

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE  
 NESSLETTER No. 64  
 June, 1984

Ulrich Magin

Ulrich, from Germany is one of our more recent members. He has sent me two interesting letters. He recounted the only story of a German lake monster he has record of. There have been no reports of monsters off the German coast, and apart from Pumas, there would not seem to be any 'alien' animals in the country. The lake monster was first reported in 1979 when on the 26th April two policemen saw a 10 ft long slimy back coming out of the water. At first they were not believed, but the sightings increased in numbers and other strange things happened at the lake, such as a dog vanishing. Peter Grunke, another policeman, collected and investigated the reports, he found that they all described a 'Wels' (which in English would be a catfish). He found that in 1938 catfish were introduced into the lake. A reward was offered to the angler who caught the fish, as a result the lake became crowded with anglers and sightseers. The lake was the 'Zwischenahner Meer' near Bad Zwischenahn, in Niedersachsen in the North of Germany. Ulrich does not know if the fish was eventually caught, but has heard of one being caught in the Trintsee in the German Democratic Republic some years ago. It was 10 feet long, although the first one must have been at least 12 feet long. He also suggests that the report from a Polish lake, Nessletter 53, could have been of a similar fish. He thinks they could also be responsible for several sightings in totally landlocked lakes in the U.S.A. I have checked, and find that we have the Wels catfish in various locations in this country. They were introduced at the beginning of the century, being native to central Europe, although they seldom exceed 4 feet here. While Ulrich was visiting Loch Ness in 1982 he thought he had possibly had a head and neck sighting. With two others he was near Altsaigh, when he thought he saw a head and neck. It showed for only a few seconds before disappearing without a ripple on the calm surface. The others were looking in another direction and saw nothing. Ulrich was disturbed by this and considered he may have been seeing things. He asked if I had heard of anyone seeing anything in the area on the same day and time. He answered the question himself in his last letter. He had experienced the same thing at home, over dry land, and is now sure it was just a 'floater' in the eye. At Loch Ness, being anxious to see 'something' the mind picks this up, and leaves one thinking, 'What was that?'. The above now gives us two more possibilities to be considered when investigating sighting reports, catfish, and floaters. In response to the query, are there any reports of Nessie glowing? Ulrich points out that in Tim Dinsdale's book 'The Leviathans' there are two reports of luminous sea serpents. He also has a cutting from The Times of 17.8.34 that states that a Mr. Beebe while diving near the Bermudas saw a strange monster some 20 feet long and glittering with lights like a skyscraper at night. He thinks that this latter one is certainly an ordinary deep sea fish or squid. He goes on to express doubts about the Loch Ness animals being attracted by light. He feels that if that was so, Bob Rines and the Academy of Applied Science should have had much more success than they have had to date. I would point out that there are some important differences. Doc Shields and others wonder if Nessie could be attracted by 'firelight'. This type of light has a flickering quality, also more subdued colours than the very bright and harsh lights needed for underwater photography. Also the Academy do not have areas constantly flooded with light. They work on the principal that first you have an animal swim within range of the cameras, then the sonar trigger operates the camera and lights. Although in the earlier years they did use a type of set up wherein the strobe light was set to flash at predetermined intervals, at the same time as the camera exposed one frame of film. The whole unit being lowered into the loch merrily flashing away and being retrieved a few hours later. Ulrich has a copy of Tim Dinsdale's 'Loch Ness Monster' third edition (1976), which is for sale or exchange. He is looking for Constance Whyte's 'More Than a Legend', or Holiday's 'Great Orm of Loch Ness' or 'Dragon and The Disc'. He would also like to get hold of copies of Frank Searle's newsletters, a full set if possible.

## Alastair Boyd

Alastair who with Sue will be at the loch in July and August wrote in his letter that he was disappointed by the press statement of Rikki Razdan and Alan Keiler that in their opinion there was no evidence for the existence of the Loch Ness animals. He feels that the overall effect on the general public will be to reinforce the belief that there is nothing there. He was personally disappointed because he had been with them at the Temple Pier lay-by and described his sighting of a hump in July 1979. They had taken him there because they thought he might have seen a large otter and made a mistake with his assessment of the size. They asked him to estimate the size of the Academy raft in Urquhart Bay, which they had previously measured. Interestingly enough Alastair judged the height correctly, but underestimated slightly on the length and breadth measurements. On the subject of evidence of different sorts, Alastair says it was not the photographs or films which led him to the conclusion that Loch Ness might be worth a visit, it was the eye-witness accounts. He says that he now knows through bitter experience why there are many more genuine sightings than there are genuine photographs.

