

# NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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## Editors Piece

Here we are at the beginning of the tenth year for the Nessletters and Ness Information Service. The first Nessletter was sent to members early in 1974, after much thought and heart-searching. I felt there was a need for a newsletter, and I was in a position to produce one. But I was anxious that I should give value for money, and prospective members should find the service worthwhile. In the early days I was given a tremendous amount of help and encouragement by a number of people, mainly Tim Dinsdale and Nick Witchell. As a result NIS, after a shaky start, grew slowly at a rate I was able to handle. Over the years although many people have dropped their membership, to be replaced by others, the general feedback I get is that members are pleased with the Nessletters, and I receive numerous thank you notes. In July 1973, while discussing the need for a newsletter and the possibility of publishing one, with some of the independent watchers at the loch, a number of ideas and opinions were expressed. One of these was, that there was no real need for a newsletter, because a more scientific approach was being made to the research and an answer to the mystery would be found fairly quickly. I thought so myself, but felt that even so, there would still be the ordinary independent watchers, who are only able to spend a limited time at the loch. These people would continue to need news of the loch and research there. Here we are ten years later and we are no nearer to having the complete answer to the mystery, very disappointing. The work has gone on at the loch season by season. Bob Rines and the Academy of Applied Science after their success with the 'flipper' photographs of 1972, have worked away steadily without the rewards they so richly deserve. They came very close in 1975 with a series of photographs taken in June. One of these shows what could be the fore end of the body with two appendages, along with a neck and head, all rather fuzzy with the peat diffused light from the strobe. Another shows what could be the close up of a head, once again indistinct, but it does seem to show some bilateral symmetry. Neither of these shots are as good as the 'flipper' pictures and they are both open to different interpretations. On 21st May 1977 Tony (Doc) Shiels was looking round the remains of Castle Urquhart, on the shore of Loch Ness. His attention was attracted to something sticking out of the water below the tower, about four feet tall in appeared to be the head and neck of a large animal. Tony was able to expose two slides before the neck submerged, it was only in his view for about 10 seconds. These photographs were published in the newspapers, and were quite startling. However they had the drawback of being only still photographs. Naturally there were those who cast doubts on them. Tony swore out an affidavit. This leaves us with three alternatives, is Tony a liar and the shots fakes; did he, and the camera, see something ordinary and interpret it erroneously; or has he obtained good still photographs of one of the animals. Unfortunately they did not take us any nearer to identifying the animals. On Monday 22nd August 1977 Mr. & Mrs. Smith were on the shore of Loch Ness, on the opposite shore and to their left was Castle Urquhart. Mrs. Smith saw a periscope-like object rise up from the surface of the choppy water, she drew it to the attention of Mr. Smith, and examined it through binoculars. It seemed to be a thick rectangular head, with no visible features, on a long powerful neck. As it started to sink she began to film it with a super 8 cine camera fitted with a zoom lens. It surfaced four times in all, the Smiths filming three of them before running short of film. The sighting lasted about ten minutes, and was witnessed by two other people. One of whom was on the loch in a small rowing boat, which he

