

# NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

Newsletter No. 39

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## Todd Martin

Early in May, I had the pleasure of meeting Todd Martin. He spent a couple of nights with us as he was travelling to Loch Morar for another season's work. He spent most of the season there last year, when, along with Tony Healy (NIS 36), he saw a strange disturbance. They both photographed it and I saw Tony's results last year. I saw Todd's when he was with us. Unfortunately they were very similar, showing a definite area of disturbed water but little else. Interesting, but of no great value in providing an answer to the mystery. Todd, who will be at Loch Morar until early September, with a trip of two or three weeks to Loch Ness in late July/early August, hopes to do better this year. He has studied all the sighting reports that he has been able to locate and drawn a number of conclusions from them. In Loch Morar the water is very clear and it has been possible over the years for a number of witnesses to report seeing the creatures underwater. Todd is certain he has been able to plot a behaviour pattern, but there is a problem in that it is intermittent. Stopping and starting at odd times, but when it does start there seems to be a run of behaviour, and this seems to hold true over the years. Todd plans to use this pattern, if it develops while he is there, by working underwater. He has two Canon AEI cameras with power wind. He intends to fit them into Ikelite underwater cases and is working on mountings for the units and has plans for a simple triggering device. He has an area in mind where he will place the cameras in about 30 feet of water. It is an ambitious effort and should produce results, that is if Todd's theories prove correct. Todd spent a large part of his time living in a cave last year. Really it was a large rock with one end in the hillside, with the other supported on a heap of smaller rocks. During the time he was there he built up a good relationship with the local people. This season he has plans to make his camp in the shell of a ruined croft. If any hardy members feel they are up to this and that they may be of help to Todd, or anyone who may just like to drop him a line, he left me two addresses where he may be contacted. Todd Martin, c/o Morar Post Office, Inverness-shire, PH40 4PA or perhaps a better one is c/o Taret Post Office, Sea Loch Nevis, via Mallaig, Inverness-shire, PH 41.

## Tony Healy

Days after Todd left, I received a letter from Tony Healy. He arrived back in Canberra on the 13th of April, almost two years to the day after he left. He enclosed two newspaper cuttings, one from the Malay Mail, the other from the Flathead Courier. They gave an outline to his journey and the various areas of his explorations. In his letter he reported that he had discovered very little new about the 'Nagas' of the Tasek Bera. He spent three days camping with aboriginal Malays in the middle of the complex of waterways and swamps that constitutes the lake. He found it difficult to imagine that there could be a family of elephant-sized monsters lurking in the shallow water. Although he saw nothing of the large creatures, it was an interesting trip and he saw many other wild animals. He did come across something else though, he collected some good stories about the 'Orang Mawas'. These are a 'Yeti-type' creature that local people swear they see in the jungles of the Peninsular. Reports of these animals go back as far as 1870. During the Malayan Emergency, British soldiers claimed to have seen and shot them. Tony talked to game wardens who had found tracks and to people who had tracked the creatures for several days through the thick jungle. Tony is now getting his files in order to start writing his book, or perhaps books. Originally, he had intended to write one book containing chapters on Big Foot, Nessie, and the Yeti, but in his travels he has collected more than 200 'monsters', from all parts of the world. So it is possible that there will be two books, water monsters and land monsters, or perhaps monsters of the northern hemisphere and those of the southern hemisphere. In any case the books are to be looked forward to.

## Expeditions

Jeff Watson - As reported in NIS 38, Jeff took a frame or two of an object in the sea in the Falmouth Bay area. I have now seen prints of these, and once more Jeff has something, but the question remains, what? In three of them there is a small head-like object protruding above the surface. There is no sign of a body or hump, no long neck, just a dark, small 'head', which shows no real sign of being animate, although it does move in relation to the background. Remember this is the sea, and if the object is alive there are many things it could be, ranging from a seal to one of the smaller types of whales. It could be driftwood or rubbish being moved about by the tide or wind. Jeff is really trying, putting in a lot of effort and time, and I hope that it pays off in the end with something very good.

John Negus - John and his fiancée (now wife) spent the Easter weekend at the loch, apart from the long time travelling. They arrived at the camp site South of Dores mid-morning on Saturday. Their first impression of the loch was that it was blue and beautiful, not grey and foreboding as expected. The second impression was one of size. Looking at maps and reading books had not prepared them for the overwhelming vastness of the loch. Their first view of the loch stretching off over the horizon was awe-inspiring. Saturday evening was spent along the shore line without any sight of the creatures. They walked to Boleskine and back on the Sunday, the weather was very good and hot. Although they drew a blank on this their first visit, as do most of us, they are determined to spend more time in the area.

