

Ness Information Service
Nessletter No.37
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Sighting

A rather unusual episode took place on Sunday 9th September 79. Involved were Angus Kennedy and two others, in a boat, travelling from Fort Augustus to Foyers. The weather was poor and the water rough; they were opposite the Youth Hostel at Altsigh when the two others saw a 'head' among the waves. It was a brief glimpse of a large dark object some 60 yards away. It was so brief that Angus did not see anything. They continued on to Foyers. Later in the day they were making the return trip to Fort Augustus, the weather conditions had not changed. When they were about a mile nearer Fort Augustus than they had been when the 'head' was first seen, Angus saw it some 50 yards away for a short time. This was a very strange thing to happen. On Loch Ness to see anything once is rare, but to have two sightings at widely different times of the same day is most unusual. Angus Kennedy took over as water bailiff at Fort Augustus after Alex Campbell retired. As such he is well versed in odd waves and floating debris and is used to the water conditions on the loch, he was certain that what he saw was alive.

McNish, September 1979, NIS36. I have had the chance to meet and talk to the McNish family, and to discuss their sighting. It is most significant that this creature was seen in close proximity to a motor cruiser with a number of other cruisers nearby. It had been thought that the disturbance caused by these boats was enough to keep the animals down. In fact after the incident the McNishes went back to report what they had seen to Tim Dinsdale. They had met Tim the previous evening and recognised his boat when they passed it about a quarter of a mile before the sighting. For his part Tim had not seen anything, for when he saw the cruisers he had relaxed his watch and got on with his chores around the 'Water Horse'. In future any one doing a surface watch should bear in mind that there is at least one creature that is not too worried by motor cruisers.

Mrs McNish told me she thought the animal may have been attracted by the spinner being trolled by the boat they passed. It was a blue and silver one and they had seen it flashing in the water as they went by. When, later in the day, they reached the Inverness end of the loch and Dochgarroch, they had a chance to talk to the occupants of that boat. They had seen nothing, but it transpired that at about the time of the sighting a fish had been hooked and this had caused excitement aboard. I suggested to Mrs McNish that it may have been that the creature was after the fish that was interested in the spinning lure. This is just an idea, but it fits in with the theory that the animals are fish eating. But ideas and theories aside, there is no doubt that the McNish sighting is most significant with regards to the behaviour of the creatures, and the increasing holiday traffic on the loch.

Zarzynski - Champlain

Joe Zarzynski sent me a copy of an article from the Brighton-Pittsford Post dated December 20th 1979. It is the story of the loss of the paddle steamboat The Phoenix on September 5th 1819. The Phoenix was the pride of the Lake Champlain Steamboat Company, built in 1815 and one of the first steamboats to sail on Lake Champlain. There were 46 people aboard on the night when fire struck the Phoenix some 12 miles north of Burlington. There was also a gale blowing and the boat went out of control, and breaking up, hit the reef off Colchester Point and sank. Six people lost their lives. The article goes on to tell of the finding of the wreck after 170 years. It was located in June 1979 by Joe Zarzynski who had teamed up with Jim Kennard. Kennard is an engineer for General Dynamics. He is very interested in sonar and has the only sophisticated sidescan unit within a 700 mile radius of Monroe County. It is his hobby and he has set up as the Rochester Engineering Laboratories, operating from his home. He is often called upon by the authorities to help find downed planes and sunken boats. A few years ago

he was called upon by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to look for 24 barges that had sunk in the Ohio River in Kentucky. He not only found them but also located six others which had gone down years before. The equipment he uses was designed by Marty Klein. Marty from Salem, N.H., has a worldwide reputation in the sonar field and has supplied units to the U.S. Navy. In our field he has done very valuable work at Loch Ness over the years, and on a number of occasions his gear has located large, moving, underwater bodies in the loch. While working with the sonar on Lake Champlain Joe and Jim came up with very similar traces. This is the first time 'Champ' has been located by sonar, and it is an important step forward. Joe sings Jims praises, for he has donated his time and gear for use on Lake Champlain, and to have good equipment and a very experienced operator is a great boon. Joe also tells me he has collected 95 Champ sightings to date, 40 of which are head and neck. I do not know what criteria Joe uses to judge the reports, but it is good to know that such work is being done.

Cousins!

