He said he got some adverse reaction to this! He also witnessed a head and neck proceeding in a stately manner across the bows of one of the hire craft. This also in Urquhart

Bay, just under Strone Cottage, there was a man sitting on the bow of the boat who was seemed completely unconcerned about it. It also made it online a week or so later, but without much reaction. Some time later when out in the trip boat he skippers, he went round the corner from the castle, and saw the remains of a model lying at the water's edge. He took photos, to enable him to locate it from the shore. Which he did later, after a scramble down the steep fields below the road at Strone Point. He found something the size, and similar shape, of a double bass, with head and neck on, it was broken with pieces of glass fibre lying about in the shallows. He now has a piece of this at home, the top of the head. He said it appeared to have been very well made quite heavy, like something a film or TV prop department would turn out. I thought this rather strange. Someone has gone to a lot of trouble to make a model monster, but failed to get that many 'column inches' in the press. Disappointing for them, or am I being old fashioned, and these days getting 'on line' is the primary aim.

DNA

The Sunday post has an article which says that a Professor Neil Gemmell, from the University of Otago in New Zealand, has plans to use DNA to try to establish what lives in Loch Ness. This would involve samples of water taken from different areas of the loch, at various depths. These would be analysed using similar techniques used by police forces at crime scenes. Professor Gemmell believes his scientific study could help to solve the long-standing 'Monster' mystery. Saying, 'Our group uses so-called environmental DNA to monitor marine biodiversity. From a few litres of water, we can detect thousands of species ranging from whales, sharks to plankton. Essentially all large organisms lose cells from their skin, or digestive system, or whatever as that move through their environment.' Going on to say that new genomic technology is sensitive enough to pick this up even when rare. They have a large sequence database that span the majority of living things, which is then used for comparison. He says, 'If there is anything unusual in the loch, these DNA tools would likely pick up that evidence.'

This news of possible DNA studies caused a ripple of interest among the serious researchers. Roland Watson, who for many years has studied the mystery, welcomed it. He is keen for scientific inquiry and using whatever means we have to come up with an answer. He did wonder if these tests would be sensitive enough to detect visitors to the loch, such as seals and Atlantic salmon, as some believe the creatures are visiting rather than inhabiting, the loch. The Loch Ness Project, led by Adrian Shine, has carried out fieldwork on the loch for a number of universities since 1973. Adrian said he and his team could potentially help gather samples, if such a study is ever undertaken, and he would be very interested in any results. Steve Feltham, based on the shore at Dores, for 26 years trying to find the answer to the mystery. Steve said that anything that gives us more knowledge is to be welcomed. He did also say that he would not give up his quest even if the study suggested there was nothing there. He said, 'I can guarantee that someone would see something the next day'. A similar view being expressed by Ella Macrae, the Dores Community Council chairwoman. Saying she would be interested to see any findings, but even if negative, she felt that the popularity of the myth would live on. The mystery will still be spoken about in decades to come, she said.

When I saw the article, then noted the date of that edition of the Sunday Post was April 2nd '17, I thought here we go again, another April Fool prank. But I could not find any of the usual anagrams in the text, perhaps it was genuine. I asked my daughter to see if she could find any reference to it on-line, and she came up with an article from the Otago Daily Times.

Otago Daily Times. (Do not have a date) Prof. Neil Gemmell, head of the Anatomy department, hopes to look for traces of Nessie, using genomic technology. Large organisms lose cells as they move through their environment; their new technology is sensitive enough to pick this up. They have large databases that span the majority of known living things to use as comparisons. They would be looking for an unusual lineage, separate from known species. the odd one out. Prof Gemmell said if unknown DNA was found it would open up a

conversation, He says although he is a sceptic; he is not averse to the idea of being proved wrong. Even if they were to find nothing particularly special about Loch Ness, he felt it would not stop people from believing in and continuing to look for the 'monster'. Prof Gemmell said at the moment the idea was just a proposal, funding for such a project had not been applied for. It started out as an idea he voiced on Twitter, with some other colleagues, which has been picked up by others, and seems to have grown legitimate legs of its own. Perhaps funding would be found and such a project undertaken sometime within the next year. News of this idea quickly reached Scotland where the Daily Mail has quoted researchers expressing interest in the study. Roland Watson said he was not aware of anyone doing any DNA testing in the loch before. Adrian Shine, Loch Ness Project leader, has carried out field work for many universities since 1973. Said he and his team could potentially help gather samples for such a study, and would be very interested in any results found. Steve Feltham who has spent 26 years at the loch-side trying to answer the mystery said, "if anyone thinks they can identify it bring them on". Anything that gives us more Knowledge is to be welcomed.

If this idea ever got off the ground it would be very interesting, but I doubt it will. It brings to mind the evening conversations in the mess at the LNI HQ, Achnahannet. After the meal the group would relax and talk about the day's happenings and come up with ideas to find the answer to the mystery we were all there trying to solve, and that was as far as it went. Professor Gemmell, and his group, has done work on marine bio-diversity, and in the aftermath, relaxing if you like, take to worldwide Twitter, voicing various ideas. Therein lies the difference, random thoughts in the confines of the mess caravan, to random thoughts given global exposure.