Allison Rigg - Allison and Nick Sykes spent two weeks at the loch, also in April. They travelled to Inverness by train and then on to the loch by bicycles. They spent till Tuesday at a place some half mile South of Achnahannet, getting the feel of the area and used to camping. They then moved on to Invermoriston for the rest of the first week. They did a fair amount of serious watching from the remains of the pier or from around the river mouth. They saw nothing of the animals but did see some large fish jumping, and were certain that if anything larger had shown they would have seen it. Saturday they spend cycling through Fort August and on to Foyers, where they camped in the trees at the loch side until the following Thursday. While there they watched from the Foyers River mouth every morning but once more saw nothing of the animals. They also met Frank Searle who gave them some advice on watching technique. They returned to Inverness on Friday, then home. Although they had drawn a blank on the monsters they had a very nice time, and benefitted from being there and seeing the Loch.

Johnny Long - Johnny sent me word that he would be at the loch from April 26th to 5th May. I was sorry it came too late for inclusion in NIS 38, but he followed it up with a letter when he had returned home. He stayed at the Foyers Hotel, once again, where Mr. & Mrs. McDougal were as friendly as ever. (A few NIS members use the Foyers Hotel and all report good service and helpful proprietors - Rip). He took less equipment this trip, one 35 mm camera and a 300 mm lens and a 8mm cine with zoom plus binoculars and one or two other small items, and a bicycle for transport. Most mornings he got up at 5.00 a.m. and averaged about 8 hours a day watching from Foyers along to Dores from the forestry walk. The weather was very good and for three days the loch surface was like glass. He says that on days like that you get a tense feeling that something is about to happen. Unfortunately it did not, but he did see two 'V' wakes followed by a water disturbance which was quite considerable. He took three still shots which he has not had processed yet, but is sure they were caused by large trout or salmon on the feed. It was early evening when they were taken, which supports this thought and he is sure they were not birds or otters. While he was there he met Dick Raynor and had a good chat about the phenomena and conservation. He also talked to Frank Searle who was in his usual form, telling him that Bob Rine's underwater shots are of the movie monster that sank in 1969, and that Tim Dinsdale's film was not a Nessie, also as an experienced fisherman, he knows there are no otters in the loch. Johnny also visited the new 'Loch Ness Monster Exhibition' at the Drumnadrochit Hotel. It had just opened and was still missing an item or two. Among them being computer enhanced prints of the MacNab and Surgeon's photographs. However the exhibition was well laid out and pleasant,

and apart from a rather gaudy model or two does not go overboard for tourism. It is laid out to present the Loch Ness story in three separate aspects. Dealing with the history of the search for the creatures and featuring most of the known photographs taken between 1933 and 1960. Then moves on to the equipment used in the search, sonar, strobe lights and other gear. With this are the underwater pictures. Then there is the current activities section, which has among other things, a model of what an animal is thought to be like. Frank Searle had been approached to contribute some of his photographs but he refused, as the Academy of Applied Science was included in the exhibition.

Johnny closed by telling me once more that he hopes nothing will come of the 'dolphin' project. He feels, after reading articles and books on training methods and the U.S. Navy's activities with dolphins, that there is no way that the 'experiment' can be humane or in the interests of wildlife generally. Johnny thinks there is more for us to learn from dolphins and other members of the whale family, than they can learn from us.

Roger Acraman - Roger wrote to tell me he is going up to the loch from about 23rd August to 7th September. He will be travelling in an emerald green Avenger with two companions. Over the past couple of months he has been in contact with Jeffrey Watson, and has done some work on the pictures Jeffrey took down at Falmouth. Using a micro photographic process, on a 5 x 3½ enprint, he has produced a set of enlargements where the 'head' half fills a sheet of 5 x 7. But this does not give the necessary definition. He now has a very good duplicate slide and hopes to get better results from that. He has also given a lot of thought to using infra-red film at Loch Ness. He sent me a print from a photograph he had taken of a local duckpond at about 10.00 pm, when it was impossible to see a gate some 20 yards away on the other side of the pond. It is remarkably clear with good definition of cars parked on the road along the pond-side, and of trees and a church tower in the background. As Roger points out infra-red is absorbed by wood and stone etc., but is reflected off flesh. I do not know much about infra-red cameras and film, but did see one used at the Loch in the late 1960's. It was part of the expedition mounted by the Black and White whiskey company. This venture, unfortunately, was more of a publicity exercise than a serious attempt to answer the mystery. Among the equipment they brought were a large number of bottles of whiskey, Black and White golf umbrellas, an underwater camera and the infra-red camera. This was a cumbersome affair with an infra-red light source attached to it. It had a very limited range, and had to be pointed at the 'target' for some time before a photograph could be taken. I saw some nice photographs taken of local houses and landmarks, but it seemed to have very limited use in the monster hunting field. Perhaps there have been improvements in the infra-red camera field over the years, if not, the position could be the same. Nevertheless it is interesting to know someone is looking into it again.

