

Lake Champlain

Joe Zarzynski sent me word that he has formed his own investigative group. It is legally registered and is called 'The Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation'. It seems there are other unexplained things in the lake besides the creatures, and Joe is interested in them all.

He later sent me the latest news on his research and investigation.

"I am happy to inform you that Jim Kennard and myself have joined forces to plan several mini-expeditions at Lake Champlain. Jim is the President of the Rochester Engineering Laboratories and owns a side-scan sonar apparatus. In June, 1979, we were lucky enough to rediscover the wreck of the 146 foot long steamboat 'Phoenix'. The 'Phoenix' sank in Lake Champlain off Cdchester Point in 1819. Jim designed a tripod to carry a Raytheon sonar transducer unit. I shall use this device in Lake Champlain to monitor high probability areas of the 109 mile long lake. I'll also be conducting an extended shore watch using camera gear on Lake Champlain. And I hope that I can persuade Jim to use the side-scan sonar in the lake. Since Jim donates the use of this equipment I am lucky to get its use on the lake for a few days a year. I have enclosed our philosophy. It is hoped that this association shall blossom each year into a more technical and sophisticated approach to solving the Lake Champlain Monster riddle. Bob Bartholomew of Whitehall, NY, has been of great help too, in assisting me in the search. The equipment was tested at Lake Desolation butside Saratoga Springs, NY, and will be used in Lake Champlain the first time during the last week of July. From there we shall use it several times more during the summer and early fall (this equipment is the tripod and sonar transducer)".

At the moment, Joe is trying to verify six sightings of 'Champ'. Most of these happened several years ago but are just coming to light now. He says he is pleased that witnesses to possible 'Champ' sightings are feeling more comfortable about talking of what they have seen. Lake Champlain still suffers from some people being overly critical to eye-witnesses. It has only been through a lot of hard work on the 'Champ' investigation and all the positive efforts of all monster researchers that a more open attitude is being fostered so that more people will have an open mind towards the subject. He states that in his opinion the fine work at Loch Ness is the key to opening the minds of many sceptics.

'Philosophy of the Lake Champlain Expedition'.

The Lake Champlain Expedition (The Kennard-Zarzynski Expedition) has been established based upon the challenge to investigate, identify, and gather evidence for the protection of the so-called Lake Champlain Monsters or Sea Serpents (hereafter referred to as the Lake Champlain Phenomenon). This quest is an association of personalities characterized by their inquisitive nature, spirit of adventure, thirst for the truth, and scientific inquiry into this cryptozoological wonder.

Our primary objective is to explore and seek out these mysterious creatures through the co-ordinated fusing of unique human talents, responsible research, and technology.

Participation in the endeavour is based upon principles designed for the betterment of the Lake Champlain Phenomenon. It is also hoped that this expedition will benefit participants through the formal exchange of ideas and information.

Those asked to volunteer their services and/or equipment should understand that their donations of time and/or equipment are not for any profit motive, but to further the objectives of this scientific expedition.

Membership in the planning and mechanics of any field operation is by selection from the expedition leadership. Invited participants will be required to sign a brief, but necessary agreement intended to protect the interests of the precepts of the project.

With these points briefly outlined and now considered, it is with optimism that this union of talent and technology challenges the enigma of the Lake Champlain Phenomenon.

We all have our own ideas about the investigation into Loch Ness and other places, and the possible results of this work. We also have our own reasons for taking part in this work or for being interested in it. It is interesting to see Joe's thoughts on the matter written in a very precise manner.

One last item from Joe is a second hand account of a sighting of a lake monster in Lake Saskatong about 100 miles north of Quebec. He has no details and thought perhaps one of our Canadian members has come across a report.

Expeditions.

