

Ness Information Service
Nessletter No. 29
August 1978.

Holidays 1978

The evening of Saturday the 22nd July saw us once more on the shores of Loch Ness. With my wife out of hospital only two weeks after a serious operation, it had been in the balance whether we would get away on holiday, but here we were again on the shore, looking out over rough water. For the first few days the wind continued strong building up large waves at our end of the loch, so we drove around, and visited our friends in the area.

I had built myself a eight foot long dingy from plywood, powered by a small outboard motor. This had not yet been tested and it lay on the beach waiting for calm water, and its first launching. This happened on Tuesday evening, but when 'Waterchick' was put on the water it proved to be wrong. It was far too high in the water and was thus unstable. More work needed doing. During the next two or three days things were sorted out and with the help of half a hundred-weight of gravel in a plastic sack 'Waterchick' was made usable, with care. But, the weather remained unsettled, with wind and rain and mist. I eventually got out early one morning on a beautiful calm surface, with a light rain falling. It was good to be back on the water but I found the motor intrusive. Even at a quiet tickover it seemed very loud, in the silence of the dawn. In previous years I have used a canoe and as the quiet is not spoiled one feels closer to the loch and more 'as one' with nature. The dingy is good fun for buzzing around during the day keeping the children amused, but for monster-hunting quiet is important - so it is back to the paddle, or perhaps sail? 'now there's a thought'

On Monday July 24th at 7.30 p.m. there was a brief sighting of a single hump, upturned - boat type, mid-way between the old Abriachan pier, and Dores. This was about half mile away from our camp at water level; but we saw nothing as the water was very rough. It was seen by Miss Patti Page, who is the niece of Bob Rine's wife Carol. Patti and Bob were driving back from Inverness when Patti saw this large black hump moving across the loch. Her view was obscured by trees and when they pulled into a lay-by there was nothing to be seen. Bob admitted that he had not seen anything and rather thought that Patti may have been mistaken, allowing her close contact with the monster-hunt to influence her. But a day or two later it was found that a man in Dores had seen the hump at the same time, in the same area, substantiating Patti's sighting.

We visited Bob and Carol, and I had a chance to have a good talk to Bob about the Academy work this season.

There has been an increase in the cruiser traffic on the loch. On the Friday morning of our first week we counted fifteen cruisers from one hire company pass our camp. A little later there were nine from another. On most days there were cruisers passing up or down the loch and this brings more people onto the water, with a chance of seeing a creature. On the other hand there is the disturbance caused by engines and the growing risk of pollution from oil and waste, which is very undesirable.

During our last two days it was very misty and we could not see a hundred yards over the water. We had a couple of cruisers creep out of the mist and tie up to the old pier for a while, and then slowly move out back into the fog, disappearing quickly. We left for home on 5th August, after two weeks of mixed weather, but it had been grand to be back at the lochside. Yet another season has passed and I still have not seen anything of 'Nessie'.

The Academy of Applied Science

Late last season the main camera under the raft in Urquhart Bay shot off eight frames. The indications were that it was something large but when the film was processed there seemed to be nothing on it. Further work brought up a rough textured surface, similar to the body in the 1972 'flipper' photographs. This led to the conclusion that the target had been within six feet of the camera, giving a close up shot of part of its body.

The camera 'pot' that went missing over the winter has not been re-located. This fact along with the close range shots obtained last season, has brought about a different approach in 1978. The 'pots' from around the bay have been used to further re-enforce the fire-power under the raft. The cameras being placed in position so they cover each other's field of view. There are now slave strobe lights around the rig, to give a much larger and more intense area of light. These are similar to those used in high altitude photo-reconnaissance aircraft, being developed by Harold E. Edgerton at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They can now be triggered at intervals of three seconds, giving a 'movie-like' result of photo frames. Cables have been laid to and from the shore, taking power to the raft and thus eliminating batteries. Also, monitoring has been computerised, and now can be done from the shore. If Dials and charts show that cameras have been used, a trip out to the raft is taken and further checks made before the equipment is hauled up, and film removed. This work has been carried out by Bob Rines, Ike Blondes, Charles Wyckoff, John Lothrop of Polaroid, Duane Marshall of Megapulse Inc., Bob Needleman and Tim Dinsdale. Holly Arnold and Ian Morrison volunteered as divers to check the gear, and get it all properly calibrated.

Another aspect of their work has been the mapping of the underwater stone rings. This has been done by John Mills of Underwater Instrumentation, Harold Edgerton, Ed Rector, and Glenn Storrs a NIS member. They have used cameras to try to study the sedimentation on them. They also think they relocated the wrecked aircraft found two years ago, but it is now in much deeper water, having doubled its depth since last found. This could have been caused by underwater currents, or the wreck sliding down the steep underwater slope. It could also be another wreck, for when located at first it was thought to be a Catalina, but it is now thought to be a Wellington or a Junkers 88. Attempts are to be made to get photographs of it by towing an underwater camera rig over the site.

