

Ness Information Service
Nessletter No. 23
August 1977

Holidays' 77

My family and I were on the loch shores for the last week in July and the first week in August for our annual holidays. The weather was very poor with rain showers every day, and two days of continuous rain. There was also a fair amount of wind, which curtailed my early morning canoeing to two trips. We once again did not see Nessie, but did the rounds of our friends and were able to meet a few N.I.S. members. (and bring ourselves up to date with news of the area.) We toured the area and had a nice break, the children enjoyed it very much, and now look forward to next year.

Academy of Applied Science

I was fortunate to be able to visit Bob Rines, and his family, once more. He told me of the Academy's efforts this year. Most important, I think, is the increase in camera units to five. They are still using the main rig on the platform off Temple Pier, but now have four 'pots' suspended from buoys spaced round Urquhart Bay from the castle to Tychat. These 'pots', as Bob terms them, consist of a cylinder with the sonar gear in the centre and at opposite ends the strobe light and the camera, both focused to a point some distance to one side. The sonar is set to trigger the light/camera should an object of a predetermined size approach close enough. The cameras are motor drive Nikon F-2s, 35mm, with a magazine of 250 pictures, they are set to take them at four second intervals. These cameras have been loaned by Mr Ehren Reich of Photo Optical Industries, Garden City, New York. The pots have batteries for a month and are to be serviced by the team of local people consisting of Alec Menzies, Tony Gerlings and Dick Raynor. Dick along with Holly Arnold helped in the calibration of these new units. The Academy's team also includes Charles Wychoff, Bob Needleman and J. Lowthrom of Polaroid.

There was further investigation of the 'stone circles' located last year by sonar at Loch End. Professor Peter Milne of Strathclyde University, Hugh Williams and Dave Grant along with John Mills, Managing Director of Undersea Instrumentation, undertook a series of dives. They ascertained that the circles were indeed manmade rings, with mounds of rock which look like the remains of cairns. It is hoped to bring pumps next year to pump out the silt from one or more rings in an effort to bring to the surface artifacts or other evidence of the dates of precession. The circles lie in about 45 feet of water, and I made the point that the level of the loch was raised when the Caledonian Canal was constructed. But Bob said that, even allowing for that, at that time the circles were under as least twenty feet of water.

It was during these operations that the divers made an interesting find in another field of loch research. They came across numbers of small fish on the bottom in water of seventy feet and more in depth. They were from 2 to 10 inches long, with dark stripes on the body and red marks on the gills. They lay on the silt in a curved manner with head and tail slightly raised. When disturbed they would burrow down into the bottom and disappear from view. Sir Peter Scott was told of these fish but did not know what they were, and the British Museum had no information either, so a specimen was caught and sent away

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for identification. These fish have some of the characteristics of the salmon family and therefore could be char, which are known to be in the loch in the adult phase. Very little seems to be known of the breeding habits of the char, but they are found in many lakes and in each habitat have developed their own family characteristics. Hugh Williams and John Mills, the two divers concerned, made dives in Urquhart Bay, and they found more of the little fish. So in two areas at Loch End and in others in the bay at depths from seventy feet down to one hundred and twentyfive, the deepest the divers went, these fish were in evidence, suggesting a large overall population, which would no doubt add a valuable item to the larger animals diet.

An attempt was made to relocate one of the large 'targets' found close to the wreck off Temple Pier last year. It had been hoped that this might turn out to be a carcass or remains of an animal, But all efforts proved fruitless, sonar did not pick it up again, nor was it found by a television camera mounted on an underwater sled. Despite having the location carefully plotted from last year, (it had been just 15 metres from the wreck). one more tantalizing question remains unanswered.

Bad news department. The main camera rig had been left in the water over the winter, serviced by the local team, and examination of the sonar results showed that something large had come close and film had been exposed. BUT... during the years this equipment has been used, the cylinder used as the housing for the strobe light and associated gear had developed a hairline crack which allowed a very small amount of water to collect and short out a resistor in the circuit. Result no flash! pictures!

In all a very full season of activity with increased change of success.

Loch Morar

I have no detailed news from Morar. Just that early in the season they had teething troubles with some of the equipment. But this was sorted out and some hard work was being done.

