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Standing On The Shores Of Loch Ness

By Steven Cronin

Locked in the vaults of Scottish legend lies an enigmatic stretch of water famous the world over.

Within the wells of Celtic folklore, the mystery of Loch Ness has baffled scientists for decades.

Loch Ness sits in the north of Scotland, near the town of Inverness. It forms part of a series of lochs running from the Irish Sea on the east coast, over to the North Sea on the western shoreline, almost dividing the country in half.

Loch Ness is the deepest body of water in the United Kingdom. Despite its natural beauty and standing as a tourist attraction in its own right, of course the real reason Loch Ness achieves cult status is the legend of the Loch Ness Monster.

Since those first blurred, black and white photographs from the first half of the twentieth century, the legend of the Loch has kept the world captivated; countless scientific expeditions have failed to reach a conclusion, elevating the monster myth.

Standing on the shores of Loch Ness, I have come here to experience the aura and mystery which has besieged the entire neighbourhood.

Drawn by a desire to meet the land and its people, I headed north from England, navigating the secluded mountain roads and low winter sun.

The journey trod a magnificent path through the bleak Scottish mountains, the neighbouring landscape carpeted with a blanket of snow. An immense feeling of isolation gripped me along the open roads, greeting little other traffic.

This was quintessential Scotland, just as nature had intended. Vast, wide open spaces, with barely a soul to witness, civilisation stripped to its bare bones. Life's fundamentals were all this place required.

The water rippled gently about my feet as I stared deeply across the water's surface, clear, but for several birds bobbing on the surface. I felt the answer to the legend was out there somewhere, but it

Standing On The Shores Of Loch Ness

was going to take a better man than me to work it out. I was simply here to enjoy the ride.

There's a romance about the uncertainty. The enigma drives the tourist trade, on which the livelihoods of many people depend. But it's not just about money. The people here are proud to be associated with such an iconic landmark.

To be honest, I'm undecided whether the truth - either one way or the other - is what people really want. I get the impression the majority of locals feel the same way.

Steven Cronin owns the City Breaks website featuring city break special offers from luxury hotels to budget accommodations. For more information please visit

<http://www.sargas.co.uk>

Documenting Everything: Your Journal is Your Logbook

By Stephen Earley Jordan, II

Sailors had it for years. Great explorers had it as well. If you go on an expedition to an ancient Aztec mound, more than likely the archaeologist will have one too – so, why shouldn't you own one?

No, I'm not speaking of the scurvy that plagued the sailors! No, I'm not speaking of the Loch Ness Monster or Bigfoot, whom explorers claimed to have seen in snowy Manitoba winters. Nor am I speaking of a lost city, which was never truly lost, but simply buried under mounds of earth and recently dug up by an archaeologist.

I'm speaking of journals. Journals? Yes! Keeping a journal can be just as much of an adventure as sailing the high seas, exploring unknown Canadian wilderness or digging in the dirt to find buried treasure.

Journals have been a source of reflection for centuries. My suggestion is to look at your writing career as if you're an explorer analyzing new-found land; an archaeologist digging up new artifacts and renaming them and so on...

How can you do this? Well, view your journal as a logbook and document your daily happenings. Here is a suggested format for keeping your captain's log.

Divide your journal entries into sections: Date, Weather, Mood, Events and Freewrite

1. Date: This is the obvious one (for some people). Write the month, day and the year. Also write which day of the week it is (i.e., December 17, 2001; Monday).

2. Weather: Make note of the temperature outside. Is it 100 degrees? Or perhaps it's only 20 degrees? Is it raining and 35 degrees? Snowing and 110 degrees? Raining cats and dogs? (Don't step in a poodle....)

Standing On The Shores Of Loch Ness

3. Mood: What's going on in your head? Did you just get off the phone with your ex-lover who ruined your day and sank you into the depths of depression? Write about it. Did you manage to pull off some wondrous passive-aggressive revenge against said ex-lover? Write about that too and how it made you feel.

4. Events: Here's where things get a bit complicated – for some. You have to do your homework. Watch television, read the newspaper and write a few lines about what's going on in your city, state, country or the world in general.

5. Freewrite: Here's your chance to shine. Since we're all writers, we should leave a section for freewriting. Allow yourself some space to simply write aimlessly without direction. But, here's the challenge – try to limit yourself to a certain number of lines.

When you keep these entries for a week, two weeks or a longer period of time, it can be extremely beneficial. Comparing and contrasting the Mondays or Tuesdays could be a surprising learning experience.

Many times I've written stories and wanted to "know" what 78 degrees felt like, so I went to my journal and found an entry, read my mood descriptions and weather descriptions and was easily informed from my own documentation.

Keep in mind, a good writer documents everything – whether it be on paper or just in the mind's filing cabinet. But, to keep things in order, try to keep your documentation on paper – or at least saved to disk.

Stephen Jordan, a medical editor, has five years experience within the educational publishing industry. Stephen was a freelance editor with such educational foundations as Princeton Review, The College Board, New York University, and Columbia University. Away from the office, Stephen promotes his creative writing with his home-freelance business OutStretch Publications and his artwork. Stephen holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees in writing and literature from Alderson-Broadus College of Philippi, West Virginia.

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