Joe Zarzynski was also the source of an article from the Providence, Rhode Island Journal of November 18th 1979. In an isolated, densely wooded area of Southern Quebec close to the Maine border lies Lake Pohenegamook. Six miles long and one mile wide this lake, formed by glacial action in the Shick-Shock Mountains which eventually form the spine of the Gaspee Peninsula, is fed and drained by the St Francis River. It is 300 feet deep in places, although local people claim there are much deeper places and underwater caverns. The surrounding mountains which rise, in places, directly from the water to heights of 2000 feet, send out over its sheltered and usually calm waters strange echos. This gave rise to the Indian name for the lake, Pohenegamook, mocking lake. That is also the name of the town of some 3000 inhabitants, which is made up of the villages of St. Eleuthere, Estcourt, and Sully. Until the mid-1800's the only access to the area was by a military footpath from Riviere du Loup to Madawaska, in Maine. This passed some miles from the lake, and an Indian trail left it and cut its way through to what is now St Eleuthere. In the late 1850's a road was built to help in the harvesting of the millions of acres of trees, this also provided cleared ground for the early farmers. Two of the early settlers near the lake were an Irish immigrant and a Frenchman, they are recorded as being there in 1866. In 1874 the village of St Eleuthere, its population now 120, was assigned its first priest. Very little happened during the ensuing years, the village tried to get electricity in 1929, it succeeded in 1945. The area is still very remote, and jobs are scarce, with many modern amenities lacking. Children wanting to finish high school are bused 40 miles, where they stay for the week, coming home at weekends. The lake, as it did in the past, plays an important part of the life of the area. Providing recreation in the forms of fishing, boating, and ice hockey. It could also hold the key to the economic future. A minor tourist boom began in the 1960's, and a campground-motel-bar-restaurant was opened on the west shore of the lake. Unfortunately this last development causes the finger of suspicion to be pointed at any reports of monsters in the lake.

There are reports, and these follow a pattern we have come to expect in North America. Indian legends told to early trappers and settlers of 'Mantouche'. Among the Cree Indians of north-central Quebec, Mantouche is a giant lake-dweller associated with the calm thundery days of August. These legends were not believed by the incomers. But as more French Canadians came to the area in the late 1800's they began to see strange things in the lake. Sightings have continued to come in over the years, with an upsurge during the road building in 1957/8. One of those who saw a creature in 1957 was Abbe Leopold Plante, the parish priest at the time. His report was of something 25-30 feet long, gray and slimy, looking like an upturned boat. He reported seeing the creature on a number of further occasions. Many of his parishioners also reported seeing unusual things in and around the lake. Eliza Sirois, who has collected reports of most of the sightings, has one from his own father in the mid 50's. He was going with his dog to pick up his canoe, when the dog started to bark and stopped in its tracks. Looking ahead his father saw a huge, dark animal slip into the water. This was one of the few reported land sightings. Over the years the sightings have fallen, more or less, into two groups, the up-turned boat type 15 to 30 feet long, and the head and neck type. Descriptions give a smooth skin,

dark colour, with a head like a cow or horse with small horns, the size of a pumpkin. In 1958 Dr Vadim D, Vladikov, a biologist and former director of Quebec's marine life laboratory, spent several months trying to find a creature. He was sure there was 'some living thing of great size' in the lake. He applied to the provincial government for more funds and time to be spent on a more thorough search. But this was not forthcoming, and there was no further organized work done until 1978.

Bob Murray a professional diver from Ajax, Ontario, undertook a self financed, three week long expedition at the lake. He did some diving but came upon no large creatures underwater. He did see a small number of sturgeon, but these were no longer than $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Sturgeon are given as the answer to the mystery by many of the sceptics. But Bob Murray said that the fast moving targets picked up by his boat's sonar on two different occasions were not sturgeon. Whatever caused the sonar traces was about 25-30 feet long. The expedition members also reported seeing 'V' wakes as caused by motor boats but there were no boats in sight. Murray also saw and photographed what appeared to be the head of a very large creature above the surface. But at such a distance that even with enlargement it was inconclusive. Murray is hoping to return to the lake in 1980, providing he can raise the necessary funds, as his first expedition almost drove him into bankruptcy.

I found this account fascinating with its very marked similarities to Loch Ness. There was even a mention of bodies of drowned people not being recovered. I am not in a position to check any of the facts given but presumably the newspaper writer checked the basic facts.

Lake Bala. The Sunday Express of 14th October 1979 had an article about the Welsh lake Bala, Murray Barber sent me the cutting. Bala Lake lies at the North West edge of the Berwyn Mountains, Dating from the ice-age, the lake is 4 miles long and $\frac{1}{4}$ mile wide and very deep. There have been sightings reported at regular intervals over the past twelve years. In September 1979 Mrs Jones, from Llanuwchllyn two miles from the lake, was being driven along the lakeside road when the water was suddenly disturbed and she saw for a short time a large, dark, humped shape. This submerged smoothly just leaving the waves behind. When she told neighbours what she had seen, she was apprehensive that they would laugh at her But she found others had had similar experiences with 'Anghenfil', the Welsh name for the monster. Lake Warden, Mr Bowen and his deputy had a sighting, no date was given. They were having a morning cup of tea in their office, when they both saw a disturbance some forty yards off shore. They saw what appeared to be a creature with two long, low, humps, cruising slowly on the surface. There are shoals of a fish called a Gwyniad in the lake. These are of the same species as the Loch Ness char, I believe;. Living close to the bottom in deep water they are sometimes caught by anglers. In the wardens office is an underwater contour map of the lake, compiled from echo-sounder charts. These show some large blobs in the deep sections which are probable shoals of Gwyniad, but could be echoes from a single large animal.

