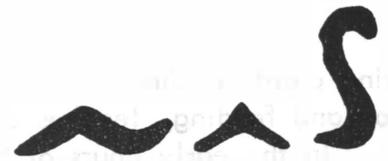


NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

Telephone: Weardale 357359



HUNTSHIELDFORD
St. Johns Chapel,
Bishop Auckland,
Co. Durham,
DL13 1RQ

Nessletter No. 60
October 1983

Sightings

On August 6th 1983, while taking a trip on the morning sailing of Scott II, James Newton reported seeing something strange off Tor Point. 12 year old James from Calne in Wiltshire, on holiday at his grandmother's near Beaulieu, apparently was the only passenger on board to see anything. I sent a Sighting Report form which he kindly filled in and returned. He saw a long neck and two humps and estimated it was a quarter of a mile away, he did not give details of its position in relation to his own. It was in view for one and a half minutes, he did not see it surface but saw it submerge, but did not say in what manner. He thought it was about four metres long, but did not detect any colour or texture, or movement. He reported that the weather conditions were good and the loch surface was calm. I would make one point about that, I was at the pier at Abriachan that morning until 10.05, and according to my log-book the visibility was good, but with a fresh south east wind the surface was made up of waves about a foot high. Perhaps our judgement of the conditions differs. An interesting report but one that seems to be rather lacking some details.

I have also had a Sighting Report form and a letter from Mrs. Jean Skeldon. She has lived overlooking the loch at Dores for two years. NIS55 carried the leech theories of her husband, Jim. They had been on a trip with their son and daughter-in-law, and were returning home, travelling north on the A82 towards Inverness. At about 6.30 p.m. on 24th August 1983, they reached the Abriachan road and were looking over the loch towards their house and watching a large trawler as it drew level with Tor Point. Moments later Jean was still watching the water but not really giving Nessie a thought, when she saw two 'piles of asphalt' in the water close inshore on the A82 side. It took several seconds for it to dawn on her that it is not possible to have 'piles of asphalt' in Loch Ness. She then asked the others if they had seen anything in the water, her daughter-in-law was not too sure but thought that she had seen a wash, or disturbance, no one else had. Her son wanted to stop the car, but there was too much traffic and nowhere to stop safely; so they continued on their way. On the following Saturday they went to the Glen Urquhart Games, as they travelled the same road she scanned every inch of the water, but could not see anything to account for what she saw. She has been in trouble with the family for not shouting 'stop' or letting them go back to look, but as she points out the A82 is a very busy road and potentially dangerous. Now back to what she glimpsed, two black humps, one estimated at 7 to 8 feet long and some 2 feet out of the water, the second about half that. They appeared to be rough and knobbly, which gave the appearance of asphalt, the weather was cloudy but the surface was calm. Jim added a postscript to Jean's letter. While reading a book on British Wildlife he came across the Horse Leech, while it is not interested in horses, it can prove fatal to fish, frogs, and snails. It has a flat tail with suckers which it uses to hold on to its victims, while it feeds on them with its mouth. It is only one inch long while at rest, but when moving it can be six inches long. They have a habit of packing food in pouches inside their bodies when they feed, and may not need to feed again for a month. Jim says could he dare to suggest that that may be one of the reasons Nessie is rarely seen. The body is segmented and like a slug when contracted is covered in knobbly lumps, just as Jean describes them. That is the point in the whole episode that most excited him. As already said, Jim has a theory about Nessie

being giant leeches. Size is a problem, and one question I do not know Jim's answer to, is food and feeding, leeches are parasites needing a host as large or larger than themselves.

In the early hours of Saturday morning, 16th July 1983, members of the Inverness Fire Brigade arrived at Dores. They had been called out to extinguish grass and driftwood burning on the beach. As they deployed their equipment some of them noticed a large black object sitting on the flat calm surface in the distance, but dismissed it as a boat. However, as they worked they caught further glimpses of it through the smokey dawn light. The object had travelled closer, disappeared and emerged again. When the blaze was controlled and put out, their attention was once more turned to the loch, and there it was again, large and black and not far off shore. Then it sank without trace. They were unsure what it was they had seen, some thought a boat, but could not explain where it went; others suggested it was the 'nodding-ducks' wave experiment, but they are no longer moored in the loch. Others inevitably thought it must have been Nessie, but no one wanted to commit themselves. An inconclusive little story, but it has an interesting aspect for me. In the early days of the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau, they tried experiments with a searchlight in Urquhart Bay, without real success, but in later years I have heard, from different sources, that the beasts are supposed to be attracted by firelight, perhaps it is the flickering effect of the flames that is the cause. Although I do not know of anyone who is able to prove the theory, it is food for thought.

