

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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Holidays '82

16.30 hrs, Sunday 25th July 1982, arrived on site. The site was the patch of ground by the remains of the old Abriachan pier, on Loch Ness, the family and I were at the start of our ten day stay by the loch. The loch surface was calm, and the sun was shining. Large areas of Scotland were suffering from lack of rain. Loch Ness and the surrounding area were no exception, the loch level was low and many of the burns were dry. During our stay the weather remained good, for holidaying, but the gardens, farms, and fishermen needed rain. More important from my point of view, was the lack of wind. We had an above average number of calm days, giving long periods of calm water. I was thus able to spend a fair amount of time on the water in my canoe. Not that it did me any good, I still cannot report seeing anything unusual in the loch. However I was able to visit many of our friends and renew acquaintances. I also had the pleasure of having a number of NIS members call at the camp-site. It was interesting to be able to exchange views, my only regret was that once or twice I was rushing off somewhere with the family, and was not able to spend as much time talking as I would have liked. Roland Watson was the first to visit, he was staying at the Youth Hostel at Alt Sigh, near Invermoriston. His views on the creatures lean towards the paranormal, and while these views are not held by the majority, they should not be ignored, and it is good that Roland is following up his theories with research work. Jeff Watson and Roger Acraman came along next. Jeff has visited me at home, and I have had many letters from Roger over the years. They have collaborated together for some time, but this was their first field expedition together. They were based at Fort Augustus, and had a fine array of cameras and various types of film. Ian Freshwater, from Staffordshire, dropped in, accompanied by his father. They were staying in the Drumnadrochit area. Doug Macfarlane, with his wife and youngster, popped in. They are usually on the south shore, towing a caravan out to the loch every day. I met Grahame Snape around Drumnadrochit once or twice, Grahame and I go back a long way to the days of INI. When I eventually caught up with the Loch Ness and Morar Project, and paid them a visit, I met Ricky Gardiner and Mr B. Herring (I do not know his first name) again, having seen them last year, although I first met Ricky a few years ago. It was nice to meet so many members, and good to know that so many are able to visit the loch and either conduct their own expeditions, or join in and give their time and efforts to bigger expeditions.

On our first Tuesday morning the loch was calm, so after breakfast I canoed across the loch to see the Loch Ness and Morar Project at Balachladaich. When I arrived there was no sign of life, no boats, tents or people. I spoke to a camper from the adjacent site, who was walking his dog on the shore, he said he believed they were operating from Urquhart Bay. That proved to be true, as I found out later. They had been operating since April, and had chartered a converted barge for some six weeks or so. This large craft had been fitted with their own sonar equipment, and had proved a suitable vessel. Unfortunately the owner was charging more than they would afford, and they could not continue with another charter period. Tony Harmsworth, of The Loch Ness Monster Exhibition at Drumnadrochit, who has worked closely with the LNMP since they started work on Loch Ness, was able to offer help and advice. He and Adrian Shine were able to come to an agreement with Jim Hogan of Caley Cruisers, the result was that the LNMP were able to charter the New Atlantis until the end of August, along with one of the older cruisers of the fleet. These two crafts were based in Urquhart

Bay and were capable of accommodating the expedition crews, so it would not be necessary to set up the Balachladaich camp until larger crews were expected. Later in the week I was able to contact the Project, and have a talk with Adrian. I also had a trip aboard the New Atlantis. The sonar gear aboard was impressive, a bottom scan set and a side scan set, both give a picture on screens in colour. The bottom set can record from and play back on to the screen. The side scan set can be plugged into a paper recorder. Both these sets operate on different frequencies to the LNMP's own equipment. They had some success with their own gear and they hoped to be able to duplicate these results with equipment of different frequencies. The side scan sonar has a degree of automatic 'lock on' to a target, and can be further directed by the operator. This gives a good chance of tracking for long distances in deep water. Because of this ability, the Project has been operating in the deep channels in the loch. One of the targets recorded on their own equipment was observed to dive some 300 feet at a rate of 1 metre a second. Of the various targets which they had already tracked, Adrian would not say that they had proof of 'the monster', or in fact that they were alive. In keeping with the very careful work and research programme they are following, they will not make any claims until the results obtained are very carefully examined, and if possible duplicated. Adrian said that the work they have done in the loch up till now has been very valuable, they are getting the 'feel' of the water and storing up experience of interpreting the sonar. So they are continuing their steady progress, and not looking for overnight success, although it would be welcome if it should happen.