Lough Brin. In a wild and remote area of Co Kerry, Southern Ireland, is Lough Brin. It is five miles from the nearest metaled road, the only way to it is to use a rough, little used, dirt track. It is only visited by local farmers tending their flocks, Although one farmer, Mr Dave Breen lives close to the lough. In the summer of 1979 two of the local farmers reported seeing a strange creature in the water. They described it as being ten feet long and resembling a reptile. It swam from one end of the lough, almost to the other before submerging into the depths. This was the first report of anything strange in the lough for fifteen years. When the father of the two brothers in the latest sighting saw a strange animal. He described it as a cross between a giant seal and a 'dragon out of the pictures', and as black as soot. Mr Breen said his mother spoke of something strange in the lough. Lough Brin is surrounded by towering granite mountains, the strangest thing is that it is only 600 yards long by 400 yards wide and 200 feet deep. Which is hardly large enough to support large creatures, although geologists have confirmed that at one time the

lough was linked by an underground waterway to the sea. This was blocked by a rock fall about twenty years ago.

This is a strange report, and you feel it cannot be true, judging by the size of the lough concerned. But we must not forget that work done in Ireland by people like Lionel Leslie, Ted Holiday, and others, pointed to the fact that most of the waters concerned were much smaller than they expected. And though they produced no concrete evidence, there was much to support the reports of Irish lake creatures.

NIS at the lochside

I received a letter from M. Jean Berton, of Glun, 08300 Tournon, France, with a short account of his, and his wife's trip to Loch Ness in August '79. They also spent a short time at Loch Morar; they were there on the opposite shore when Tony Healy and friend saw their disturbance (NIS 36). Back at Ness the weather was very poor, making watching not worthwhile. They made the best of it by visiting Inverness library, and the library at the Fort Augustus Abbey, doing research into the Water Horse/Bull legends of Scotland, Ireland and other countries. Jean asks that anyone with stories of this nature to please contact him at his address. (Copies of Jean's book, which is in French, can be obtained from the same address, cost £3.50 or .35 Fr.) Back to Jean's letter. He had two cameras with him, and took some slides with one of them, when he had them processed they were no good. The camera needed cleaning and repair. Once again highlighting the importance of checking and knowing your equipment. Jean is planning another trip north in 1980. He will presumably be using the Ford Transit motorcaravan which they found so useful last time.

Jim Green sent me word of his trip to the loch in the last two weeks of September. Once again the word is of poor weather, with Jim spending much time watching from his car. He met up with a number of old friends and made the most of the situation. He hopes to go to the loch again in June or July 1980.

Jeff Watson let me have a report on two of his trips to Loch Ness and a trip he made to Falmouth Bay. The Ness trips were just three day watches, the first in September and then one in December. He just spent one day at Falmouth. He had no success on these trips, the December one being troubled with bad weather, wind and rain. But they all gave him a chance to get used to his camera equipment.

It is good to know that there are people watching the loch when we cannot be there ourselves.

Fortean Times

This magazine has been undergoing troubled times. Bob Rickard (Editor) and his staff have tried hard to bring the magazine out in a suitable format for the newstands. The main problem is finance, they managed to bring out No. 29 (summer 1979) as an example of what could be done. That edition was truly superb, among the articles was one that applied more to Nessie people. It was a discussion and examination of the Doc Shiels photographs (May 77). The photographs were reproduced and it was a most informed article. Unfortunately all the work was to no avail, and the Autumn 79 issued no. 30 is back to its old size. It is available by subscription from Fortean Times, 9-12 St. Annes Court, London W1., 1 year (4 issues, £3.00/£8.00 (airmail add £6.00). Limited numbers of back issues are available, 80p or £2.00 each. Among those available are copies of no. 29.

Big Cat

I know it is not really 'monster', but I feel anything strange in the general area of the loch is of interest. A report appeared in the local Inverness papers at the end of October concerning a hunting party that had been out in the Cannich area. They had been organised after Mr Ted Noble, of Kerrow Farm Cannich, had seen what he described as a lioness. He saw it on Saturday 27th October, and said it was stalking two of his Shetland ponies. His sister-in-law said she had also seen a strange animal some six weeks before in an area from which some of the farm's ponies had disappeared. Cannich is 12 miles West of the loch, up Glen Urquhart. A week later an engine driver reported seeing what he thought was a lioness near the railway line as he approached Garve Hotel, this is some 30 miles North of Cannich. Three days

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later, 6th November, four men in a car on a straight stretch of road between Muir of Ord and Marybank saw a large animal in the headlights. It was sandy coloured and looked very powerful. After standing still for a moment it jumped the fence into a field. They stopped and went to look, it had gone but sheep in the field were running around in all directions. This area is 15 miles South-East of the Garve sighting. Just over a fortnight later on 22nd November, two young men reported seeing a strange animal on the road 150 yards in front of them. They were driving towards South Clunes in the Drumchardine area, this is some ten miles South of the previous sighting. They have both worked on farms, but said that they did not recognize the animal. They described it as golden brown in colour with a long tail and standing about three feet tall. It had been walking but pounded off across a field and into some trees, covering a lot of ground very quickly.

I have heard of no more sightings up to now, but will cover them if or when I do.

Well another Nessletter finished, please remember you are important to NIS, your news and views are needed my address is still:- R.R.Hepple, Huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 1RQ.

Rip.