

Fort Augustus/Loch Ness - Interesting Facts

Loch Ness & The Monster

Loch Ness, and it's most famous resident 'Nessie' the Loch Ness Monster, has become one of the most famous lochs (or lakes) in the world.

It's the largest loch in Britain by volume of water at 24 miles long, averaging 1 mile wide and is up to 740 feet deep (in new money that's approx 39km long with an average depth of 132m & its deepest point is 320m near Urquhart Castle.) It holds more fresh water than all the lakes and reservoirs in England and Wales put together.

The loch receives seven rivers: Farigaig, Foyers, Tarff, Oich, Moriston, Coilte and Enrick and its only outlet is the River Ness. Loch Ness lies in a natural geographical fault that stretches across the width of Scotland & is joined at either end by the Caledonian Canal, built by the engineer Thomas Telford in 1822.

The first recorded sighting of the monster was in 565AD, when it snatched up and ate a local farmer - or so the story goes..... St Columba, in the area on his way back from Iona, failed to save the man, but forced the monster back into the waters. Chastened by this encounter, Nessie has been reluctant to leave the depths ever since.

Although rumours spread after "strange events" in 1871 and 1930, it was only in 1933 that the monster hit the headlines. In this year the construction of the A82 along the west bank of the loch involved much drilling and blasting, and it is believed that this drove the monster out into the open. In May 1933 Alex Campbell saw "something" in the loch, and in July of this year George Spicer and his wife saw "something else" on the road near Foyers.

Quickly rechristened "Nessie" by the local newspapers, the monster was seen so often in the following months that in 1934, a full scale mission was mounted but without success. Later in 1934 however, everything changed. A London surgeon, R K Wilson, took a photograph which clearly showed a sinuous head and neck rising from the surface of the loch. Public interest was tremendous, and over the years every new photograph was studied and debated in universities, meetings, villages and pubs. Several of the photographs were inconclusive, several more undoubtedly false, but a number remain unexplained to this day.

In the 1960s manpower & technology joined forces when the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau was formed to intensify the search who, with the aid of still and movie cameras, teams of spotters monitored the surface of the loch every summer for ten years, and recorded an average of 20 sightings each year.

In the late 1960s the searchers ventured beneath the surface for the first time, initially in mini-submarines, then with sonar equipment. Sonar brought new levels of sophistication and accuracy to the search, with sonar-activated colour cameras recording images of Loch Ness. Remarkable underwater photographs were made public in 1972 and 1975 and were instrumental in raising public awareness and generating new interest in the monster.

Since then, several major sonar scans have taken place and contacts have producing exciting, if unprovable results on several occasions. In 1987 Operation Deepscan covered the entire surface of the loch with 20 motor cruisers, creating a sonar envelope from which 'nothing' could hide. Nessie, however, did.

The most recent theory is that 'Nessie' could have been sightings of a circus elephant bathing in the loch.... Neil Clark, curator of palaeontology, sees similarities between descriptions of Nessie and what an elephant looks like while swimming. Coincidentally, circus elephants passed near the loch in the 1930s at the height of the monster sightings. By publishing his theory, Clark has reignited worldwide passionate discussion about Nessie - the Loch Ness Monster.

Although there is no scientific, physical or conclusive photographic evidence that either prove OR disprove the existence of a monster or monsters in Loch Ness, many respectable, responsible and sober observers are utterly convinced they have seen a large aquatic creature in the water.

Come watch the waters and decide for yourself – source www.visitlochness.net

Did you know???? Urquhart Bay and the surrounding woods is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The woods, lying between the Rivers Enrick and Coiltie, are one of Britain's last remnants of swamp woodland

Did you know???? The Corrimony Chambered burial cairn in Glenurquhart was built circa 2000BC, and is of a type known as a passage grave, encircled by 11 standing stones.

Did you know???? On the 29th September 1952, whilst travelling at 206mph on Loch Ness in his craft Crusader in an attempt to gain the world water speed record, John Cobb lost his life. The people in the area had so taken to the quiet, unassuming Englishman that it was decided to erect a simple cairn, to commemorate the man, from the people of Glen Urquhart, on a site overlooking the measured mile.

Did you know???? When Johnson and Boswell set off from Inverness to Fort Augustus on the morning of Monday, August 30, 1773, they travelled on horseback, accompanied by a guide and translator, Joseph, and two other Highlanders on foot. "I perceived a little hut, with an old looking woman at the door of it," wrote Boswell. "I thought there might be a scene that would amuse Dr Johnson." Sure enough, in they went to the hovel, lit only by a hole punched in the turf and the light of peat fire in the middle of the floor and goats tethered to one end. Where, wondered Dr Johnson aloud, did the woman sleep? Something must have been lost in translation because the old crone interpreted this as an alarming invitation to go to bed. The misunderstanding and her dignity were saved with humour.

Did you know???? Cherry Island near Fort Augustus, about 100m from the shore, is the only island on Loch Ness. In fact is not an island, nor is this its real name! The 'island' is in fact a man made structure known as a 'crannog'. Designed to provide a fortified retreat for the local people when threatened, they were built and used for this purpose between the Iron Age and the 16th century. The real name of the crannog is Eilean Mhuireach or Murdoch's Island.