I was also very happy to be able to meet up with Bob Rines and family again. Bob brought me up to date with the work the Academy are doing. Bob Needleman had been to the loch about a month earlier, in preparation for the seasons work. They have a purpose built camera/sonar rig this season. Their previous equipment had always been built for other jobs, and adapted for work in the loch. Even so they were still getting some trouble with water leaking into the sonar unit. It has always been so. Over the years so many people have designed and built equipment for use in the loch, and it has worked beautifully on the bench; but once it is put into the water it has taken a great deal of sorting out. But Bob was pleased with the camera and felt he was near to correcting the sonar housing faults. The unit would enable them to set the trigger to activate on objects of a predetermined size. It is also suitable for towing under a boat, which could lead to tracking targets. They are also working on advanced high frequency sonar that will give a picture-like image. They have also been using the old Edgerton gear this season. This was the first camera equipment they brought to the loch in 1971, and consists of a cylinder with a strobe light and another with a 16mm industrial movie camera. This is triggered one frame at a time along with a flash at preset time intervals of 4 seconds, or longer. These are mounted on a small framework which can be set on the bottom, or hung from the surface, in what is estimated to be a likely area. This rig has been used in Urquhart Bay, below tychat, and has confirmed that there are a great many fish in the bay this year. Although up to the beginning of August it had not come up with anything of a larger nature. I was fortunate to be able to go out in Ivor Newby's boat, along with Grahame Snape and Bob Rines, to deploy this equipment in the bay. It brought back happy memories of handling the same gear from 'Fussy Hen', one of the LNI's workboats, in 1971. So the Academy of Applied Sciences continue their work at the loch.

Bob had also interviewed a farmer and his wife at Loch End, who, along with his sister in law, had a triple sighting sometime in May 1982. They were about three quarters of a mile away, when they saw the disturbance in the loch off Aldourie Castle. They described seeing a hump some 10 feet long with a large neck standing several feet out of the water. A short distance away from this were two smaller head and necks, the large one being 8 inches to a foot in diameter. All three heads seemed to be angular, and displayed small horns or tubes on the top. One strange thing was that the horns on the smaller heads looked the same size as those on the larger. They watched for almost five minutes as the objects in view moved slowly towards them. Then a boat came

round Tor Point, out of Dores Bay, the large neck and hump submerged immediately; not to be seen again. The small necks went down, but resurfaced briefly. They did this twice, before staying down and not being seen again. Bob said that when he spoke to them he suggested that perhaps they had been watching birds, possibly swans. The farmer replied that he had many years experience of the loch, and water conditions, and was sure that what they saw were not birds, and that the sizes estimated were correct. There had been two other witnesses of the objects, who were standing at a different point at Loch End. All in all a strange, but exciting, episode. Bob said he had the impression that the people concerned were genuine. Bob had also interviewed Mr Ray Greenfield, who saw something strange in the water, also at Loch End. It was three years ago, when he was living in the Old Manse overlooking Loch End. He was upstairs when he saw 'a pole' sticking up out of the water, it began to move very fast towards his shore. It turned slightly sideways, showing then a triangular fin-like shape. It was some three or four feet tall, and Mr Greenfield thought it must surely run ashore. But on reflection he recalled that there was a fair amount of water close to the shore that was out of his sight, owing to the trees and steep shoreline. That was all he saw, what impressed him was the speed of the object, indicating immense power. Being interested in the creatures he did a little research, and came across the plesiosaurus illustration with a diamond shaped fin on its tail. That seemed to fit in with what he had seen. Another strange little episode for the file.

On the last morning of the holidays, Friday 6th August 1982, I dropped into the Monster Exhibition, at Drumnadrochit, to say goodbye to Tony and leave a message for Adrian. As it happened he was there, so I had the chance of a last word. They told me they had been given a film that had been taken by an English couple on Monday 2nd August 82. They had been repairing a hired moped in a lay-by opposite Tor Point when they became aware of a disturbance in the water. It was about 100 yards from shore, they could see one black hump-like object which submerged, seconds later it reappeared as two objects, one of which they took to be the tail. They had taken film of it, and when later they arrived at Drumnadrochit they reported what they had seen. They also let Tony have the film to be processed, and analysed. When Tony told me the story I was very interested, I had been at the old pier, about one and a half miles away, on the Monday morning, at 11.40 a.m. I was able to check my log book and confirm that Scott II had made its usual trip into the loch, with a turn for home at 11.30 a.m. opposite Tor Point. This immediately raised the question of boat wakes, and the possibility that what the couple had seen and filmed was the Scott II wake. Hopefully this will be answered when the film is examined.

Once again the holiday was over, on a useful note, the weather had been good, I had met up with old friends and some new ones, unfortunately the one I really want to see, Nessie that is, did not oblige. Still, there is always next time.

