

Ness Information Service
Nessletter No. 21
April 1977

Fortean Times

In N.I.S. 20 the address given for the Fortean Times was incorrect. It should have been, P.O. Box 152, London, N10 1EP, UK. I am sorry if this caused any inconvenience..

Sighting

Through Nick Witchell I have an account of a sighting by Mr and Mrs Sampson of Jersey. On 7th September 1976, while on a holiday in Scotland, they were driving up the hill from Lewiston toward Castle Urquhart at about quarter past one, when their attention was drawn to a dark 'hump-like' object on the surface of the bay about 100 yards from the shore, and roughly halfway between the head of the bay and the point. They stopped and got out and both had a brief view of the hump before it "quietly disappeared", leaving a slight wake behind. About a minute later, they guessed, the hump again appeared, this time some 40 yards to the left of the first position. It remained in full view, almost static, for about a minute and a half. They were both able to have a look at it through binoculars. The object's colour was black and through the glasses a white mottled effect was noticed running over the exposed surface, But this was later thought to have possibly been caused by water washing over (or off) the hump. An estimate of size was six feet in length and some four feet in height, no other features were noted. Suddenly in contrast to its earlier submersion the hump disappeared beneath the surface leaving behind a shower of white water. This time there was no wake to show the direction taken. After watching for several minutes they decided to move on to Castle Urquhart, but nothing more was seen during the afternoon. The weather conditions were generally damp and miserable following a period of light but steady rain. The surface was judged to be rippled. Distance from the object was put at 400 yards. Visibility to the north, towards Loch End, was good, but to the south from the castle was shrouded in mist. No loch traffic was seen. Two photographs were taken, but the camera did not have a telephoto lens. (I do not know the results of these. Ed.) Mr Sampson says that he was a believer before this but his wife was a sceptic, but she now has no doubts. He finishes by saying; "When we were at Loch Ness previously in 1975 we learned to recognise air currents and the other disturbances that might be mistaken for one of the creatures - this time the genuine object showed us there is one hell of a difference!"

Caledonian Canal

The canal has been closed since November last year (1976) owing to the failure of the Laggan Locks on the Fort August - Fort William stretch. The cause of the failure was due to normal wear and tear. Considering that no expansion of the Laggan Locks has been done since they were built by Thomas Telford 150 years ago; it is no surprise that the cost was put at £250,000. Which is far more than the British Waterways Board is able to meet, as a result an application was made for Government assistance. Mr Davenport, the Waterways Board engineer in Scotland, stated, there was no question of the canal being closed permanently, pointing out that in 1976 more money had been spent on the canal than in previous years, and that they were anxious to get started with repairs as they realised any undue hold-up put many people's livelihood's in jeopardy. Talks went on with the Department of the Environment over the months. The Scottish Fishermen's Organisation and the Caledonian Canal Pleasure Craft Operators Association both being very much involved, along with Mr Russell Johnstone, M.P. for Inverness. The fishermen pointing out

that not having the canal was causing fishing boats to use the longer and more hazardous route, via the Pentland Firth, from the East to West coast. And, the tour operators, that not having a through route was limiting their craft to a short stretch of the canal. These discussions went on right through to March when at last money was said to be available for the repairs. It was hoped to start work at once and have the canal operating fully before the holiday season really gets under way.

This could have had an affect on monster reports owing to the lack of trawler wakes, for false reports. Also causing more cruisers to spend more time on Loch Ness, more engine disturbance for the creatures. But also more people on the water to see if anything should occur.

Academy of Applied Science

The Academy team is intending to recommence their search for the answer to the Loch Ness Phenomena in late May. Bob Rines will head a team with fewer members this year, but the equipment will be improved and modified from that used in previous seasons, Bob is sure that the answer will be found through underwater techniques. Along with the sonar and photographic equipment being shipped over it is hoped to have a small submersible. This is now in the process of being tested in Boston at the moment.

On June 27th 1977 there is to be a symposium held in, The Eden Court, the new theatre in Inverness. Sir Peter Scott and Bob Rines will be the principal speakers. Dr. Roger Wheeler, Director of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, will be the Chairman of the symposium which is entitled "In Search of Nessie". This will be the first chance most of the people of Inverness will have had to see and hear the results of the underwater work done by Bob Rines and his team over the years. There will also be a chance for members of the public to take part in a discussion with, and put forward their views and suggestions to a panel of experts.

Otters

In a letter I received from Tim Dinsdale he comments on otters as an explanation of possible monster sightings. He says that after some twelve years watching from shore and, over various periods, a total of 365 days and nights on the water in his boat. He has yet to see his first otter on Loch Ness. This is an interesting fact, for if some monster critics are to be believed the loch is swarming not only with otters but whole families of them. I know my time spent at and on, the loch is a fraction of that spent by Tim. Never-the-less I have seen, ducks of several types, cormorants, grebes, one osprey (I think) fishing, numerous herons, and on two occasions red deer stags at the waters edge, but no otters. It is an interesting topic, would any member who has any thoughts on it like to let me know.