He had a sighting but left his camera in the car. NIS 59. In his opinion the accumulation of these eye-witness reports is the best evidence there is, particularly as eye-witnessing lacks the profit motive which is evidently the *raison d'etre* of at least some of the photographs which claim to be genuine. Alastair also suggests that car stickers could be useful in publicising the NIS and kindly sent a design. Perhaps I should go further into it - any comments?

## Wake Sighting

First I will continue on the theme of car stickers. Last year while at the loch I met Jim Skeldon, he lives in Dores, he had a simple form of sticker for recognition.

He used a rectangular of a single colour sticky plastic, blue in his case, with the letters NIS cut out of white, sandwiched between it and the car windscreen.

I have the NIS logo cut out of a similar plastic on the sides of my motor-caravan.

Now onto the wake. In mid June I had a letter from him, and a sketch, describing what he had seen in the evening of Sunday 10th. June, 1984. Jim's home is set back from the loch, but elevated, so he has a good view of the loch over the village, from upstairs. At 11.05 p.m. he noted a narrow wake travelling from South to North, left to right to him, he was able to check where he first saw it in relation to a television aerial on one of the houses below him. He watched it using his 10 x 50 binoculars, there was only the wake, perhaps 3 or 4 feet wide and nothing animate on the surface. It moved in a straight line with no obvious deviation, making for Tor Point. Tor Point is the western point of Dores Bay, two thirds of a mile from Jim, the wake progressing across the bay. The loch surface

was mirror calm, no wind, no ripples and no craft anywhere in the vicinity. Jim watched it for twelve minutes before it disappeared beyond the point, during this time it moved at a constant speed with no variation, it passed close behind a bouy moored off the point. This bouy Jim knows is 4 feet in diameter, he timed the wake as it passed it and found that it took one second. From this he was able to calculate the speed as 2.727 mph, he was also able to measure the arc of travel from the aerial to the point, this was 42 degrees. Further calculations confirmed the speed and established that he had the wake under observation of .52 of a mile. He asks 'What is it'? The seemingly easy answer is, it was a water bird of some sort but Jim stresses that at no time did he see any shape at the head of the wake, or anything above the surface. Remember he was using 10 x 50 binoculars from an elevated position at a distance of 2/3 miles, a bird should have been visible. The inevitable otter must be considered. It is possible, but is it otter habit to swim so far on the surface without diving and should not the otter head, small as it is, have been visible? The time of late evening would seem to be correct bearing in mind the almost nocturnal habits of the otters. It would be interesting to know what the 'cruising' speed of an otter is. Jim said he was surprised when he worked out the wake's speed as it seemed to be moving much faster. One incident it does bring back to mind is the wake Jeff Watson watched and took photographs of in September 1978 (NIS 30). It was narrow and moved along the shore below Achnahannet before travelling across the loch. Jeff could not see anything at the head of the wake, although another observer with 10 x 50 binoculars thought he could see a 'fin-like' object from time to time. The speed was estimated at 10mph but Jeff was not able to take any measurements or calculations as Jim was.

The time was very much different being 2.30 p.m. Jim's wake may be otter, it may even be Messie, but it unfortunately does not give us any more information. What it does do is give us a very good example of things to do if you do see anything, landmarks should be noted; measurements taken if possible; careful notes made. Not forgetting to take photographs, if the conditions are anything like favourable, in Jim's case they were not. A thought provoking incident. Jim has also taken another slide of a large patch of foam which was midway between Tor Point and the far shore, he did not give a time or date. I carried news of Jim's earlier foam patches and theories in NIS 55.

