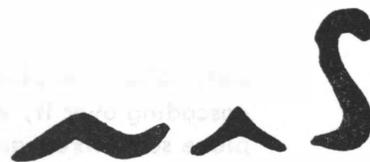


NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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Nessletter No 57
April 1983

Apologies

I must start by saying sorry that Nessletter 56 was later than usual. The firm that used to do the duplicating for us just disappeared. I sent the copy away, and waited. Instead of the package containing a Nessletter arriving in ten days, a Post Office envelope containing my original letter marked 'gone away' came. A quick search found someone else to do the work, but with altered type and margins. This resulted in the leaving out of an item on Lake Champlain.

Lake Champlain

Joe Zarzynski sent me information of a new venture he is undertaking. He is to edit a newsletter on the activity at Lake Champlain. Titled 'Champ Channels' it will be published three times a year, April, August, December, printed in offset lithography each issue will be four pages. Joe feels the time has come to provide the public and academia with a periodical specifically structured to address and seriously discuss the 'Champ' phenomenon. He intends carrying news of work at the lake, of sightings, hypotheses and theories, of attempts to provide legislative protection, of the ecological status of the lake, also news from other areas around the world that are reported to have similar animals, along with photos, maps, sketches. Subscription rates are \$6.00 U.S.A., \$7.00 foreign, foreign subscriptions please send cheques drawn in USA funds only. Cheques made out to Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation, address c/o J. Zarzynski, P.O. Box 2134, Wilton, New York, USA 12866.

I have since received the first edition of 'Channels'. It has items on the number of sightings in Lake Champlain over the years, along with ten reported during 1982, and the 1977 Mansi photograph, along with a report on the progress of the programme to try to obtain legal protection for the animals.

I have a news-clipping from the Scherectady Gazette, N.Y., of April 19th 1983. On April 18th 1983, the New York State Assembly unanimously approved, without debate, a resolution favouring "serious scientific inquiry" into whether a creature known fondly as 'Champ' inhabits the depths of Lake Champlain. The resolution also says the creature - if there is one - "should be protected from any willful act resulting in death, injury or harassment." It was sponsored by a group of Lake Champlain area Republican state assemblymen, including Andrew Ryan of Plattsburgh, Glenn Harris of Fulton County and Anthony Casale of Herkimer County. While legislative resolutions carry no official force, it shows that the general feeling is one of acceptance, and conservation.

Fifty Years On

On Friday 28th April 1933 a well known local business man and his wife had a startling experience. They were motoring along the new road on the north shore of the loch, when, not far from the Abriachan Pier, the lady's attention was drawn to a tremendous upheaval of water in the loch. She called for her husband to stop, and they watched for a minute, or more, while a large creature of some

sort, rolled and plunged about. It had a body resembling a whale and the water was cascading over it, when it submerged, it was in a mass of churned foam. All this took place some three-quarters of a mile from shore, and until the disturbance was first seen the loch surface had been like a mill-pond. When asked if she could estimate the size of the beast, the lady stated that judging by the state of the water in the affected area it seemed to be many feet long. In taking its final plunge it had sent out waves that were large enough to have been caused by a passing steamer. They waited, and watched, for half-an-hour, hoping that the beast may show itself again, but it did not. The witnesses' names were not given in the article, but were quoted in books published later as either, Mr. & Mrs. McKay or Mackay.

A few years previously a group of Inverness anglers had encountered a strange animal, of some sort, while crossing Loch Ness in a rowing-boat. They saw nothing above the surface, but the creature's bulk and movement caused a considerable displacement of water. That account was also reported in the press, but did not arouse any positive response. For some reason it was the McKay report that led to the upsurge of present day interest. Perhaps it was because it co-incident with the completion of the new motor-road, which opened up the length of the loch to visitors, and gave easy access to interested 'monster-hunters'.

On the morning of Saturday 4th April 1983 Mr. Herb Macdonald was driving a car along the northern shore road, at 11.20 he was about 100 yards on the Inverness side of the Abriachan road when he saw a disturbance close inshore. He drew his passenger's attention to it, asking "is that the monster?" Almost immediately a black hump about a foot high appeared, and it seemed certain that something strange was happening. Two of the passengers were visitors to this country, Mrs. Patricia Ness (!) of Strathalbyn, near Adelaide, Australia, and Miss Laurie Davis of Ralla, Missouri, U.S.A. The other two were from Inverness, Evelyn and Rena Macdonald.