Doug Macfarlane sent me a letter about his two trips to the loch this year. He takes his wife and 15 month old son with him, now they have a caravan. They tow with a blue MKI Triumph 2.5 PI, registration MCS 773G. Staying at the Scanport camp site, which is out on the Oorea Road from Inverness, towing out to a layby at the lochside opposite Urquhart Castle during the day. They were at the loch for ten days at the beginning of April, (Easter) and for sixteen days from June 20th. Although they didn't connect with a creature on either trip Doug did make a useful connection. He met Adrian Shine and Barry Bell of the Loch Morar/Ness Project. Doug feels he may join the group, as after fifteen years of loch watching he may be able to employ his time more effectively with a group with better equipment. He estimates he has spent some 1 1/2 thousand hours watching the water without result in the Nessie department. He also says that he has never seen any sign of otters in the loch. But one night during their last trip, he and his wife saw and followed one in the River Ness. It travelled upstream for about a mile through the town, at times it was out of the bank and they were within feet of it as it swam up the river, a delightful episode. While there, they saw very little fish activity on the surface and then only small ones, and any anglers spoken to said the fishing was poor. Doug feels that as most surface sightings of the animals may be caused by them feeding, perhaps this will be a poor year for sightings. Doug now has a Sunagor 400mm lens and an Aico 2 or 3 times Teleconverter. Using 400 asa film with the lens and X3 converter he has turned out some very good shots at the full width of the loch and now only needs a monster to pose for him. He hopes to give it the chance in September, if he can manage another ten day trip to the loch.

Jean Berton, of Glun, France, sent me word of his trip to the west of Ireland and Loch Ness. The weather was poor and deterred them from staying longer than two weeks. He and his wife stopped in each town and visited the local libraries to search for Water Horse references, they found a number but feel there are many more to be found. They hope to return to continue this research and spend more time in Dublin and other places of interest.

They visited Lough Brin and walked round it. It is terribly small, rather far away from the sea and relatively high up in the mountains. They talked to two local people who told them the news about a monster spread last year was a joke. Nothing had been seen in that lake apart from brown trout, which were scarce. The lake is rather shallow, 20 to 30 feet in depth, and local people say there are deep holes full of mud which are highly dangerous to swimmers. Jean feels that unless one is a believer in the 'worm' theory put forward at one time by Ted Holiday, you rapidly come to the conclusion that the presence of a monster, let alone a family, is very improbable in Lough Brin. Even so the lough and its surroundings are really magnificent, and are well worth visiting. There are other loughs further North which they had hoped to drive past. But Jean could not find a map detailed enough to plot them. This is another reason they wish to revisit Ireland. They crossed over to Scotland and could not resist going to Loch Ness even though it was only for a weekend. They visited friends at Drumadrochit and Fort Augustus, and spent a little time at Temple Pier with Bob Rines, before starting for home in France.

Jeff Watson sent me an interim report of his work this year. There have been some alterations to his intended plans but he has still put in an impressive effort. These changes were made because he has upgraded his equipment to obtain potentially better photographic results. So far this year he has been on trips to Falmouth Bay and Loch Ness during the Spring. Here he was on familiar territory, as he has worked in both of these areas before. Also in the Spring he spent one day in the Barmouth Bay

vicinity, doing some background research and getting the feel of the area. In July he goes to Loch Morar for one week, instead of the two weeks in August as he had planned. This involved initial shore-based watching, as well as some background research and interviews. He is also going to carry out a similar programme at Loch Shiel in August. He has already made a significant move in the area. He contacted the West Highland Estates Office of the Forestry Commission, and has obtained permission to use the private Commission road along the south side of the loch. He did not say in the report but I presume he will be using his bicycle to get about as he usually does at Loch Ness. The use of this road between Glenfinnan and Polloch opens up views of the loch which are not generally available to the public. He will be back at Loch Ness in late September for one week, and return for another week in mid-October. On both of these trips he will be working from the Fort Augustus area. Between those two trips he intends to visit Lake Bala in Wales for a day or two at the beginning of October. He will round up the years expeditions with another visit to Falmouth Bay for one more week.

The photographic outfit that Jeff now uses consists of a Canon AI SLR camera with a Hoya 400 mm telephoto lens, plus a Komura 2X converter, and a Hoya skylight filter. In addition, his Mark Scheffel 35 x 50 and Prinz 16 x 50 binoculars have been retained. For much of this year, Ektachrome 200 slide film has been used for fieldwork, instead of the faster Ektachrome 400 slide film, used during the winter months at Loch Ness and Falmouth Bay.

Among his watching and research work Jeff also endeavours to interest the media in his efforts. This year he has been fairly successful with various articles in both national and local papers. He has also been in touch with Bob Rickard, of the Fortean Times, who is preparing a book on Fortean Phenomena. This may result in three of Jeff's pictures being used in the section on Loch Ness.

Jeff says that if anyone would like a full report on his fieldwork or an account of his initial research, please send him an s.a.e. at his address:- J. Watson, Flat 3, 88 Eltham Road, Lee Green, London S.E.12, 8 UE.