Lake Champlain

I have the preliminary report on the Lake Champlain sightings from Joseph Zarzynski. He has done two years research on the lake and has assembled 73 reports. There are more but they are too vague or incomplete to accept. Joe is now analysing these sightings using the following categories:- Date of sighting, name of witness, weather conditions, duration and time of sighting, distance from witness, surface conditions, time of year, length, colour, humps or head and neck source of information, Of particular interest are 'long necker' sightings because they are more difficult to dismiss than humps or wakes. Of the 73 sightings 30 are of the long neck variety, where a head and neck were clearly visible.

Lake Champlain's length is 105.6 miles, its width is 12.6 miles at its maximum point, and its maximum depth is 400 feet off Split Rock Point. The mean depth of the lake is 64 feet. The surface area of Lake Champlain is 436.4 square miles. About 5 miles of the lake lies in Canada, the rest forms the New York - Vermont boundary. Champlain's origin is probably glacial, and there is evidence of recent oceanic past. But like Loch Ness it is now fresh water. There are about 60 species of known fish in the lake the largest being the lake sturgeon.

There have been no photographs or film taken, and no carcasses, but the evidence so far gathered seems conclusive that there is something large and unexplained in the lake. Anyone wanting to contact Joe can, by using one of these addresses:- Joseph W. Zarzynski, Ernst Road, R.D. 2, Gansevoort, N.Y.12831. or P.O.Box 34, Wilton, N.Y. 12866, U.S.A.

New Zealand

There was a spate of newspaper reports during July/August concerning a carcass found off New Zealand in April. It was brought up from about 900 feet of water some 30 miles off Christchurch, by a Japanese trawler. It was in an advanced state of decomposition, and after taking some photographs and samples they threw it back into the sea. Japanese scientists have examined these and found traces of a protein found in blue sharks. It looks as if this is what it was but they did not totally rule out the possibility of it being something unusual.

Tim Dinsdale

I received an interim report on his 1977 field operations from Tim. He had about ten days remaining of a months work in Water Horse, after which he is to retire this craft after ten seasons of persistant boatwork. He has been hampered by long periods of easterly wind, which wipes out the Fort Augustus end of the loch because of rough water. This is very tiresome as it usually blows from the west at this time of year. He has had some marvellous weather, but very little, and one morning late in August he baled 7 bucketsfull of rainwater out of the 6' x 5' open cockpit.

Tim had news of Loch Morar, he had visited Adrian Shine again at Morar early in August and it seems as though Roger Parker of Partech Ltd. who scored decisively with sonar in Ness last year (Dr James Buchanan filmed the scope-traces in colour) has scored with a single similarly huge blip in Morar -- but we must await his own newsletter report on that also the Loch Morar Survey report.

On Loch Ness - Tim obtained two new recordings of witness reports, one of a huge head and neck seen at the Fort Augustus end by one of the Brothers at the Abbey 1952 - who, incidentally reacted with astonishment when shown the colour slide of the Tony Shields head and neck pictured by Castle Urquhart in July. He said it was the same as his own head and neck, which tends to confirm Tim's belief (and my own, Rip) in this picture, as being the best still we have on record.

But the best news is of a new piece of film, it is super -8 and was taken on Monday August 22nd. It remains to be seen if the film comes out as some of it was shot into sunlight. If it does it should include 3 sequences showing a periscope-like 1 foot diameter neck, with blunt head at right angles, submerging three times, and possibly showing it turning its head. These movements could be seen by the witnesses. In all it surfaced and went down vertically four times, on the last near to a rowing boat (Tim has oarsmens name and address) - causing the rower to try to beat records getting to the shore. Tim has talked to the photographer, and has been promised a look at the film when it is processed, and I hope to be able to carry a full report of the event. Unhappily, the last sequence shot was the one before the episode with the boat. So a valuable comparison has not been recorded. In all there should be about four minutes of film.

Some little time ago Tim sent me a copy of 'Skywatch' wich is the magazine of the Gayton Highschool (Middlesex) UFO logical Society, This is run by the O level pupils and is very nicely done. Two of them, Ritchie Townsend and Nikki Tidder, had been to interview Tim, and the result was printed in the Skywatch.