As yet I have not had a chance to contact any of those concerned to verify, or gather more facts. My first reaction is that what was seen was our old friend, the wash of Soctll. It ties in with the morning trip it makes to Lochend.

All the above reports appeared in the Inverness Courier, a twice weekly local paper. Over the years it has followed the monster story, with reports of sightings and accounts of some of the work being done at the loch. It was the editor at the time of the McKay report (the late Mr. Evan M. Barron, LL.D.) who dubbed the creatures as 'monster'. When he read the report that had been sent in by Alex Campbell who was the local Fort Augustus reporter, and was for 60 years until 18 months ago, he said if it is as big as Campbell says "then it must be a monster."

The Loch Ness Monster Exhibition

At Easter I, and family, visited Inverness for the long weekend. On the Sunday afternoon we drove to Achnahannet to see Dorothy Fraser, on the way back we called into the Exhibition at Drumnadrochit and had a word with Tony Harmsworth. Firstly, he asked me to pass on his apologies to anyone who was disappointed when the roadshow did not turn up at a venue as promised. The programme had to be cut short at Norwich. The reason being the theft of one of the vehicles with its contents, those were video machines and tapes, display panels, and other important pieces of the exhibition. So unfortunately the itinerary had to be cut short, leaving them with a net loss, instead of a profit to help to support the Loch Ness & Morar Project's work. Tony also showed us some new additions to the exhibition. He now has two video tapes, which can be played as required by visitors, showing various aspects of the Project's existence of a food chain in Loch Ness, and the research that was done to confirm it. The other one illustrates the sonar used by the Project, and shows some of the contacts made with it and the calibration charts. Tony went over it with us and pointed out the colour coding of the Furuno 106A sonar, this has a range from blue, to green, to yellow, to orange, finally red. The set had been calibrated to give a blue trace when the target was a $7\frac{1}{2}$ gas filled sphere, Tony explained that this would represent a pike with a length of 10 feet, or a 15 foot salmon. Some of the unusual traces logged by the Project show targets of yellow, or even orange or red. If you consider that green is twice the target strength of blue, and so on up the scale, anything that gives a reading of red or even yellow must be substantial, even allowing for the fact that different bodies give different signal strengths. Two very interesting new assets for

the exhibition. Making it, more than ever, a worthwhile visit for newcomers to the Loch Ness scene, or for the old hands. If Tony plans to try to put the exhibition on the road next off season, I will let you know.

The Loch Ness and Morar Project will be starting another seasons work sometime in mid-April. I do not know if they have any new equipment, or techniques planned. But knowing how Adrian works, I should think they will have. As over the seasons the programme has been one of trial, testing, and improvement. This has brought very interesting results to date, and we all must hope that they can be improved upon.

Academy of Applied Science

Bob Rines has sent me brief outlines of their intended programme for the 1983 season. The Academy has rather radically re-designed their sonar-triggered underwater camera equipment and adapted it for simultaneous image sensing by other techniques including very sensitive video, and they will be doing limited tests of very portable equipment in July at Loch Ness. These will be preparatory to making some final decisions on a larger scale replication of these stations, automated for unattended operation over an extended time, perhaps in the fall of the year. They will have a minimal team this summer Bob and Carol Rines, Bob Needleman, and hopefully their British colleagues, Ivor Newby and Gordon MacIntosh. They have also been invited by Joe Zarzynski (Lake Champlain) to join an expedition in July at Loch Morar, organised by The International Society of Cryptozoology. The ISC plan to be using underwater video equipment. Bob says he will be very interested in this equipment, since video gear of 1976 vintage was found to be ineffective for the Academy's searching purposes at Loch Ness. There have been great developments in sensitivity and other characteristics since then, so they will be pleased to see what this could do in fresh water as a follow-up to earlier efforts of a similar nature by Adrian Shine. Bob also hopes to be able to arrange the loan of their boat, 'Kelpie', to the ISC for their work at Morar. It is heartening to see different groups of scientists helping each other in Loch Ness research, and not competing.

In mid-April Bob will be delivering a lecture to the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers at their convention in Boston. This will be an up-date of the problems they have been having in the limited experiments at Loch Ness over the past three years, but including the showing of the kind of underwater pictures of sizable objects which they have obtained but which are not even as definitive as prior underwater pictures, though the technology is more sophisticated; or perhaps Bob says, because the technology has become more complex.