Marty Klein has been back with his side-scan sonar equipment, working with Garry Kozak and Tom Cummings, who have naval experience. They towed the sonar towfish around in what are thought to be areas with most chance of success, and made contact with something large and moving in the depths. While towing in the main body of the loch just south of Urquhart Castle in deep water they

picked up and held for an extended trace an object 35 metres down in 200 metres of water. The target was some 110 metres from the towfish and positively in the water column. The target then took off and generated a very strong underwater disturbance, so strong the sonar was able to register it pictorially. The sonar operators said the closest thing they had ever seen to it was the disturbance left by a submarine travelling at speed while submerged. Tim Dinsdale checked with the Calaedonian Canal authorities and there were no submarines in the loch at the time. The sonar also picked up noise coming from the target. What this was is not clear, it could have come from the animal itself or from cavitation caused by its swimming strokes. The instruments were checked and the frequency changed and there were no boats on the surface, the noise was from the target. The first instance of noise in the audible spectrum was in 1976 in the Invermoriston area. Ike Blonder has now redesigned hydrophones to listen out with the cameras when they and the strobes are activated by trigger sonar.

A very active seasons work is being undertaken by the Academy. I feel we owe a very big 'thank you' to this group, for their efforts to find the answer to the mystery which we are all interested in. As well as their own work they have co-operated with an Australian scientist, Theo Brown, and made available equipment which may be of use to him in his efforts.

Theo Brown

Theo arrived at the loch early in July, he is an Australian with a reputation for his knowledge of sharks which he has studied for years. He has developed a method for repelling them using underwater loudspeakers to transmit sounds on certain frequencies. While working on this he found that it was possible to attract sharks too. This worked so well sharks would dash themselves to pieces trying to get at speakers placed in crevices in the reefs. Theo has written books on the subject and is accepted as a world authority. He is a member of Australian Division of the World Life Research Institute and as such he came to Loch Ness to try to lure the creatures.

Theo worked with his equipment for some time in the Foyers area. Using a small boat drifting around with his gear hung underneath, he was able to attract shoals of fish. Once these fish were within range of the speakers he was able to hold them until the speakers were switched off, but there was no sign of the Monster until August 25th. At 9.15 a.m. on that day while working about a mile south-west of Foyers, where the water is over 700 feet deep he attracted a large moving object with the sonic lure. It was a little over 200 feet down but while it was being tracked with sonar the noise from a large boat on the surface apparently frightened it, and it was lost. When the sonar charts were examined there was sufficient evidence to suggest that a large animal was reacting to the broadcast sounds underwater. It was in the region of 30 feet long, and seemed to have a depth of six to nine feet, with appendages underneath. It was not a shoal of fish as Theo has got to know these very well over the weeks. Theo is now back in Australia assessing the results of his expedition and making plans for next year.

Exhibition

I have information of an exhibition to be held at the Battersea Arts Centre during September. It is being staged by Philip Maltman and is titled 'Loch Ness (More than a Monster)'. Philip is a painter who became interested in Loch Ness after a chance visit in the summer of 1975. He thought of the exhibition in 1976 and has been working on it since. He has had help and continuing support from many of the people who have been concerned with the hunt for years. The exhibition will include, paintings, chosen from approximately 60 on the subject; photographs of the loch taken by Philip; positive photographic evidence of the phenomenon; L.N.I.B. documents, photographs and sighting reports, their search 'in action' plus the equipment used; maps, tourist artefacts, and historical material; and a lecture by Tim Dinsdale - also anything new that may turn up from this season's work.

Sighting '78

Round about 2pm on August 5th Mr and Mrs Chisholm and their niece were driving along the loch side between Dores and Foyers. Mrs Chisholm and Margaret Sutherland, the niece, saw something break surface. They stopped and got out and watched a head and hump come completely out of the water. They watched it for half a minute or so before it disappeared leaving huge waves behind. Mr Chisholm said he had on a previous occasion seen something in the loch but his wife had laughed at him. She said that in future she would not laugh at reported sightings.

Odds and Ends

***** Rescue, a man and two Dutch girls were rescued by a passing boat after a dingy capsized on Sunday 16th July. A helicopter from R.A.F. Lossiemouth was called but the three were taken ashore before it arrived.

**** Holly Arnold, is a name most members of the old L.N.I. will remember. She has been living in Foyers for a number of years, still very interested in, and helping wherever possible to find the answer to the Loch Ness mystery. She is going on a major scientific expedition to the Chagos Archipelago islands in the Indian Ocean. She was selected to be a member of the Joint Services Expedition led by Dr David Bellamy which leaves in October to study the vegetation and bird and underwater life of the archipelago. They will spend a year on the island with the nearest 'civilised' town some 300 miles away. Since 1972 when the L.N.I. had to close Holly has become a qualified scuba diver, and is now preparing for an Open University exam which she will take while on the expedition.

Once more that is all for this Nessletter, please remember your news and views are important, please let me have them, my address is still:-
R.R.Hepple, Huntshieldford, St.Johns Chapel; Bishop Auckland, Co.Durham,
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