Roger Acraman

Shortly after returning home I received a letter from Roger, it was an account of a sighting they had at Fort Augustus, at the end of July. He is a firm believer in the early morning watch, from dawn, about 5 a.m., through to 9 or 10 a.m. This has been my own feeling over the years, that is the quiet time on the water, especially since the growth of the cruiser traffic. Roger and his girlfriend Claire, were watching from the pier at Fort Augustus, they had a tripod mounted Pentax ME super with a 500 mm lens. Roger also had a Pentax MX and motordrive with a Vivitar 70-150 mm zoom lens, his 'snatch camera'. He always has a camera with him, whenever he is near the water, a tip that he picked up from Tim Dinsdale, and a habit I have always advocated. A camera in the car or tent is no good, it must be within reach, although I must confess to being a little lax myself. Back to the report. Shortly before they were due to pack up, around 9 a.m., a cruiser -Huntingtower Castle- pulled out of the pier to turn around to enter the loch gates. This was the first boat to start its engine, usually Roger packs up just after the first boat comes to life. However they stayed on and shortly

afterwards were rewarded for doing so. They were sheltering in the car, from the midgets outside, when they saw two dark humps break the surface and move away towards Battery Rock at a speed of about 5 mph, before submerging. Roger thought it may be part of the boat's wake, but quickly realised it was not. His experience of boat wakes in that area of the loch is extensive, and he is certain it was no wake. Claire had a cine camera on her lap, she had been told to use it at any time, no matter what the conditions. But she just froze. When Roger realised that he was not looking at a boat wake he exposed a frame at the 150 mm setting, I/500th at F7. He then dashed out and shot off a frame with the 500 mm lens camera, I/250th at F8. But he thinks the object may have submerged by then. He estimated that the duration of the sighting was 5 seconds, while Claire reckoned some 9 seconds. The loch surface was like a mirror, slightly foggy in the distance but relatively bright. They carefully combed the area for a quarter of an hour, looking for a log, bird, anything that may have been mistaken for a hump, but saw nothing. They met up with Jeff Watson, and each wrote an account of what they had seen, before discussing what had happened between themselves. This is always recommended practice for anyone seeing anything, write it down before talking to anyone else. Roger estimated that it was under 200 yards away, some 18 inches long at the base and standing the same height. When he returned home Roger had the first film processed at Bushy Colour Labs. When the slide is projected it shows plenty of background and foreground, the legs of the tripod, plus the wreck of the old iron barge lying near the shore, and in the centre of the frame a hump with a disturbance in water behind it. At the moment he has not had the other film returned, so does not know if he caught the hump a second time.

Roger is excited about the whole episode, rightly so, he feels that what they saw was perhaps a small Nessie and the implications are that, they are still breeding, there must be enough to continue breeding, they will be there for a few years to come. More on this when it comes to hand.

Chesapeake Bay

Robert Frew, a computer salesman, of Love Point, Maryland, made a 3 minute long videotape of a creature as it swam by his house overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, earlier in the year. The tape, which is said to show a 30 foot long sea creature, was shown on Baltimore television, and has attracted a great deal of interest. The tape has been examined by specialists, and is said to be genuine. The tape had not been subjected to any special effects. Various experts have viewed the tape and comments range from, the creature is alive, about 30 foot long, serpentine in shape and movement, dark brown or black in colour. It looks like four kinds swimming in a plastic bag, it is so jerky and amateurish that you cannot tell anything from it. When it was shown on British TV I must admit it did not seem to be more than a view of water.

Dr George Zug, director of vertebrate zoology at the Smithsonian Institute, is intending to convene a panel of experts in August to study the videotape.

Tail Ends

A mysterious monster has been reported in Lake Zeegrzynski. This is an artificial lake 18 miles north of Warsaw. One bather was startled by 'an enormous slimy black head with rabbit-like ears' which suddenly came up near him. Others who claim to have seen it say it is six metres long.

David James has written with word of what happened to the LNI cameras and equipment. They were sold to meet the overdraft, which he was guaranteeing. He bought two himself, at the going price, a Newman Sinclair and a 36" lens. While they are servicable, by modern standards, they are museum pieces. They are now on display at the Loch Ness Monster Exhibition, Drumnadrochit.

Lionel Leslie's book is not likely to be published before Christmas, or the turn of the year. Owing to the usual publisher's delays.

That's it for NIS 53, thank you for your letters, please remember your news and views are always welcome. My address is:- R.R. Hepple, Huntshieldsford, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 IRQ.

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