Doc Shiels

I have an interesting letter from Tony concerning his 1983 Irish trip. They arrived back in late September after an amazingly successful "Monstermind 1983", from the Irish point of view. They managed to invoke and photograph no less than four beasties. Very briefly, the first two appeared as dark humps in the waters of Lough Inagh and Maumeen Lough, Connemara! classic monster country. Then, a few days later, they were on Achill Island, County Mayo, and saw a long grey hump backed creature in Keel Lough. There were four witnesses, and he photographed that, too, before it sank. He simply could not believe his good fortune. Later, in County Clare, they saw the head and neck of a marine monster in Liscannor Bay, near Lehinch; and got another picture! This is quite incredible, very exciting, Doc reckons they have broken all monster-raising records. He goes on to say he does not suppose the monster hunting 'establishment' will accept his photographs as authentic, because the Shiels tribe and their methods are not regarded as scientifically 'respectable'; but the negatives will be available for examination, and all the pictures contain plenty of background detail to establish the locale etc. A full report of their Irish activities will appear in the Fortean Times. He also said that I may be interested in the fact that, as part of Monstermind 83, he invoked Nessie for the video camera of Erik Beckjord early in August. Monstermind 83 will continue until October 31st, Halloween, and they hope to raise and film Morgawr and some other creatures during the last few weeks. He has been attempting to raise and photograph Irish lake monsters for a good many years now, with little success, but he is delighted with the 1983 results. Next year he will be establishing himself near Loughs Conn and Cullin, County Mayo. They heard stories concerning these two loughs, in Foxford, this summer. In a P.S. Doc said I should make it clear that he is not involved in Eric Beckjord's projects, although Eric has been in contact with him trying to get him involved. Doc is interested in Erik's work but that is as far as it goes. A few days later I received another letter with more details of the photographs. Unfortunately once again they leave a great deal to be desired. Doc says the main reason being the fact that he did not have a telephoto lens. Perhaps we should wonder why! After all Doc was undertaking Monstermind 83, and was hopeful of results; shouldn't he have been equipped for it? Anyway, he was not, and the pictures were taken with a standard 50mm lens. Resulting in the two Connemara shots showing the humps as very small specks in the middle of rather large areas of water. The Achill Island and Liscannor Bay pictures are rather better. The Keel Lough creature appeared as a pale grey, glossy, elongated hump, very similar to an illustration in Tim Dinsdale's Loch Ness Monster (4th ed, p17, 4th sketch down). The Liscannor Bay monster was very similar in its actions and size, to the Nessie he saw and photographed in 1977. He feels if he had had a good telephoto lens the Liscannor pictures would have been as good, or better, than his 1977 Ness results. He also has further thoughts on Erik Beckjord's work. Doc says he has to

admit that Erik seems to have obtained some interesting results on Video. He has seen stills taken from the tape obtained on August 6th. He was very impressed, and in his opinion the wake/splash pattern is certainly not ducks, and is similar to parts of Tim Dinsdale's film. From the evidence of the stills, and his own quite extensive experience in these matters, he thinks Erik may have captured the real thing on video.

Loch Ness Project

Late in October I had a telephone call from Adrian Shine, with an update on their season's work. He was in the process of closing down the site, and tidying up, before returning south to begin assessment of the results. One item in NIS59 he wanted to correct, they have not changed their name, it is still the Loch Ness and Morar Project. The use of the prefix 'British' in a handout from the Loch Ness Centre was just as an adjective, and not an indication they claim to be 'The British Expedition'.

They have had a very good season of general scientific work. The sonar equipped cruiser, The New Atlantis, was not as freely available this year; although they were able to use it for a short time early in the season. This enabled them to duplicate the sonar contacts achieved during 1982. Adrian pointed out that was not the object of this seasons work, they have shown that unusual, strong, sonar contacts can be made in Loch Ness. The next step forward must be to discover to what use the contacts may be put. Can they be tracked for longer periods? Is there a pattern? These questions, along with many others, need to be answered. Adrian said he was a little disappointed with the progress made in that direction this season. As I reported in NIS 59, the Project worked from a base camp overlooking Strone, and an outstation on the shore a little south of Achnahannet. I expressed doubts about that arrangement working well, but it did. It enabled the Project's 18 foot catamaran, which has been fitted with a cabin, to work in the deep water of the northern basin in the most efficient manner. Cutting out the long cruise from Urquhart Bay, or the even longer one from Dores. They were able to do a great deal of work on the loch bottom profile, using echo sounders. They also did some comparison work on the effect the temperature layers in the loch have on sonar signals. They are building a fund of very useful experience in the use, and interpretation, of sonar in the loch; this is added to season by season. It had been hoped that the echo sounders may have produced something interesting in the 'large animal' field. There were some signs, but on the whole a little disappointing. The outstation was manned for most of the time, and when there was no one on the shore it was within sight of the 'cat' on the loch. It also helped the shift system to work properly, personnel not being 'on watch' were replaced, and returned to Strone. Where they were able to relax and get away from the temptation to overwork, which can lead to accidents and inefficiency. The usual fauna of the loch is being studied, as well as water condition, temperature layers, and so forth. Adrian would have liked to employ some passive sonar, but siting transducers on the steep underwater sides of the loch proved very difficult. The last volunteers departed in early October, the site being shut up at the end of October. No doubt they will return next season, and once again I will point out to members that if you are able to join them, I am certain it would be a worthwhile experience. The address for the Project is, The Loch Ness Centre, Drumnadrochit, Inverness, Inverness-shire.