Valentine Smith, had booked a holiday in Cornwall with his wife and son, while there he took the chance to visit Falmouth Bay. They took a boat out and had a look at Rosemullion Head, but not too close as it was turning choppy and it was a small boat. Valentine said that he had no sense of awe; the awe he feels at Loch Ness even when standing on the shore. He still feels this although it is twenty-one years since he went on his first expedition to Loch Ness. He and two others camped at Inverfarigaig and, though they kept a good watch, it was not until the last day that they saw something strange. Peter, one of the group, had been at the loch-side for over an hour keeping morning watch when the other two joined him. At that moment they saw "waves without wind", a wake going past and waves breaking on the shore. It was the one fine calm day of their expedition; Peter assured them that no boats of any sort had passed. He says they claim nothing for this, but have remained mystified by it through the years. He became a member of the L.N.I.B. and has been on several private expeditions, but has never had a sighting.

The above are all the details Valentine sent me about his "waves without wind", they are meagre but I can put forward an explanation which may answer the mystery. When I go to the loch we camp at the old pier at Abriachan, this is on the shore at water level. We have noted at times waves breaking on the shore when the loch is very calm, but have also seen what causes them. That is the British Waterway boat Scott II, which is a converted tug and used for pleasure cruises on the loch. As an old tug, she has a deep draft displacement hull, and as a result leaves a considerable wake pattern. In a day she does a number of runs in a variety of durations. The one of interest to us is the morning run, which just comes into the loch at Loch End, swings round and sails out. The wash she makes continues along the loch breaking on the shore as it goes, On a calm day, it is still very powerful when it reaches us, at the Abriachan pier some fifteen minutes later. By this time of course Scott II is well out of sight going back along the canal. The distance from Loch End to the pier is about three miles, roughly the same as the distance from Urquhart Bay to Inverfarigaig. Now it could be, in Valentine's case, that some large craft had turned into Urquhart Bay leaving its wash to travel along the loch to be seen and heard by them. This travelling wash is much more prominent on a calm day as waves on the surface absorb its power and kill its effect. As I said earlier this could be an explanation, but there were reports of 'waves without wind' long before motor or steam vessels were plying the loch

More Cousins

There was a report in the New York Times of June 22nd 1980, of the further sighting of 'Chessie'. N.I.S. 31 carried the reports of sightings of a strange creature in Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. The latest report comes from Mr. Muse, a farmer of Westmoreland County, Virginia. He and five friends came upon a creature some 10 to 14 foot long as they were going to the shore of the Potomac River on the morning of June 14th. Mr. Muse had binoculars with him and was up on the bank about 18 feet above the water. 30 yards out in the river he could see a long dark streak in the water. He said the creature's body was somewhat uniform in size, about as big around as a quart jar, and the head was bigger than his hand. Mr. Muse and his friends watched the creature through binoculars for about 15 minutes before it swam out of view. He said he had a little boat he could have put out, but he was not sure that he wanted to get too close to the animal. Mr. Muse, who is 59, said he had been around the river all his life but had never before seen anything like it.

This does not really tally with the typical reports of the Loch Ness animals, but is nevertheless something very strange.

Lake Wenbo in Tibet is about 3000 square miles in area, 300 feet deep and rich in fish. It is also the home of a strange creature according to a Peking newspaper. The paper reported that it had been sighted several times by local Tibetan herdsmen, including a Communist Party district secretary. The official said that one day he and three others had seen a strange beast on the surface of the lake. It was about the size of a house with a long neck and a small head just floating on the water. Another report was of a sick yak being left near the lake shore, and some time later when the herdsman returned the yak had disappeared. All that was left were tracks where the yak had been dragged into the water. On another occasion a man went out fishing on a raft and disappeared in a whirlpool, his body was never found.

It is difficult to assess the value of reports like this on the strength of one newspaper article. But it is strange how reports from round the world seem to return to the same stories of animals disappearing from the shores of the lakes, and of bodies of drowned people never being recovered.

Well, that brings another Nessletter to an end. May I thank everyone who has written to me with their news and views, please remember yours are always welcome. Patrick Vickers sent an idea in, would any member writing to me like to include their views as to what Nessie is, plesiosau, sea slug, or whatever. Subscriptions are British Isles £2.00; North America \$8.00; other areas on application.

Rip.