

# NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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## Books

I have been asked by one or two members if I had any information concerning a new book that claims to have solved the Loch Ness mystery. I am pleased to be able to let you have Roland Watson's comments on the book. I have not seen a copy, but he has sent me the following report. It is titled "The Loch Ness Mystery, Solved" written by Ronald Binns, who is a former LNI member and published by Open Books. Mr. Binns takes up where Maurice Burton's "The Elusive Monster" finished in trying to explain away all reports of large creatures in the Loch as hoaxes, driftwood, floating logs, boats, wakes, local wildlife and mirage effects. Of course these have been utilised to explain away dubious cases, and rightly so, but whereas investigators of the phenomenon usually still end up with 90% explained and 10% unexplained, Ronald Binns says "why not 100% explained?" From then on, he proceeds to dismantle and denounce almost all the classic photographs, films and eyewitness accounts. For example The Surgeon's and Hugh Gray's photographs are classed as hoaxes, as are the 1972 'Flipper' photographs, obtained by the Academy of Applied Science. Tim Dinsdale, through nervous exhaustion, filmed a reddish-brown motor boat and Torquil Macleod's land sighting was a man in a boat. With sonar, Roland says, Mr. Binns has been more generous and dubs them inconclusive in the main. The list goes on and the Loch Ness Mystery does indeed look solved. As for eyewitness testimony, apparently a combination of a natural object, an overenthusiastic and inexperienced observer plus a possible mirage effect leads to a 'monster' sighting and from there on everything is blown out of proportion.

Roland goes on to say that he has no doubt these effects do produce a large number of sighting reports, but he does not believe that it runs to 100%. He asks what about sightings of the creatures at distances of less than 100 metres, not a difficult distance to judge, mirage effects become less and less important here and wildlife becomes more recognisable, in fact, about one fifth of reported sightings occur at about 100 metres distance, or less. In denouncing some photographs as hoaxes, Mr. Binns' main argument is a lack of reference points and, as a result, many reputations are questioned; no doubt, most photographs are dubious but there are not many confessions about. As an example, he suggests that the 1972 'Flipper' photographs were an Academy hoax to life the monster's ailing reputation; there is absolutely no evidence to suggest a hoax, Mr. Binns is floundering on this episode and has slapped on the 'hoax' label for the sake of the rest of the book. Also, when he says that Laclan Stuart's photograph was of rocks, he totally fails to remark on or even mention the the head and neck, also witnessed; which could not be explained by rocks. Ronald Binns is also unconvincing in his disposal of sonar 'sightings', in fact, Roland says, he rather moves onto 'non-sonar' sightings, asking, why are not the creatures recorded by sonar more often. Also it would seem, his dismissal of Adrian Shine's results in February's New Scientist is unfair. The motivating question of the book is "Why is there so little evidence for so many hours of surveillance?" Roland Watson says that is a crucial question indeed; but he feels he has an answer, that is because it is indeed sometimes not there at all, because it is a tulpa. Roland's tulpa theory was reported in NIS55. I am grateful to Roland for this review of the book, and his comments. He finished by saying perhaps Ronald Binns is right, and we have grossly overestimated witnesses, "seeing is what you want to believe". He feels that the book will unconvert believers, but that he still has an open mind until such time that he actually sees something himself.

