

## NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESS LETTER No. 63

APRIL 1984

'DOC' SHIELDS

Tony has recently sent me two very interesting letters, giving me his views and a theory. First he stresses that he no longer has any connection with Erik Beckjord.

Erik had access to some of his photographs for a short while, and that was all. Tony then goes on, "As far as my recent Irish pictures are concerned. . . yes, they turned out to be disappointing, and I'm making no claims for them. I had hoped to borrow a telephoto lens in Kerry, but the fitting turned out to be wrong. Bad advance planning and lack of funds again. The objects in them are not necessarily 'monsters'. they could be floating lumps of gas-filled turf, tree trunks, or even large fish. I don't really know what they are, but I was very excited when I snapped them. Since then I have viewed the pictures in a more sober light . . . in every sense of the phrase!" Tony then says that after studying the mass of eye-witness reports and other people's films and photographs, along with his own 1977 pictures, he has come up with a cautious or provisional identification of the animals. He points out that while in the company of David Clarke of "Cornish Life" magazine, he photographed Margawr in November, 1976 and he is convinced that the sea-serpent is closely related to lake monsters such as Nessie. The conclusion he has arrived at is that the creatures are most likely to be some kind of giant coleoid cephalopod.. a hump-backed beast with a long retractile proboscis. The humps are inflatable, a chain of gas-filled cartilaginous cavities which act as a buoyancy mechanism. This sort of thing is found in various cephalopods. The proboscis, usually misidentified as the animal's neck and head, is similar to an elephant's trunk in many ways. This flexible organ, with its 'toothed mouth' breaks down food with salivary enzymes. Many decapods do this, including the giant squid, *Architeuthis*, the larval form of which (once known as *Rhynoteuthis* and regarded as a separate species) has two two long tentacles joined together in the form of a trunk-like spout. Such an animal.. which Tony has tentatively named the elephant squid.. could easily appear Nessie-like and does not contradict any of the basic rules of cephalopod morphology. *Elephanteuthis* (!) would be able, with the aid of its jet propulsion funnel, or hyponome, to travel at fairly high speeds in any direction. The number of humps could be changed at will. The creature would be able to change colour, quite dramatically, with the aid of pigment cells known as chromatophores. It would even be able to come ashore for short periods, as octopuses are sometimes known to do (Frank Lane, in his fascinating book, "Kingdom of the Octopus", quotes several stories from zoologists and marine biologists about wandering terrestrial cephalopods). So you see, says Tony, he is attempting to describe an animal which fits in with a great deal of what used to seem like contradictory evidence, from Loch Ness and elsewhere. The main problem with his hypothesis is that no one has ever discovered a freshwater cephalopod (though, as well as coming ashore, some cephalopods live in brackish estuarine conditions).

Tony is assuming that the elephant-squid, like so many of its molluscan cousins, has adapted to the freshwater (the chloride cells of its gills may work as either salt secreting or salt absorbing organs, for example). . in fact, it is quite possible that the creature can move quite freely from salt to freshwater. It is not such a wild idea, and many other animals can do this (salmon and eels for instance, as part of the breeding process). Tony thinks that his photographs of Nessie show the semi-extended proboscis of the creature. The pale rounded object, which seems to be floating by the 'base' of this proboscis, may actually be part of the right eye of the animal, or a light-sensory palp, like an eye on a stalk. Similar to the rounded organs of Tullimonstrum, which Tony thinks may have been a mollusc rather than a worm. He also thinks that Dr. Richardson's ideas concerning the 'Tully' Monster' were closer to the truth than some of Ted Holiday's.