hurriedly rowed to the shore. The film received a good airing on television, giving many people a chance to see it. Unfortunately the quality of the image was very poor and jumpy, for various reasons. Although it was examined by JARIC, they could not define what had been filmed, and once more we were left no nearer an answer. There have been some other photographs over the ten years, but they have been even more inconclusive. Apart from the continuing work by the Academy of Applied Science, there have been one or two so called scientific expeditions to the loch over the seasons. I say, so called, because they seemed to be mounted more for the publicity than scientific effort. The Japanese effort was perhaps the most notable from this point of view. Then after getting all they can out of the media, they go away announcing they have found no evidence, and the general opinion that Nessie is just a tourist attraction, is strengthened. The Iscan Project, which operated at the loch for four months last year, thankfully did not fall into that category. Unfortunately despite all the time, expense and effort, they put in; they did not obtain any positive results. Although as I pointed out in NIS 59 they were monitoring a miniscule portion of the loch, for a comparatively short time. So we should not be too surprised but it was a shame that Rikki and Alan should tell the media that in their opinion there was no evidence to support the theory that there are large unidentified animals in Loch Ness. Myself, I think the most heartening advance over the past few years has been the re-emergence of a large, volunteer manned, investigating group, in the form of the Loch Ness & Morar Project. Under the on-site guidance of Adrian Shine, they have undertaken a programme of sonar research and surveillance at the loch. They are using sonar in an attempt to take the hunt to the animals, as long range photography, as used by the Loch Ness Investigation, proved to be unproductive. One of the problems I feel, is that sonar is a very imprecise tool, even the present up to date equipment. Last year saw evidence of that when the navies of Norway and Sweden, on different occasions, tried to catch unidentified submarines in their territorial waters. We can safely presume that, small as they are, these navies will be equipped with very good sonar. Yet the Norwegians could not pin down a submarine they had bottled up in a fiord. It had been contacted and the narrow mouth of the fiord blocked and guarded, while other craft searched the area for it. They had fleeting contacts with it, it was there, it was not there, but after a few days it was certain that it had managed to slip away. The Swedes had a similar experience with an unauthorised submarine nosing around one of their secret naval installations. The fiord would have been very similar to Loch Ness, narrow and steep-sided. This highlights the problems faced by the Project in their work. One other problem that arose for the Project last season was hostility, in the form of a fire bomb thrown at their boat one night. Luckily there was no damage, or injury. When I asked Adrian about it, he told me that if the Scottish Courts had the same ruling as the English Courts, concerning eye witness evidence, a prosecution would have been possible. As it was the incident was reported to the authorities, and nothing more done. It does seem to have been a 'one off' affair, and there should be no chance of a repetition this year. So here we are thinking ahead to another season, the Academy of Applied Science will be back to carry on with their underwater work, the Project will be around watching underwater events with their sonar, and NIS members and other independent hunters will be around from time to time watching the surface, clutching cameras. All of us hoping that this season will bring something more positive than has been obtained in the past years. May I take this opportunity to thank you all for being members, and some of you for your letters and news, if you have not written yet please do, news and views are always needed. I try to answer individual queries promptly, if you have written with a question and have not received a reply, I am sorry, please try again. Also we could do with more members, if you think the NIS gives a satisfactory service perhaps you could pass the word on to anyone you think may be interested.

#### NIS at the Lochside

I have had letters from a number of members concerning their trips to Loch Ness during 1983. Doug Macfarlane, his wife Margaret, and son Alan, who live in Largs, Ayrshire, visited Ness on six occasions. In March, April, and May they visited for short stays of three to five days duration. In July they towed a caravan north in splendid weather, spending four at Loch

Ness, then going to Loch Morar for two days, followed by a round trip of the Isle of Skye, to let the family see the west coast. They then went back to Loch Ness, like going home said Doug, as they drove down the side of the River Moriston and saw the loch before them. They had another ten day trip to the loch in September, staying at Dochgarroch with the caravan and watching the loch from various places on the north shore from Lochend to Fort Augustus, and from the lay-bys on the south shore along to below Whitefield. They had two more short trips in October and November, their latest at the loch. They tried for a trip in the New Atlantis, but it was being used by Aidrian so they could undertake no sonar work this year. Despite watching a number of lochs with a monster history, they drew another blank last year. Doug has obtained a 10 foot glassfibre dinghy, which he is putting the finishing touches to, and he hopes to use it as a mobile photographic platform. An old friend of Dougs used to work for a large Glasgow firm, his works manager was a keen angler and had a cruiser on Loch Lomond. He once told Doug's friend that there was something in Loch Lomond that just should not be there, that he had seen something very unusual on three different occasions, but he would not comment further as to description when pressed. Doug lives about an hours drive from Loch Lomond, and hopes to test his dinghy there, if he can find out where the works manager moored his boat. It will be a starting point for some further investigation.

Roger Acraman, from Ruislip, and his brother Rob, visited the loch in mid-September for twelve days (as reported in NIS 58). They did travel north by train hiring a car at Glasgow, a Vauxhall Nova which gave 55mpg. They watched dawn till dusk, with afternoons spent travelling, swimming, or more often, with Rob doing PR work while Roger watched and read. He was reading the Ron Binns book, which he found well written and he feels it brings out some points that needed bringing out, although he does not share his conclusions. They had one interesting moment while watching, although it did turn out to be a peculiar wave pattern, which photographs later confirmed. They interviewed one of the local ladies who had a sighting some years ago. In all they covered some 1800 miles by car, despite their resolution to economise, but they had watched from many places round the loch, from Lochend, to Foyers and Fort Augustus (their base), and on to Inchnacardoch, and Strone. At a place known as the 'wall' on the south shore, they ran into biting flies, not midges, but big fat hairy flies. In previous years I have encountered these at Abriachan from time to time, they are nasty. They met Doug Macfarlane in Fort Augustus on his last day, they feel it is always good to meet other members at the loch, as it helps to inspire comradship.