Terry Chappell - Terry will be going to the loch in September for two weeks. I have no details of vehicle or base area. As well as watching the loch, Terry will be shooting footage on 8 mm cine. He is making a personal film about the phenomenon, past to present, and is hoping to get some local colour.

Theo Brown - Theo, who is Director of the Australian Division of the World Life Research Institute, has plans to return to the loch again this year, but as yet they are not finalised. He hopes the weather will be kinder this year than the past two years.

Wallis - Mrs. V. G. Wallis was most interested in the account of Lake Bala. She and a friend are going to North Wales for a fortnight in September. They will now include Lake Bala in their trip and with camera at the ready, do a little monster hunting.

Brooks - Some time ago the Sunday Post carried a very short item about an expedition planned for 1981. It said 'Ernest Brooks, head of the Brooks Institute, Santa Barbara, California, plans spending a month at the bottom of the loch in a mini-submarine in 1981. "We'll only learn the truth by spending some considerable time at the bottom", he says.'

## Japanese Cousin

Two members sent me a cutting from the Times of 7th March, 1980. It was a letter from Professor Stuart Kirby, University of Aston, Birmingham. It concerned reports of a strange creature reported in Lake Kutcharo in Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, where he was recently resident. The phenomenon has been persistently reported over the years, and there are photographs of 'Kushie' and her wake. Professor Kirby points out that should anyone cry 'Japanese always copy everything', the legend is an ancient certitude of the aboriginal Ainu, who were in Hokkaido long before the Japanese. They have a beautiful story that long ago when the world was new, two twin stars fell down from the sky. One came down in Lake Kutcharo, the other far away in the West - as we now know, into Loch Ness. Ever since 'Kushie' has been calling to 'Nessie' utilizing, according to a popular Japanese song, the modern method of communicating via the stars, assuring of her remembrance and longing to meet her sister again.

## Tail Ends

\*\* Joe Zarzynski sent me another article on Lake Pohenegamook and its creatures. It is from the Canadian magazine 'Harrowsmith', the January, 1980 issue. It is a most comprehensive article dealing with the history of the lake and its surrounding area, moving through the years to the present with interviews by local people. It also goes into the theory that the answer to the mystery lies with one of the three sturgeon species, but that seems unlikely.

He also sent a cutting from the New York Times, of 19th March, 1980. The subject was Dr. Roy Mackal who had recently returned from a month long expedition in the Congo River basin with a zoologist colleague, James H. Powell Jr. They initiated the trip on the strength of reports that two of the creatures had entered Lake Tele in 1959. Now, after turning up what they said were eyewitness reports as recently as last year, they conclude that "the Mokele-Mbembe is a real animal, not a myth" and a promising target for further search.

\*\* Jacobite Cruises. This firm has lodged an application for planning permission for a landing stage and access pathway at Castle Urquhart. This facility will enable but tour operators to put down passengers at the Jacobite starting point at Tomnahurich Bridge and later pick them up at the castle. Giving visitors the chance of a one way trip on the loch.

\*\* Caledonian Canal. On Tuesday evening the 20th May, 1980, 81 year old Duncan MacGregor reached the Fort William end of the canal. He had just accomplished his life long desire to row the length of the canal. He set out from Inverness on the Morning morning to cover the 60 miles. He was sponsored in aid of Christian Aid and the Erskine Hospital for Ex-servicemen. Duncan, a former naval gunner, said it was hard but there was just one time when he nearly had to abandon the trip, that was when he had to take refuge in the accompanying launch as his own boat filled with water in torrential rain, as he was rowing down Loch Ness.

\*\* Dolphins. I have had no word from the Academy of Applied Science as to their programme this year. I have heard that some of the equipment on their raft has been ashore for over-haul, Gordon MacKintosh, one of the local people who help the Academy's teams, has said he has been in touch with them recently and believes there will be no attempt to bring dolphins in this year.

\*\* Otter. On the 5th May, Mr. and Mrs. Morris were going shopping in Inverness and parked their car near the footbridge over the River Ness at about 10.30 a.m. A large splash drew their attention to the river, thinking it to be a fish they went to look. To their amazement they saw an otter diving and cavorting in the smooth flowing water. They watched it for some time and although there were quite a number of people about, it seemed they were the only ones to notice it.

That brings another Newsletter to an end. My thanks to everyone who has written. Always remember your news and views are needed, you are NIS. My address is still - R. R. Hepple, Huntshildford, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL 13 1RQ. Subscriptions are U.K. £2.00, U.S.A. Canada \$ 8.00 p.a. **RIP.**