Did you know??? The RSPB purchased Corrimony reserve in 1997 with the aim to regenerate a large area of Caledonian pinewood. Black Grouse, Golden Eagles, Scottish Crossbills, Crested tits & Greenshanks can all be found there. Source: www.rspb.org.uk

Did you know???? Strathglass & Glenurquhart Shinty Clubs competed in the fixture considered to be the origin of the rules applied today in modern shinty at Bught Park, Inverness in 1887. This ancient rivalry is still continued with the clubs' first teams playing each year for the MacDonald Cup and second teams for the Ali Bhan Cup as a curtain raiser to the new season. Source: www.wikipedia.org

Did you know? Legends of Loch Ness-side records that at one time the Great Glen in which the loch now lies was a place of rich pasture, a land of milk and honey with plenty of corn, fish, deer and game for its numerous people. In the Glen there was a well which had been blessed by Daly, the Druid, under the condition that whosoever drew water from the well must always replace its cover. Many years later a woman was drawing water from the well when she heard that her child had fallen into the fire. The poor mother immediately rushed home forgetting to replace the well's cover. The water of the well overflowed and flooded the whole glen and the escaping inhabitants lamented "The loch nis ann" (there is a lake now). From this saying (nis is pronounced Neesh in Gaelic) Loch Ness took its name. Source: A Brief History of Foyers by the late Gordon Wilson

Did you know?? Urquhart Castle is located on the shores of Loch Ness on the rocky promontory of Strone Point. It dates from early in the thirteenth century, and was built by Alan Durward, son-in-law of King Alexander II. For a time, it was a strong-hold of Robert de Brus (the Bruce), and it met its end in 1692, when English forces blew it up to thwart the Jacobites. It is now in the care of Historic Scotland, and is open to the public.

Did you know?? IN 1890, when Queen

Victoria was still using paraffin lamps in Balmoral Castle, some villagers in Fort Augustus had the unlikely luxury of electric light because of a small water turbine installed by the monks at the nearby Benedictine Abbey. This is believed to be Scotland's first electrical installation and began operating eight years after Edison opened his station at Holborn Viaduct in London in 1882. Source: The Scotsman

Did you know? Divach Falls on the edge of Drumnadrochit drops over 30m (100feet). The falls have inspired artists and authors. The artist John Phillips painted the falls & the painting now hangs in Buckingham Palace. The Falls were also responsible for the first tourism in the area. Source: www.lochnessview.com

Did you know???? In the 2001 census Drumnadrochit had a population of 813, Fort Augustus had a population of 508 & Inverness had a population of 40,949.

Did you know???? In 1895 the North British Aluminium Company started to make use of the River Foyers to generate the electricity needed to process aluminium at Foyers, South Loch Ness. All materials were transported to and from Foyers by boat and a light railway was built to connect the works and a wharf. Aluminium production at Foyers ceased in 1967: though the plant was then used for a while to build narrow boats for English canals. In

1973 the power generation equipment was enlarged and upgraded and the ex-aluminium plant now serves as a hydro electric power station feeding the national grid. Source: www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk

Did you know???? High above the village of Inverfarigaig there is a large hill fort, which probably dates back to the Iron Age. The fort was built on the top of Dun Dearduil, about 925 feet above sea level. The fort was built by the Celts some time around 700BC to protect them from their enemies and to protect their cattle and families. At the beginning of the last century it was excavated and found to be partly vitrified. This means that some of the stones it had been built with had melted and become like glass. Originally, the fort would have been surrounded by a thick stone and timber wall and there are still traces of a separate enclosure which might have been used for cattle. Source: http://cauldeenprimary.co.uk/secretlochness/data/foyers_dundeardail.htm

Did you know???? Some time in the 11th century, the story goes, a Viking prince called Monie landed in Argyll, accompanied by an army of men and his sister. The Scots were having none of it, and he was pursued northwards until he finally reached a rocky crag in what is now Drumnadrochit near Loch Ness, visible for miles around. Though he and his companions bravely held their own, they were eventually defeated and Monie was killed. Craig Monie, as that rocky crag is called, is a local landmark still – so prominent that a gibbet once stood there as a sombre warning for wrongdoers. Source: <http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk>

Did you know???? Baxter's Loch Ness Marathon had Twenty-five nationalities represented in this year's (2006) event with athletes from as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, USA & Inverfairgaig.

Did you know???? Brown trout exist in large numbers in Loch Ness and are regularly caught at lengths between 6" and 10" or 15cm to 25cm. Some turn cannibal and grow much larger, easily attaining weights of 12 lbs (5.3Kg). These are known as ferrox trout. In 2000 a trout was caught weighing 18lbs (7.5Kg) a new Loch Ness record. Source: www.loch-ness.org (please note – if this inspires you to grab a rod and reel, the season runs from the 15th of March to the 6th of October).

Did you know???? Northeast of the village of Dores is Drumashie Moor, where Fingal and his Gaels fought a battle against A'ishidh (Ashie) and his Norsemen. The battle is said to haunt the moor where



ghostly columns of soldiers and horsemen
march on the moor and silently enact the battle just after dawn on May 1st.
Source: University of St Andrews.

*This fact sheet was created by The Loch Ness Partnership. For more information please visit
www.nesslink.co.uk.*