

Ness Information Service
Nessletter No. 22
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Washington

The President of the United States visited Great Britain in late May, part of this visit was a trip to Washington, County Durham, the ancestral home of the Washington family. This is only forty-five miles from my home, and five miles from Lambton Castle; the home in the 12th century of Sir John Lambton. Midway between the two is the Worm Hill at Fatfield on the river Wear; for this is the land of the legendary Lambton Worm. This creature is famed in folk song and legend in the north east of England. In the story, Sir John as a young man caught in the river a strange fish and not knowing what kind it was and not being bothered to carry it home he threw it down a nearby well. As the years passed the worm grew and grew, and Sir John went to fight in foreign wars—possibly one of the crusades. During his absence the Worm took to roaming the countryside milking cows and eating little 'bairns' (children). Attempts to kill the creature failed, for when wounded even as far as being cut in pieces it healed and joined itself together. After such exploits the Worm would wrap itself round and round the Worm Hill and bask in the sunshine. When Sir John returned the local people turned to him to rid them of the troublesome animal. Consulting a witch, he was advised to dress in his armour, having first attached to it scythe blades; and taking his sword he was to stand on a rock in mid-river and await the worm. The condition placed on this advice was that should he be successful he would kill the first living thing he met after the battle. Sir John did as he was bid, and the creature came out to fight and after the fashion of worms it wrapped itself round him. The blades and Sir John's sword did their job and the worm was cut into pieces, which fell into the rushing water being washed away before they could rejoin; thus Sir John defeated the worm. Before the fight Sir John had told his father that, if he was victorious, when he was seen returning home they were to send one of the hounds out to meet him. But his father was so overjoyed that he forgot and rushed out to greet his son, becoming the first living thing to be met by Sir John, who could not bring himself to kill his father as instructed by the witch thus bringing onto the Lambton family a curse which was that for nine generations no Lord Lambton would die peacefully or in bed. This seems to have happened for the records show that following generations suffered such fates as drowning, and being killed in battle. That is how the tale runs, one of many dragon and worm stories from all over the country.

Strangely, President Carter while in the area visited the Corning-Pyrex glassworks in the town of Sunderland (at the mouth of the river Wear) where he was presented with a glass sculpture of Saint George and the Dragon

F.W.Holiday in a chapter of his book The Great Orm of Loch Ness, covers this and many more worm/dragon tales.

Loch Morar

June should see Adrian Shine and the Loch Morar Survey team in action once more. This year is to be one of increased sonar activity, sets from Kelvin Huges, Osprey, and other firms will be operating on a large range of frequencies. It is hoped to use sonar to track targets to establish the best location for the cameras, of which there will be two. Another experiment is to be deep bottom T.V. pictures in an effort to find traces or remains, as well as gathering general information. The Royal Holloway College will be conducting a biological survey. These along with depth survey, a study of the loch's limnology, and direct observation by divers should make sure that everyone concerned has a busy June, July and August.

Photographs

On April 30th 1977 Mr Earl L. McGrew, from Playa Del Rey, California, an aeronautical engineer, was motoring along the A82 when he saw a long tapering neck emerge from the loch. He was about one mile east of Fort Augustus and the neck was some 50 yards offshore. It was, he estimated some 3 or 4 feet high and moving quickly through the water. After having stopped his car and trying to stop two others, he ran down to the waterside where he was able to take two pictures. Mr McGrew returned to the USA on Monday the 2nd May and it is believed his photographs could be very good. (I have not been able to make contact with Mr McGrew, as yet, to get more details. Rip).

Thursday June 9th 1977 and Nessie was front page news in the Daily Mirror. They published a head and neck picture, taken by Tony Shiels of Ponsanooth, somewhat in the style of the Surgeon's. In some editions it was on its own and in others there was a selection of some of the other better known photographs. They had a write-up along side with details of the creature. I contacted Tony Shiels and he sent me the following letter.

"Nice to hear from you again. The Mirror 'story' if you can call it a story was, of course, light and jokey. As a matter of fact, my picture (the better one of two) was originally given to the Scottish Daily Record, where it appeared on the front page in colour. The Mirror had it wired back to them from Glasgow, and I think they retouched it before printing in last Thursday's paper.

You will have noted that the smaller pictures they printed were a dreadful selection ... apart from the Wilson photograph (wrongly dated ... 1969!)... which may tend to put my shot in the 'not-to-be-taken-too-seriously' pigeon hole. No matter. Personally, I think I've been lucky enough to get the best pictures ever taken of the beastie.

Here are the details (and I should tell you that I've already made reports to Mr Mackintosh, at Drumnadrochit, Tim Dinsdale and Bob Rickard).... the photographs were taken from Urquhart Castle, at around 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 21st. The weather was very warm and sunny. The camera was a Zenith EM, 35 mm SLR, with a 150 mm telephoto lens. As I recall, I took the pictures at between f.II and f.16 at 1/500 of a second. Other shots from the film are, at present, in the hands of the Daily Record photographic dept... that is, apart from my No.2 monster shot which is in Boston, USA, in the care of Max Maven. Oh yes, the film used was high speed Ektachrome. The picture, as published shows only a small part of the original frame (the creature takes up about one sixth of the vertical space, on the original slide). The creature was rather less than

100 yards away when I took the pictures ... but I can't give you a strictly accurate estimation of this. The part of the neck showing above the water line must have been around four or five feet long. Don't take any notice of what appear to be eyes in the published picture ... I could see no eyes, as such, in the original. The light patch above the 'mouth' (If mouth it is... and I think it is) in the Mirror pic is merely a reflection on a kind of ridge. The colour of the animal was greenish brown, with a paler underside. Skin texture, smooth, glossy.