They asked some good questions and obviously knew the subject. Touching on reptiles in cold water, people's reactions on seeing the creatures, what it is, other locations for similar phenomenon, the attitude of the media to the subject and had Tim ever had an interview that had been later distorted, and so on. In all a very good effort, which being for a school readership should bring the facts to more of the younger generation.

Fortean Times

This magazine of the strange, curious, and mysterious, has in edition number 22 an article concerning monsters. It contains reproductions of a number of photographs, three of Mōrgawr the Cornish sea creature, also three of Morag, Loch Morar, two are the photographs taken by Miss Lindsay (N.I.S. No.22). The other one was taken by Hazel Jackson while on holiday with her husband, she took a snap of their collie dog with the loch as background. They did not see anything while they were doing so, but when the film was developed there in the water just behind the dog is a head on a short piece of neck! Two photographs had been taken and 'it' is in each one but in a slightly altered position suggesting movement. The other two are the photographs taken on the 21st May 1977 by Tony Shiels.

The address for the Fortean Times, as given in N.I.S. 21, is Box 152, London N10 1EP. back issues 75p each.

Odd Ends

*****U.F.O. : A family group of seven reported a strange flying object to the police at Ullapool during the first days of August. They described a 'sausage-shaped machine' which hovered in the sky for a while and then made off at high speed. It was also said to resemble a modern jet without wings, it had no windows, made no sound, showed no lights and was definitely no type of bird. A couple of nights later a mile or so west of Fort Augustus there was another report. Mr Jackson, retired farm manager from Borlum Farm, went out from his home at Lower Glendoe with his dog at 10 p.m. for a short walk. He saw a large oval-shaped 'moon' in the sky. Very surprised he ran home and got his wife and a young family friend. They all watched the object which was brilliantly white, and three times larger than the real moon. It moved westward with an undulating motion, and after three minutes, it gradually disappeared. All three who are keen nature observers, were deeply impressed by the incident.

*****Books : Richard Breisch sent me details of two new books that have been published in America. 'Search at Loch Ness' by D.L.Meredith, NYC; Quadrangle/The N.Y.Times Book Co, 183 pages hardback (£9.95), the account of the Academy of Applied Sciences N.Y.Times 1976 expedition. 'The Loch Ness Monster' William Akins, Bergensfield, New Jersey: Signet Book/New American Library, 169 pages paperback (£1.50), historical account of Loch Ness Monster sightings.

*****It has been suggested that we should have a lapel badge for N.I.S. members. Comments please, would there be many required also has anyone any ideas for design.

*****Ancient Skills and Wisdom Review; I have received two copies of this magazine, which is a review of books etc. connected with occult, prehistory, parapsychology, UFO's and associated subjects. More details from Paul Screeton, who was editor of the Ley Hunter for some years, 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland.

*****Dave Whittaker; some old L.N.I. members may remember Dave. He had the distinction of being the youngest member to work on expedition, he also swam across the loch from the Castle to Sandy Beach during the 1971 expedition. He sent me word recently that he has qualified from the Veterinary faculty of Edinburgh University and is now working in general practice in North Wales. He was wondering where the other L.N.I. members are and what they are doing. Would any of them care to let me know.

*****Eden Court; the 'Monster Night' held on 28th June 1977 at the new Eden Court theatre, Inverness was a great success. 800 tickets were sold and on the day of the event another 500 requests were turned down, proceeds went to the World Wildlife Fund. The chairman was Dr Roger Wheater, Director of the Royal Scottish Zoological Society, with Sir Peter Scott talking on the problem of identification, Bob Rines about the technology underwater, and minutes of question time, which was very lively debate.

*****Querns: An excavator driver working in the Fort Augustus area uncovered a 'trough' quern. Querns were used for grinding corn, most of them being round, using the circular motion of a stone in a shaped base. The trough type is rectangular in shape, worked on a back and forth motion using a special tool. It probably dates somewhere between 1500 and 2500 BC., it has been donated to the Inverness Museum.

Once more that is all for this Nessletter, please note that news and views are always welcome and needed. The address is still:- R.R.Hepple, Huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Telephone Wearhead 359. Subscription rates U.K. £1.25 U.S.A. Canada \$7.00.

Rip.