Ian Whitlock writes to tell of his trip to the loch last season. They arrived at the Althsaigh youth hostel on Saturday 16th July. They set about finding places to watch from, and succeeded in finding two nice secluded spots. They spent many hours watching for mysterious wakes, humps, necks etc. alas to no avail. They also hired a boat from the Inchnacardoch Hotel to get on to water to try for a sighting, but all Ian succeeded in getting was blisters. They did hear an interesting story from the assistant warden at the Youth Hostel. He told them that a few days before he had been canoeing on the loch not far from the hostel when a huge bubble burst next to the canoe. He estimated that the bubble was some two and a half feet in diameter, and about three feet high before it burst. He was considerably shaken and frankly stated that he had been on the loch many many times, and had never seen anything like it before, and could offer no kind of explanation for it. Ian also met up with another NIS member, Roland Watson, they have corresponded since they first met in 1982. Roland Watson also wrote to tell us of his trip to the loch. He mentioned his meeting with Ian, and said that unfortunately neither of them had anything to report. Roland did see the 'New Atlantis' behaving in a strange manner, circling round and round and cutting its engines. He wondered if perhaps it was in the act of contacting a sonar target. He visited Frank Searle to hear his side of the Loch Ness saga. Roland says that he considers at least one of Frank's photographs a fake, but goes on to say that surely Frank must have seen something, and possibly photographed it, in a decade of watching. Frank Searle has

photos of Nessie, but which ones? Roland was also one of those who visited Loch Morar, although he was only there for three days. The only monsters he encountered were horse-flies, or 'clegs' as they are known. I asked for members thoughts on the 1975 Academy photographs, in an earlier Nessletter. Roland says he thinks the 'head' photograph is totally uncharacteristic of the accepted conception of the head, small and blunted, and would not be surprised if it turned out to be the sunken model. On the other hand the 'body' photo is too coincidental to be anything other than one of the animals, although he cannot decide whether it shows the underside of Nessie or the thorax, neck and two front appendages only. He made one further point on his Tulpa hypothesis, some members seem to think that the final thought form was intangible. It is not, being as solid as our so-called reality, and so exhibits all properties of such matter in a liquid environment, wakes, etc.

John Essex, of Redditch, visited the loch for a week early in September. He did not give details of where he was based, but did mention Dores and that he had visited Mr. & Mrs. Skeldon, who live there. He thinks Jim's theory that Nessie is a leech, could be very probable. While there he did not see anything of importance himself, but talked to two local people who had sightings, one in Urquhart Bay in 1981, the other close to Dores, in 1982. Both saw large backs, which sank after a very short time.

Now on to the coming season, I have a request from Miles Cato, who is looking for someone to join forces with on a trip to Loch Ness. He gives no specific dates, just sometime between July and September for a couple of weeks. He is keen to visit the loch, but does not really want to go alone. He is twenty and would be pleased to hear from anyone, male or female, of roughly his age. He can be contacted c/o Magdalene College, Cambridge, CB3 0AG.

#### Robert Dorion

I have a letter from Robert voicing various thoughts. In early June 1983 he attended the first meeting of the Cryptozoological Society in New York City, Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans was the president, Drs Wood, Gemaio, Roy Mackal, etc, were all there. Robert lives in Guatemala which may not seem to be the ideal place for lake phenomena, apart from the lively socio-political activities. However he did act as host to Heuvelmans in Guatemala in 1969/70, they were looking for the 'Sissimite', the local version of the 'Yeti'. In 1950 Robert had to give up professional shark fishing, due to a BIG shark giving him a broken spinal disc. He thought he would never see his sharks again, but in less than two years he was catching sharks again. They were for the Smithsonian, the University of California, the University of Nebraska, and others. These were fresh water sharks, they are Bull sharks and they swim up the rivers. On the same shark theme, Robert found a tooth in inland Maya site material, it was from a 14 foot Great White! , 200 miles inland, during a quake. He says it makes one think about the 'Xoc or mythical (?) whale/fish of Mayan history, 'a mythological monster'. His interest in Loch Ness goes way back, he did visit the loch and the LNI around 1970, he met Sir Peter Scott in 1977, and discussed the Loch Ness mystery at length, in Antarctica. He makes two points, do not be surprised if key material comes from unsuspected areas, and the technology developed at Loch Ness will be very useful in other parts of the world.

Well that is all for now, the first Nessletter of another 10 years! Please remember your news and views are always needed:- R.R. Hepple, Huntshildford, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 1RQ subscriptions are U.K. £2.50, U.S.A. \$9.00.

One sad item just in, those few old LNI members among you may remember Albert, who used to work the petrol pumps at Menzies garage at Drum'. He died at home on 23rd February, 1984. One of the local characters who will be missed around the area.

Rip.