X The animal was visible for no more than four or five seconds. It held itself very upright, very still, except for a turning of the head and a straightening of the neck immediately before it sank, very smoothly, below the surface. It had powerful neck muscles. There is evidence, well... possible evidence, in my second picture, of parasitic growth at the back of the neck, on the dorsal ridge, as a pale yellow/green patch is visible near the water. Also, in both pictures, a round, pale object floats on the water close to the neck (this can be seen in the Mirror pic)....I suggested to Bob Rickard that this could be an empty McEwans beer can, so many of them are to be found along the lochside!!! On the other hand, it could be the same sort of round, pale, small object which appears in, for example, the Hugh Gray picture of Nessie (and several others).

From my own point of view, I think my pictures re-enforce the plesiosaur theory, but I really don't know, for certain, what the monster is. I'm of the opinion that Roy Mackal is quite wrong to dismiss the Wilson pictures as shots of a diving bird. My second picture seems to show what must have happened between Wilson's two shots... just before the creature submerges.

I can't think of anything else to tell you just now... but please feel free to contact me should you wish to know more."

I must thank Tony 'Doc' Shiels for this letter and information. I have used it in full because it is so very interesting, and presents the facts of the case in a straight forward manner.

I also have news from Tony of possible photographs from Loch Morar. They were taken on the morning of Monday, Jan 31st, by a Miss Lindsay of Musselburgh. There are two pictures, which are supposed to show the head of a forty-foot creature, taken somewhere between the island at the west end of the loch. Prints have been submitted to David Shirt, of Royal Holloway College, the Scientific Officer of the Loch Morar Expedition, for examination. Although he is, very properly, cautious in his judgements of these photographs, Mr Shirt says, "If the photographs are genuine, they are the first to have been taken of such an animal in Loch Morar, and are among the closest taken of a 'monster' any-where". Unfortunately, Miss Lindsay has not submitted the negatives for examination; which casts a certain amount of doubt on the authenticity of the photographs.

Canadian Cousin

Lake Pohenegamook which is 300 miles north of Montreal is reported to be the home of a large creature. For over twenty years reports from the 6½ mile long lake which is crystal clear and 300 foot deep have been accumulating; dozens of eyewitnesses include a local priest and former mayor. Last summer sightings reached a new high, a vegetable market executive Mr Louis Farmer who lives on the lake shore said "We saw the monster at least a dozen times last summer. It was very long -- about 80 feet -- and less than 6 feet around". Other reports refer to lengths of 'over forty feet', a colour of 'dark blue-gray', and 'saw-toothed fins on its sides'. The Quebec provincial government have received so many reports

that they have sent Dr Vladykov, professor emeritus of biology at the University of Ottawa, to the lake to produce an official report.

Otters

I have a letter from Murray Barber, who is a long standing monster watcher with a great deal of experience on the loch, concerning otters. He has seen one in the loch and sent me the following notes. It was early afternoon, one day in September 1975, good visibility, slight wind and he had gone to the waters-edge from the lay-by at the 'battle-ship'. (So called by L.N.I. expedition members, because from H.Q. at Achnahannet on the opposite shore that is what it looked like) Murray caught sight of something off-shore in the direction of Dores, when he turned to look at it, it had gone. A 'hump' then appeared and disappeared again, in about the same place. It gave him a real jolt! He ran back up to the car for his camera, and even with the slight elevation and change of angle it was obvious that the object was fairly small and close in shore. The object swam right across the front of the lay-by, perhaps 20 yards out, surfacing for two or three seconds and then submerging to reappear 20 or 30 feet further on. Walking along and keeping pace with it, just past the lay-by it swam inshore and Murray was looking practically directly down on it, swimming in and out of the rocks. It was an otter about 3-4 feet long overall but while it had been swimming along no part other than its back was visible. Murray says that this incident shows how easily one can misjudge size and distance when close to the water. He also wonders, if it had gone in the other direction or been lost from view in any other way, if he would have considered it a 'good' sighting. He suggests the reason for Tim Dinsdale's failing to see otters is that they stay close to shore and in a boat you do not go that close inshore, if possible; also there are not many lay-bys where you are close to the water level.

N.I.S. at the Lochside

I have word from Jim Green of the Bell Hotel, Wallbridge, Stroud, that he will be at Loch Ness from 6th to the 16th of August, he will be at the TI-NA-BRUACH guest house which is on the loch about 5 miles north of Fort Augustus. Jim says he will be pleased to meet any other Nessie fans up there. Also from Ricky Gardiner, Greenmount Nr Bury, Lancashire, his vehicle is a red Toyota Corolla Estate, reg. number YCW 322R. He roams about but favours the southern shore, which may be the best place to look for him during the last two weeks in July and early August. The family and I are making ready to be up there the last week in July and first in August. (N.I.S. 21).

Caledonian Canal

Hopes for an early reopening of the canal faded when the Laggan Locks were drained. Divers and sophisticated electronic equipment had been used to assess the damage, and extent of repairs needed, but when the locks were drained it was possible to see the enormity of the problem. There was bulging in the opposite wall of the lock, and the sills which prevent water getting under the locks had worn away, this was making much more work and it would now be early August before the canal can be reopened.

Loch Ness Map

I have a sample of a really beautiful folding map of the loch. Tim Dinsdale sent it to me, it is his project and is published by Johnston and Bacon at 95 pence. It is a projection of an empty loch giving depth and contours and not

only this but there are a selection of views, charts, pictures, and a sightings map. All in all a very good and useful item to people interested in the Loch Ness phenomena.

Well once again that is all for this Nessletter, please remember news and views are always needed. My address is Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co.Durham, DL13 1RQ. Subscriptions are U.K. £1.25 and North America \$7.00, other areas on request.

Rip.