(Read "The Great Orm of Loch Ness" F.W.Holiday Rip). Richardson thought the so-called neck was in fact a toothed proboscis, that the rounded appendages were eyes, and that the creature's 'mouth' was situated in the 'chest' area. This implies a mollusc, and the leaf-shaped tail of the animal is very like the finned tail of a squid. In his opinion the 1975 pictures taken by Rines and Co said to show the 'long neck and front portion' of the Loch Ness Monster, actually shows the creature upside down, with its proboscis extended, the two so-called 'flippers' are the eyes or sensory palps. The Rines 'flipper pix' of 1972 may show one of the outer 'arms' (that is, the base of one of these arms) of his speculative cephalopod. He has seen cuttlefish with similar shaped outer 'arms', and the Rines pictures do not show the 'tip' of the 'flipper'. However, Tony is more inclined to think that the pictures are really some kind of fishy fin. Tony's speculative 'elephantsquid' would seem to cover most of the requirements for an all round ideal Loch Ness Monster, or sea-serpent which Tony feels is a close marine relative. Neither does it seem any more impossible, from a zoological point of view, than many of the other suggestions put forward. Its various components are to be seen in living molluscs, and as Tony points out you can add or subtract these components to suit your 'ideal' of a mollusc Nessie! Tony does not totally reject other candidates out of hand, but he does find objections to them, for example, the long necked pinniped theory. Pinnipeds come ashore very often, often in large groups for breeding, they also like to bask when they do, our water monsters obviously do not do either. Giant newts have been suggested as an answer, but they could not have originated in the sea, as Nessie must have done, because of the osmosis problem in amphibians. Tony says that Roy Mackal chooses to turn a blind eye to the Nessie/sea serpent relationship. The principal objection that Tony can see to his cephalopod is that none are known to live in fresh water, but many gastropods do, and he is allowing his monster some gastropod attributes. In any case, there is now reason why a cephalopod should not have adapted to fresh water. Tony also gave his views on recent happenings at the loch. He says, "There seems to be some kind of 'depression' connected with recent work at Loch Ness. A lot of investigators seem to have given up, lost their enthusiasm, or decided that it is all a load of nonsense after all. Much of the 'classic' evidence, such as the Gray, Wilson, Stuart and Macnab photographs, is no longer regarded as 'highly suspect'. . . though no solid reasons are given. Ronald Binns has tried to put a damper on the proceedings (he makes some valid points but goes way 'over the top' in order to promote his ideas and, it must be said, to sell his book). . . and his thinking smacks of sour grapes.

The same could be said, even, of Aidrian Shine who now appears to trust nobody's results but his own. This is a great pity and is likely to inhibit genuine investigative progress. ALL aspects of the beastie, no matter how bizarre and impossible-seeming, should be considered and investigated. There is, without doubt, something very strange in Loch Ness and sooner or later it will be identified. It could happen tomorrow or years from now, but it WILL happen and we must all maintain our interest in the subject, avoid too much of the nasty back-biting and 'monster politics' which has spoilt a lot of the recent investigations, and all try to co-operate with each other as much as humanly possible. . . otherwise, that important moment of genuine discovery will be unnecessarily delayed. I don't like preaching in this way; Rip, but there is so much depressing in-fighting in the monster-hunting game these days." He finishes by referring to NIS 60, in which a possible sighting by firemen attending a fire on 'Dores' beach was reported. Tony found this very interesting in connection with his 'elephant squid' theory, especially the point that the animal may have been attracted by the firelight. He says that cephalopods are known to use different forms of powerful biolumen essence. Lane suggests that the animals may use the lights to help them locate each other, they could be distress signals, or a source of sex attraction, or some other sort of communication. Possibly even more interesting are a couple of stories quoted in Lane's book, about octopuses, ashore, crawling towards and right through bonfires, as if immune to pain. Roy Campbell stated that he had known of cephalopods crawling through beach fires rather than round them! Extremely odd behaviour, but it could be significant, do the animals, at night, mistake the flickering flames for flashes of luminescence from one of their own kind? Tony wonders if there are any reports about Nessie emitting light?

## LIONEL LESLIE

Lionel who is 84 not out, as he puts it, was one of the early LNI members, has written with some random thoughts, perhaps triggered by the tenth year of NIS. He wrote, "It is now more than 60 years ago since I came across my first eye witness, so I have had more time than most men to think over the problems of lake monsters. I was trout fishing at the time on Lough Derg in the County of Donegal when the boatman told me how he had once seen what he called a Water Horse. The description, which I can still clearly remember, sounded like Nessie, only very much smaller. Another local resident spoke of having once seen what he described as the 'King of the Otters' swimming across the lake. So some forty years later, when I came to Loch Ness to join the first LNI expedition in 1962, I was interested to learn that the local name for Nessie in Gaelic also meant the Water Horse. Subsequently I spent a fortnight each summer with the expedition on Loch Ness until 1968. During that time I met more witnesses than I can remember, including a visitor from Canada who had lived near Lake Okanagan. In his own words he mentioned his experience; "at first I thought it was a log, but when I see a log stand up on end and wiggle itself - then I know that's no ordinary log!". "In 1963 I was standing at a camera site opposite Foyers, when I noticed a dark semi-oval shaped object moving slowly on the surface about 70 yards away, but by the time I had adjusted the camera, it had disappeared. Incidentally, two other members of the same expedition reported on other occasions of having seen the same phenomenon. Then in 1965, we received a report from the Inland Fisheries in Dublin, about a sighting in Lough Ree made by three Dublin priests on a fishing holiday, saying that they believed it to be genuine.