They have worked on ocean bio-diversity, using the knowledge that 'large organisms' lose cells as they move through their environment. I wonder just what constitutes a 'large organism', how far down the scale of size are they able to go? It would be interesting to see how many of the different species of fish in the loch they can identify. From the Salmon, the largest I would suggest, then Sea Trout, Brown Trout, the Char that are in the depths, of course the ubiquitous Eel, down to the little Minnows, Sticklebacks, and Lampreys. That last one is a strange creature. A primitive fish almost from the age of the Dinosaur itself, which I know are in the loch, having caught one in my hands while building the LNI harbour below Achnahannet. They may identify Sturgeon, or the European Catfish, the Wels, which are theories some hold as possible answers. They both may show up as something out of the ordinary, not really supposed to inhabit the loch. Maybe showing there is, after all, something large and unexplained living there. Another theory is the overgrown Eel, the *Anguilla Anguilla* that did not go back to breed in the Sargasso Sea, and just stays in the loch, growing to gigantic proportions. That could perhaps throw a spanner in the DNA works. Would the DNA of a large overgrown Eel, be just the same as the run of the mill Eel? When it is picked up and identified as *Anguilla Anguilla*, the response is, 'just an Eel' nothing to interest us and so nothing in the loch. Meanwhile our rolling, small, population of large Eels goes on popping up every now and then, and the Monster Legend lives on.

On the other hand, Professor Gemmell could find something that is not on their large database, something completely new. Would that tell us what lurks in the loch? Or would such evidence have to go on the shelf alongside the Tim Dinsdale film? Evidence that points to something large and unknown, but not what it is. I suppose with DNA we could be taken a little closer, by getting the Genus or family, or related animals.

Writing the above I was reminded of an interesting episode with the LNI. I am not too sure of exact details, such as time, day, month or even year, either '70 or '71, I will have notes about it somewhere, but the events and outcome are still quite clear. One evening a phone call came into H.Q. Achnahannet, from the camera crew stationed at Strone, on the Carey's garage. This would come from the Carey's landline, in the days before mobile phones. Having lost 'camera light', they were in the process of packing up to return to base. When they became aware of a patch of yellow water, out in Urquhart Bay, using binoculars they could see it seemed to be rising to the surface from below. This news produced a flurry of activity, whatever it was, if possible a sample should be obtained. As Tim Dinsdale's "Mooscow", and 2hp Johnson engine were loaded into one of the Bedford vans, we speculated as to what it may be. Even, no it couldn't be could it, Nessie Poo? Away we went,

Tim in his Jag, myself driving the Bedford, there were others not sure now just who. The couple of miles to Strone and we could see for ourselves, yellow swirls similar to milk carefully poured into a cup of coffee, coming to the surface. An area perhaps, of two tennis courts. The Strone camera people told us it was diluting, not as marked as when they first spotted it, no time to be lost. The little inflatable, engine and other gear, were carried, dragged down the steep hillside, and put onto the water. As we went out we needed directing from the hillside, as on the water we could not see the yellow patch, until we were actually among it. We had sample jars, really empty coffee jars, to get the required sample. It was judged the best way was to reach as far down into the water as we could, then carefully remove the lid, taking water from below the surface if possible. Looking at the jars of water we filled, we could see a heavy suspension of fine particles, with a marked yellowness. Return to shore, everything carried up the hill loaded into vehicles, then back to Achnahannet. Not sure what we had, but it was very interesting, and hopefully of some use. We were pleased that our reactions to an unexpected situation had been fairly co-ordinated, also fruitful. Arriving back at Achnahannet, we were very surprised to find Tim's 16mm Bolex camera still lying on the Jaguar's wing. The Mk 9 Jag has a very nice, smoothly contoured dip between bonnet and front wing, the camera had been laid there while getting everything else into car and van, then overlooked. Fortunately making the two and a half-mile trip back to base without sliding off to destruction. Writing that, I have a thought, is there somewhere, a film of our escapade that evening? The samples were packed up and sent, or taken, to a laboratory in Edinburgh, if memory serves me. I am sure of the results, which came back quite quickly. What we had collected was water, with fairly concentrated amounts of pollen, tree pollen, which came from Scots Pine trees! We were somewhat disappointed that it was not Nessie poo, or something they had not come across before. Just ordinary common tree pollen, albeit in concentrated quantities.

The next question, how come Fir Tree pollen was swirling around in Urquhart Bay? After much thought and speculation, a reasonable solution seemed to be reached. Both rivers running into the bay, the Coiltie and Enrick, ran through forest areas, perhaps the Enrick more so. They are both running low water when the pollen falls from the trees, some of it falling onto dry river bed, some into quiet pools, just lying there. Then later in the season there is rain, heavy rain, up the glen, resulting in raised river levels. These spates pick up the debris and suchlike, collecting over the dryer season, flushing it out into the loch from the rivers. In this instance there had been a great accumulation of the pollen, picked up in a flood and swept into the bay. Then the bottom contours and currents bring it swirling to the surface, where it soon dilutes and dissipates. I think it would take a rather specific set of circumstances for this to occur. Could it be that over the years, such phenomena has happened from time to time, but lacking LNI camera crews watching the loch, has passed un-noticed.

It has taken me that long to finish this Nessletter I have needed to change the year on the heading, let alone the month! Really no good reason for my tardiness, time just seems to slip by. In the time since my Doris died, now turned eight years, I have found time has slowly become irrelevant. When she was with me and as her health deteriorated, I gradually took over the day to day looking after us. Eventually becoming her carer, I suppose, not that I ever thought of it like that. But her needs were important, and required taking care of as and when necessary. This gave purpose, and drive, things being done at once, and other things being done as a consequence. Now, as I look after myself, and our cottage, on a daily basis, meals, cleaning, and all the little things to be done, other things are easily put off. With the feeling of I have 'all day tomorrow untouched', and will get round to it then. At 82 I perhaps should consider I have a limited number of 'untouched tomorrows', and put them to a more productive use. But it is all too easy to sit in the comfy chair in the conservatory, and watch the world go by. My thanks once again to you, especially those that send me cuttings and news.

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.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldsford, St John's Chapel, Weardale Co Durham, DL13 1RQ Tel: 01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963.