Help Requested

Some while ago I received a copy of a letter he has sent to several newspapers in England, from Henry Bauer, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061, U.S.A. Henry, who is a long standing NIS member asked me to publish it as he hopes other members may be of assistance.

"I am writing a book about the controversy surrounding the Loch Ness 'monster'. Partly in connection with that, I am compiling a bibliography of writings about the matter, including items in newspapers. The latter in particular are very difficult to locate - very few newspapers are indexed. If you would be so kind as to publish this letter, I should like to invite the help of any of your readers who have collected material on the subject. I am happy to offer in exchange for material that I do not yet have, copies of my bibliography which is revised periodically and currently runs to 80 pages; and to reimburse for the costs of making copies of

material sent to me." I have seen one of Henry's bibliographies, he seems to have most of it. However I know some of our members do have impressive collections of their own, perhaps they would like to help.

Magazines and Books

To hand is the latest issue of the Shaman (incorporating Ancient Skills and Wisdom Review), this quarterly publication reviews books and magazines dealing with all types of strange and unusual happenings. As a main item this issue has Doc Shiels' Irish adventures, with an introduction to Doc and his history by Paul Screeton. Single copies are 50p, a four issue subscription is £2.00 from Paul Screeton, 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS25 2AT.

Issue number 40 of the Fortean Times has arrived, this fine magazine has been reporting strange phenomena for 10 years. It covers the whole range of Fortean interest. It is intended to change the format from the next issue, to try to increase circulation, possibly by filling the gap left when The Unexplained comes to the end of its run.

'Searching for Hidden Animals' by Roy Mackal has now been published in the U.K. by Cadogan Books at £8.95. I have not seen a copy, but I have seen the Sunday Times review of it. In the book's 294 pages Roy discusses and investigates strange and mysterious animals worldwide, supporting some and dismissing others as myth. If Roy's Loch Ness book is anything to judge by the new should be interesting.

Jon Erik Beckjord

I have left Erik to last, because since NIS 59 I have corresponded with him and he has sent me details of his 1983 work, which will take more space than I have available this time. They videotaped water movements and something making several wakes that appeared and disappeared on top of the water, while the wakes continued all the time. The object went about 100 yards in flat calm water in Urquhart Bay, out past a 42 foot long converted lifeboat. That gave some scale. Then, they, what seems like two objects, dived in different directions, causing two large splashes of water, which showed up as a Vee shape, or forked splash. One leg of this splash was 70 feet long, as measured by a 14 foot boat which they sent out from Temple Pier later on for comparison. Once the splash subsided, they could see on the videotape, via the screen, what appeared to be three dark and wide objects swimming off at an angle to the splash, in the direction of Castle Urquhart. The wakes were going at 0 degrees away from them, and against what slight wind there was. The splashes were at 90 degrees and 45 degrees from that line of travel and the underwater swimming objects were then seen swimming away from the line of initial travel at an angle of about 60 degrees away to the left from the line of travel at the start. The splashes were to the right. Erik speculates that there were three large swimming underwater creatures, only two of which at first made any surfacing so as to make wakes, with the third staying underwater, but with the others. After the dive, all three swam away together, just a foot under the surface, for if they had been much deeper, they would not have been visible due to the peaty water. By using Polarized filters and a darkening lens filter, they were able to see some way beneath the surface. The dark reflection (not a shadow) of the green hillside of the Strone area helped them in getting this underwater shot, shallow as it was. There follows a page of explanation as to why the wake etc. was not caused by water birds, more next time. Erik was also kind enough to send two stills taken from the videotape. Unlike Doc Shiels I am not very impressed, and unless something amazing could be done with enlargement I cannot see them being acceptable evidence of any value.

Well that must be the finish of another Nessletter, please remember your news and views are always needed and very welcome, my address is:- R.R. Hepple, Huntshieldford, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 1RA. Telephone Weardale 537359. Subscriptions U.K. £2.50, U.S.A. \$9.00