I do not agree with Roland that the book could 'unconvert believers'. What does cause concern, is that if Mr. Binns' book is read in isolation by someone who is new to the Loch Ness mystery; it is possible that the reaction could be: " so that is all there is to it!" and another recruit to the investigation could be lost. As far as we are concerned I feel that most of us have read all the available books, and done whatever research within our capabilities, after that we either accept the evidence or we do not. The evidence, while there in quantity, is not good enough to date, if it were there would be many fewer questions left unanswered. But I presume that many of you have your own 'piece of evidence', as I have. For me the most important evidence so far is the film taken by Tim Dinsdale in 1960, and the evaluation of it carried out by JARIC in 1966. Now Ron Binns, it seems, claims that Tim was suffering from nervous exhaustion when he mistakenly filmed a reddish-brown motor boat. Now in my opinion this does not matter, what does matter is the resulting exposed film, and the film taken later the same day as a 14 foot loch boat covered approximately the same course as that taken by the creature. This was to prove invaluable, as comparison, when JARIC examined the films in 1966. JARIC, the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (UK), is formed by personnel from the armed services, and as a professional group specialize in photographic interpretation. As such they have vast experience and know what they are about. They examined the original 16mm film, no copies were made, all examination being done by optical enlargement thus obviating losses by photographic processes. The majority of the examination and mensuration was made at x20 enlargement. They report in detail such items as focal length of the camera used, frames per second, and then the siting of the camera, this was 300 feet above the loch. This being determined from the Ordnance Survey map of the area, Tim knowing his position on the road when he took the film. JARIC first examined the frames containing known objects, these being the 14 foot boat, which had been timed as travelling at 7 mph, and a vehicle which passed through frame as the film was being taken. They calculated the boat's speed as 6.5 mph, agreeing well with Tim's assessment, and the length as 13.3 feet, proving that their scaling was sensibly correct. The vehicle on the far shore had a calculated length of 14 feet and a speed of 39 mph. This agrees reasonably well with the assumption that the vehicle is possibly a family saloon or small truck, and the speed seems reasonable for the road at that time. They then moved onto the 'object'. In the report they give their calculations, and reasons for them. They give the 'object' a speed of 10 mph, which is the sensibly LOWEST speed from the observations. The 'object' image was measured on a number of frames, what they had to measure was a solid, black, approximately triangular shape, with no impression of perspective. The base of this triangle is 5.5 feet. The height of the 'object' was more difficult to arrive at, but after giving the reasons they calculate the height above waterline as 3 feet. The interpretation was a more difficult problem, they first considered whether it may be a surface vessel of any kind. The 'object' appears to submerge, but it can be readily argued that under certain conditions of light, reflectivity and aspect of angle etc., objects may not be visible on the photography. However, the boat was filmed on the same morning and the light conditions were probably reasonably similar. When travelling parallel to the shore the boat is discernible as a boat shape and can be measured whereas with the 'object' there is no visible sign at all, other than the wake. They go on in this vein, but the conclusion was that the 'object' was therefore not a surface vessel. For various reasons they rule out a submarine, which leaves the conclusion that the 'object' filmed by Tim Dinsdale is probably an animate object'. Moving on from that conclusion, using measurements already obtained they give a cross section of the 'body' of 6 feet by 5 feet. Now this leaves us with the unbiased independent opinion of a professional organisation, that Tim's film is of probably an animate object, with a cross section through its middle of 6 feet by 5 feet. JARIC

also re-examined the film in 1980. The same organisation, different personnel. They could not fault the work done in 1966, reaching the same conclusions. The film has also been examined by the Jet Propulsion Laboratories of Pasadena. Their findings follow closely those of JARIC. Going even further by computer enhancement, and finding what could possibly be a small second hump close behind the first. With evaluations such as this, from bodies like JARIC and JPL, I feel that Ronald Binns has gone out on a limb to claim that his is the correct solution. I am also sure that a similar case could be made against many of his findings. And it just takes one, to leave the subject open, and Ronald's case in ruins.

The other book is, *Monsters: A Guide to Information on Unaccounted-for Creatures. Including Bigfoot, Many Water Monsters, and Other Irregular Animals.* It is by George M. Eberhart, and published by Garland Publishing Inc., 136 Madison Ave, New York. "Monsters" are defined by the author as living animals uncaught and uncatalogued by scientists. Bigfoot and the creature that inhabits Loch Ness are two prime examples. This is a most comprehensive bibliography on the subject. Twenty chapters, each prefaced by a brief description of the creature concerned, give 4450 references in all. Ranging from books and magazine articles, down to single letters published in newspapers. The chapter on Freshwater Monsters deals, not only, with Loch Ness, but also other locations world wide, giving 743 references. A specialized book such as this would be more suitable for public libraries and academic institutions, rather than the casual reader. But it would be a very valuable aid to anyone doing research work etc.

### Strange Story

Colin Mather came across the following strange account in 'Hampton on Pike Fishing', W&R Chambers Ltd., and sent it in. From the section on Lloyd's Scandinavian Adventures, it goes. "Fishing one day in a large lake in Fryksdale in Wermeland, when they had proceeded a considerable distance from the shore, the fisherman suddenly pulled the boat right round, and in evident alarm commenced rowing with all his might towards the shore. One of the party asked the man what he meant by his strange conduct. The Sjo-Troll, or Water Sprite, is here again, replied he, at the same time pointing with his finger far out to seaward. Everyone in the boat then saw in the distance something greatly resembling the horns of an elk, or a reindeer, progressing rapidly on the surface of the water. Row towards it exclaimed Lekander; The deuce take me if I don't give the Sjo-Troll a shot; I am not afraid of it. It was with some difficulty, however, that Modin (the fisherman) could be prevailed upon once more to alter the course of the boat, and to make for the apparition. When they neared the object sufficiently, Lekander, who was standing gun in hand in the bow of the boat, fired, fortunately with deadly effect. On taking possession of the prize they found it to be a huge pike, to whose back the skeleton of an eagle was attached. The fish, or rather the bones of the bird, had been seen by numbers for several years together, and universally went under the above designation of Sjo-Troll. The flesh of the eagle had rotted away and the skeleton, completely overgrown with algae, from a distance resembled a small bush."