So later that year I went over to Dublin to interview them, and they gave me a most descriptive account, including a sketch one of them had pencilled at the time. It sounded very like Nessie, except in size for it was very much smaller. Then I went to the West in Connemara where more sightings of a similar nature had been reported. During the next three years I continued investigation there and was joined by three other members of LNI, notably the late Ted Holiday, Ivor Newby and Holly Arnold. Some of our findings were more than extraordinary, and included an account of how a carcass had once been found! When we asked what became of it we were told that it had simply 'melted away'. This sounds rather like an enactment of Einstein's famous equation in reverse - the converting of Mass into Energy!! A full description of our experiences can be found in "The Dragon and the Disc", by E.W. Holiday. I should also like to draw attention to a very interesting account contained in "The Search for Morag" by Elizabeth Montgomery Campbell, which describes the experiences of a British ship's Captain navigating the river Shannon in 1922. When passing through the City of Limerick he noticed crowds of people, the reason for their curiosity being the appearance of a long-necked monster, like Nessie. It turned round and headed back to the sea. This account by the late Captain Hugh Shaw is now in the archives of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Finally, in 1981 I got in touch with Dr. Bob Rines head of the American Academy of Applied Sciences in Boston, a non-profit making organisation, that had already achieved some remarkable results on Loch Ness. He studied the evidence and decided to organise an expedition to carry out a side-scan sonar survey on Lough Derg in 1982. This is not the same Lough Derg as I mentioned earlier, but a lake larger than Ness in the South of Ireland. The depth does not exceed 160 feet and the water is comparatively clear. I went ahead to make local arrangements and in October the survey began. A 'target' not less than 5 feet in width from top to bottom was recorded on the screen of the sonar equipment. that was all, but there is still a wide field open for further investigation in these waters. The Loch Ness Monster is not an isolated creature of its kind as phenomena of the same nature have been reported from Morar, Canada, Ireland, Sweden, Patagonia and Siberia. But although photos and films have been secured, as well as sonar recordings, no tangible evidence has ever been found. We do not know how they feed or breed, or anything about their lifestyle or ecology. It may seem questionable whether they can be classed as animals at all, or are they to be considered as creatures on the fringe? "At all the boundaries of science we come up against what are probably the inherent limitations of human understanding. At the edge of biology we meet the chasm between what science describes and what the mind experiences." (Sir Cyril Hinshelwood, Presidential address to British association, entitled 'Science & Scientists' : 'The Divine Flame' by Sir Alister Hardy, Collins).

One cannot ignore the mass of evidence that has accumulated, but to accept them means offending ordinary commonsense. So it amounts to a paradox. How paradoxes are not admissible according to the out-dated laws of Newton, on which our every day impressions of life around us still depend, but in Sub-atomic Physics, which is founded on Einstein, certain paradoxes do occur. The irrational behaviour of the electrons circling the nucleus of an atom is one example, and later Heisenberg spoke of the 'unpredictability of Modern Physics'. Both these characteristics seem typical of Nessie.

So it may now be wondered whether modern Zoology, as it is know today, is really sufficient enough in itself to explain some of the phenomena in question, or whether it is rather like expecting to solve some of the problems of Relativity by means of simple schoolboy arithmetic ! There is now a branch of science known as Biophysics, based on Modern Physics, which in recent years has been able to solve certain phenomena in the Medical World that were previously unexplained; so it may one day help us solve some of the problems connected with lake monsters. Some interesting comments from Lionel, who has been involved with the mystery longer than most.

#### PLANS FOR 1984

Mrs.MacDougall of The Foyers Hotel, sent a newspaper cutting from the Press and Journal. It reports that a data processor from Blackpool is to attempt to catch one of the Loch Ness animals. Stephen Whittle, who is 25, says that it is a serious attempt to do something he has wanted to do for years. He intends to use an aluminium cage measuring 70 feet x 20 feet x 25 feet, baited with live salmon. It will be moored offshore some five miles from Fort Augustus on the south side of the loch, this will be somewhere near the Horseshoe Scree. Mr.Whittle says that if he does cage an animal it will be kept for as short a time as possible, while photographs etc. are taken. It will then be released, hopefully unharmed. No dates are given but he did visit the loch in mid April.

NIS member, Miss Valerie Smith is looking for a companion for a trip to the loch. She gives no particular date, but expects to have just a week to spare, she is 23 years of age and does not mind whether the contact is male or female. Her address is, Flat 3, Riverside Court, Caversham, Reading, Berks RG4 3AL.

Two more letters to hand. First from Sue and Alastair Boyd they will be back at Strone from 22nd. July until 18th.August, almost four weeks, their longest stay at the lochside. Then a new member Ulrich Magin from Germany wrote an interesting letter. He did not give any dates but hopes to re-visit the loch this season. He has been four times before as well as visiting a number of other monster locations. I will carry more from these letters in the next Nessletter.

That is all for now. Your news and views are always needed, please keep sending them, my address is : R.R.HEPPLE, HUNTSHIELDFORD, ST.JOHNS CHAPEL, BISHOP AUCKLAND, CO. DURHAM DL13 1RQ. TELEPHONE: WEARDALE (0388) 537359.

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