Odds and Ends

*****Swimming: Australian long-distance swimmer Des Renford is to race British Kevin Murphy, along Loch Ness, in July, These two have raced each other on other occasions. Last year Murphy, recognised as one of the best long distance swimmers in the world, beat Renford, in Sydney Harbour, over a shorter distance.

****Film: The Disney film about Loch Ness, 'Man, Monsters and Mysteries', is available for hiring. Details from Disney Educational Materials Co., 68 Pall Mall, London SW6 5EX.

****Water: An American marketing firm requested 60 gallons of genuine Loch Ness water. They sent containers by air especially for the purpose. Apart for saying that it was not for consumption of any sort, they would not say what they were to use it for. The water was collected from the loch by the Provost Ian Fraser of Inverness District, who was accompanied by Colonel Hugh Mac Lean, the Tourist Officer of Inverness, Loch Ness and Nairn Tourist Organisation. The firm stated that if their trial venture was a success they would require regular supplies of the water.

N.I.S. at the Lochside

Members who will be at the loch are; Alan McClymont, who will be in the Inverfarigaig area for two weeks from 18th June. His vehicle is a Cortina estate reg. number JOG 797E, with L.N.M.I. 77 along the top of windscreen. Peter and Pauline Hodge will be around, they hope, from 5th to 17th September, no further details. I, and the family, will be up^{at} the loch from 25th July to 5th August. We are based in the Abriacan area and have a Land Rover, estate type, reg. number KTY 984, with N.I.S. symbol on the sides. Tim Dinsdale will be helping Bob Rines and the Academy at Loch Ness in early June. Then over to Loch Morar to help Adrian Shine in July. He will return to Loch Ness in August to do some of his own hunting.

That is about all for this time, I finish with a 'Nessie' poem sent to me by a member, a little light relief. Please remember news and views are always welcome, the address is: Rip Hepple, Hunshieldsford Cottage, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Telephone Wearhead 359. Subscriptions are still UK £1.25 U.S.A. & Canada \$ 7.00.

Rip

HOGMANNAY 1973

There's an ancient Plesiosaurus in the water's of Loch Ness,
But he's shy and hides himself from public view,
He is less than photogenic, and his name you'd never guess.
Nessitoras, Rhombopteryx, Ma'am, to you.

He has happily been browsing with his wife around these waters
For a time you'd not believe, yet it appears
That he should have been extinct, at least the Pundits say he oughter
For a period of forty million years.

Now this may seem hard to credit in an age when we were born
To a transience of froth and effervescence,
But the Mesozoic Era which old Nessie did adorn
Was the age of built in obsolescence.

Many, doubting his existance, would scoff loudly at reports
Of the sightings of a Monster, but it's risky
To attribute such phenomena, with satirical retorts,
To excess of Celtic temperament and whiskey.

They assumed it was a racket to enhance the local trade,
 And to boost that trade whenever it grew slack,
 As publicity material they surely had it made,
 Just the thing to soak the touring Sassenach.

Now these slanders wounded Nessie, as a personal affront,
 Which could put his own supporters out of pocket,
 And he brooded long and darkly on a vindicating stunt
 In his lair, near Castle Urquart, Drumnadrochit.

He came up with an idea, and he put it to his wife..
 They should let themselves more frequently be seen,
 And in different locations, it would mean a busy life
 For two Saurians much less active than they'd been.

For a long time Mrs. Nessie did not venture a reply
 Then in a flash, no pause for doubt or maybe's
 With determined-on-maternity, don't-say-no-look in her eye
 She produced the simple answer--have some babies.

It would take a year or two till the Plesiosaurettes grew
 But just think of all the fun they'd have with all those nippers,
 For already in her mind's eye had appeared the clearest view
 Of the pitter-pat of tiny Saurian flippers.

Now old Nessie was astounded by the brilliance of her plan,
 And although he was not one to mope or brood
 His capacity he doubted after such a lengthy span-
 That last Ice-Age hadn't done him any good.

But the thought of peopling the Loch with Plesiosauri,
 Putting all his old detractors up a tree,
 Was a challenging temptation which he couldn't well deny
 If she thought she could make it- Dam it so would he.

From the Drumnadrochit Arms he had sent down a case of malt,
 And the pair of them consumed it, it was fun
 Until the rosy dawn had brought the party to a halt,
 They were tired, but anyway, the deed was done.

There is sure to be an entry, and it may well be next year,
 In that book recounting oddities absurd,
 In the Guinness Book of Records it is certain to appear-
 Consummation, forty million years deferred.

There's a sprightly Plesiosaurus in the water's of Loch Ness
 And paternal pride is beaming on his face,
 Soon they'll be popping up all over, and when he's had a rest,
 He's decided he might try another case.