Strange goings on, which I suppose one could pick holes in. But I do not think Ronald Binns used it as one of his explanations.

### Sighting

I do not have full details but two young women and a young man reported seeing a large back breaking the surface. They had been south for the weekend and were returning to Inverness along Loch Ness side. I think the date was Monday 20th June 1983, I do not have the time of day. They were about two miles past Drumnadrochit, when the young man, Mr. J. Nairn, remarked on the dark shape he thought he had seen through gaps in the Loch side trees. When they reached a position that had a clear view of the Loch he stopped the car and they watched in astonishment as a huge shape showed itself on the surface. It was some 200 yards from the shore and undulating slowly along leaving a wash behind it. Avril Deacon, of Dingwall, reported that the water was dead calm and they saw the shape surface and then begin to move forward. She estimated that at one time the back was four feet out of the water, it went under for a short time before surfacing

again. It was black in colour and seemed to be covered in small bumps. The portion which came out of the water was about 20 feet long, but Avril said they could plainly see there was much more underwater, and thought the overall length could have been as much as 45 feet. It left a marked wash, which spread out in waves on either side. Caron McNicol, the other young woman in the car, said she had never seen anything like it before. She also said **that** she was not sure of the existence of Nessie before, but she was now sure of there being animals in the Loch. They watched it for some ten minutes before it disappeared under the water. I have sent people involved sighting report forms, as yet these have not been returned.

#### NIS at the Lochside

Doug Macfarlane writes to let us know of his trips to the Loch. He has recently changed his job, and is now working from home rather than offshore, which means that he no longer has time off in fortnightly periods. But he has managed four visits to the Loch, with his family, already this year. The latest being the weekend of 11th and 12th June. He has renovated his caravan and now has a white Renault 30 VGG 222R as towcar. They travel around the Loch watching from various lay-bys. Look-out for them, they hope to get to the Loch at least one weekend a month, with perhaps a fortnight in late July.

Roger Acreman will be at the Loch from Saturday 16th July to Thursday 28th July. He will be accompanied by his brother Rob, as well as Jeffery Watson who was with Roger last year. They intend to travel north by train, using B.R. Intercity Savers, and hire a car at Inverness to get to Fort Augustus. Their watching strategy will be the same this year as last, the 'right angled' view over the loch. Roger and Bob watching from the pier end, at the canal, Jeff way off to the left on Battery Rock. Both positions giving a good view of the loch but from different angles, that could prove important in the event of a sighting and photographs being taken. Their equipment will also be the same as last year, Pentaxes, motor drives, 500mm lens and a 70-150mm zoom. They intend to concentrate on early watches, Roger being a firm believer that the time from 5 am to 11 am will yield the best results. If the conditions are right an evening watch will be mounted, 6 pm to 9.30 pm. He also hopes to carry out a series of tests to evaluate the distance and size of the object he filmed last year.

Roland Watson, in his letter already covered, also gave me the dates of his intended trip to the Loch. He hopes to be there from July 20th to 31st, but he says he will be the tall guy riding a red racer bike, wearing a blue kagool.

Lionel Leslie hopes to spend some time at the Loch in August, he will be staying at Strone. Lionel is one of the old hands at Loch Ness, being one of the early LNI members, doing much valuable work.

I and the family will be at the Loch for the first two weeks in August. This is a week later than usual, but we hope to be in the usual place, the old pier at Abriachan. Watch out for a cream coloured Bedford Dormobile, registration number CXG 583K, NIS symbol on the sides.

Joe Zarzynski, Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation, has sent word that the planned ISC expedition to Loch Morar has been postponed for one year. They will be testing their equipment in Lake Champlain this year, preparing for Loch Morar in 1984. He also sent sad news of the death of a NIS member. Mayor Erastus Corning 2nd, died in May 1983, he had been a member since 1976. While I did not know him personally, I had a note or two from him concerning the Loch, and always noticed his name when sending Nessletters out. He had been Mayor of Albany, the capital of New York state for 41 consecutive years.

That is about all for now, just one talking point. James Baldwin wonders if in a future Nessletter there could be some discussion about the Rhine's photographs. He has heard contradictory reports about their interpretation, though he has never heard their authenticity questioned. He is convinced that, with the more important accompanying sonartraces, they are a principle piece of evidence. He asks "do any members think otherwise and why?" Please let me have your views on this, or any other item for that matter, your news is always needed. Are there any questions you would like asking in future Nessletters? My address is still R.R. Hepple, Huntshildford, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 1RQ. The telephone number had changed, it is now Weardale 537359. Subscriptions remain the same U.K. £2.50, North America \$9.00.

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