The Academy is also very much occupied in two other projects in the U.K. this summer: a July 4-6 workshop conference which they are sponsoring at Oxford University (St Catherine's College); and assistance in the London Youth Science International Fortnight programme at the University of London which the Academy's U.K. chapter (now an approved U.K. charity) is co-sponsoring for young science students, together with the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

Colin Mather

Colin of Wigan Lancashire, sent an interesting letter commenting on points raised in Nessletters. He says surely, if as Mr. Skeldon says, film exists of 20 foot long South American leeches, that is a zoological wonder in itself which should be publicised, and he would like to see a photo of one. He moves on to 'tulpas', having rediscovered a further scrap of information when glancing through John Keels' "Visitors from Space" Panther Books, 1976, about the weird "West Virginia Mothman". He mentions a tale about an old house in New York's Greenwich Village which is haunted, reputedly by a phantom dressed in a long black cape and a wide-brimmed slouch hat, who slinks about from room to room. Ghost-hunters speculate that this is the ghost of a revolutionary war spy. Fair enough you may think, but Keel goes on to say that until 20 years or so before there were never any reports of hauntings, until after the house was vacated by the author Walter Gibson. He was one of the authors for the old pulp magazines, producing novels at the rate of one a month, all written in the old house. The subject of them was the once famous nemesis of crime and evil "The Shadow", who lurked about the underworld (surprise surprise) dressed in a black slouch hat and cape. Keel speculates that the immense mental energy used by Gibson in creating "The Shadow" and his adventures over such a long period could have

formed a 'tulpa', a kind of man-made ghost. Colin says that he is straying from the subject of Lake Monsters, I suppose he is but it could have a bearing. In 1970/71 when I was with Tim Dinsdale at Achnahannet, the old LNI headquarters, he used to say that Loch Ness was like a sponge, soaking up as much time, effort, and energy as the teams could put into it. This had gone on through the mid and late sixties, and into the early seventies. If 'tulpas' can be created, perhaps there should have been an increased number of sightings, which there was not. Colin goes on to quote from another of his books, it is entitled "The Wild and the Tame", by Huldine Beamish, published around 1958 by Geoffrey Bles, he thinks, he no longer has the book. It relates the authoress' adventures and anecdotes about the highlands. She gives the following story told to her by an old highlander. As a young man he used to take his few cows to a loch of many miles circumference, and as was his custom in the summer drove them into the water to swim to the nearest green island. The cows soon learn this trick when it means lush grazing. As the last one was about half way to the island, the head of what the old man described as a giant eel came out of the water with a rush, and the cow simply disappeared and was never seen again. The man told no one, other than most intimate friends and relations for fear of ridicule, until years later he met Huldine and learned she was interested in water kelpies. There is no date given, or location, apart from the fact that the old villager lived 'in the islands'. Another book Colin quotes from, and recommends is "Emma Tupper's Diary" by Peter Dickinson, published in 1971 by Victor Gollancz, and 1973 by Puffin Books. A novel, the plot is about a private loch, inhabited by a herd, or school, or pach (what is the collective noun for a group of plesiosaur?) of aquatic creatures, known as a kind of family legend for years. One of the elder characters has some very pertinent comments to make:- "Yes. The question is whether it is better for your creature to subsist in its own strange way, unknown, or whether it is better to have it thoroughly studied, and probably in the process kill it dead. It would then be known; you could find accounts of it in libraries, casts and skeletons in natural history museums. But it would be extinct, as the dodo is, and oryx and the tiger almost are. Are you prepared to choose?" Thought provoking. Colin asks if anyone knows any details about the colour photo on the cover of Alan Landsburg's book "In Search of Myths and Monsters", Corgi Books 1977. He says that in the book there is no credit for the photographer, or any explanation of its whereabouts or what. I must admit I thought it was just an illustration.

Travel

From March 31st 1983 there will be a new coach service from Inverness to Birmingham and London. The Superstage service includes super luxury coach, faster journey time than other existing service, meal served on board, video show on route. Single adult fare £13.00. For full details write to Stagecoach, 24 Marshall Place, Perth, or ring Perth (0738) 33481.

Newtons coaches have been running services from Inverness to Ullapool, Glasgow, and Edinburgh for a year. They are now offering new timetables and services, with double deck coaches and direct connection to London. Further details from Newtons, West End, Dingwall, or telephone Dingwall (0349) 63000. Worth considering for members without their own vehicles, both firms offer cheap, convenient, travel. Although I believe there is a restriction on the amount of baggage allowed.

Another Nessletter finished, thank you for your letters, your news and views are always welcome, and needed. My name and address remain:- R.R. Hepple, Huntshieldford, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 1RQ. Subscriptions U.K. £2.50 U.S.A. \$9.00. Other areas on request.

Rip.