### Sighting 1981

Tim Dinsdale who was in the process of preparing for his 50th private expedition to Loch Ness, sent me the following report. "Account of Sighting of Loch Ness Monster, August 6th, 1981. The family were driving along the eastern shore of Loch Ness towards Foyers in the late morning. It was the last day of the holidays and was a particularly fine, sunny day. Looking northwards up the loch a mirage could be seen and it appeared to split in two. My father (Rev.P.Grimshaw) was driving, my mother was in the left hand front seat, and the three children (Thomas, Rachel and John) were in the back. As we came to an open space between two blocks of trees a view of the loch was possible, and in it was the monster. A large hump was visible and a neck, but no head was seen. It must be realised that the gap between the trees was very small and the view was only there for a very few seconds, and what we saw was an impression of something black with a hump and neck, which is why no proper head was seen. My father was watching the road as one should and missed the spectacle, as did my sister, but all the other three saw it. Being sceptical and not having seen it himself my father drove on and we saw no more. It was not a very clear sighting, but I have no doubts that it was not a boat or any sort of known marine mammal being familiar with seals and having seen porpoises in the Hebrides. An interesting sequel to this was that we saw a letter written by a lady from London in the "Sunday Post" who claimed to have seen the monster at the same time, place and date as we did " Signed: John Grimshaw (aged 13 at time of sighting). Tim met John who is now a sixth former at a school lecture and John sent him the account later.

Although he was young at the time he had some experience of Loch Ness, as the family holiday in the area and have visited the loch on numerous occasions. Perhaps it should be considered that as a young person John may have had a preconceived belief in the monster, but other two people in the car also saw something, his mother being one of them. It would be interesting to find out more about the Sunday Post letter. I do not have any knowledge of it. John was correct about the weather conditions. As it happens on the 6th. August, 1981 we were at the Abriachan pier and my log book records very good conditions. This has happened a number of times over the seasons, that is us being at the pier and others reporting sightings from within a mile or two. Another report for the question mark file, our thanks to Tim for passing it on.

### Wellington

There are plans to make a documentary film about the raising of the Wellington aircraft that is lying on the bottom of Loch Ness. It is in over 200 feet of water, some 300 yards offshore, one and a quarter miles from Loch End. The aircraft was located in 1977 or '78 by a team from the Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, they were using sonar while monster hunting. Over the years teams from the Royal Navy have dived on it, as a training exercise using oxygen - helium mixture.

It has also been filmed with a light intensifying television camera. When this was done the aircraft was shown to be remarkably well preserved, the engine cowlings still being shiny and fabric covering still on portions of the fuselage. An Aberdeen salvage firm, assisted by a team from the Heriot Watt University, intend to raise it to the surface early in September. Midas Promotions and Network News of London have been given permission to film the operation. If the operation is successful it is hoped that an appeal will raise sufficient money, in the region of £100,000 to enable the aircraft to be made airworthy again. Strangely, when one considers that there must have been hundreds, if not thousands, of Wellingtons built, there is only one example left; it is in the R.A.F. Museum at Hendon and now the remains of another on the floor of Loch Ness.

## Doc Shiels

Doc sent me a short follow up letter to his 'elephant squid' theory. He has received a further small piece of information. It is from an AP report, dated January 14th, 1946 which was quoted in 'Doubt' No.16. A young man, Ted Peters was reported to have lassoed a live octopus in the Blackwater River, near Morgantown, West Virginia. Professor L.H. Taylor, from the University of West Virginia said that it was not possible because cephalopods were unknown in freshwater but then several other people came forward claiming to have shot octopus in the same fresh waters. Nothing startling but another small piece of evidence to support cephalopods being found in freshwater. Doc's daughter-in-law met a woman who claimed to have photographed Nessie from the northern shore of the loch, around mid September, 1983. He has seen a copy of the picture and says it is good, but the circumstances surrounding it are suspiciously obscure. Doc says that if he finds out more about it he will let us know. One final piece of news which Doc says may be greeted with sighs of relief by monster hunters, is that he is retiring from the hunt. His interest in water monsters will continue, but he will no longer actively hunt them, or attempt to invoke or photograph them. This means he will not be involved with the Loch Shiel Investigation Group. After a good few years with long periods 'in the field' he thinks the time has come to devote himself to other things which are in no way connected with cryptozoology, the so-called 'supernatural', or anything of that kind.

## At the Lochside

Word from Roland Watson about his arrangements for Loch Ness this year. He intends to visit Lochs Oich, Quich and Arkaig during the period 18th to 22nd July, arriving at Loch Ness on July 23rd. He will be staying at the Altsigh Youth Hostel until July 29th. He will be operating on the Western side of the Loch; anyone wishing to meet him should look out for a young man with a red racing bicycle. We, that is my family and myself will be at the loch from July 22nd until August 3rd, with a trip further north on the 25th and 26th. We will be based at the old pier at Abriachan, our vehicle is a White Bedford Dormobile CXG 583K with the name 'NELLIE' and NIS logo on the sides. A word of warning about the midgies which can be a real nuisance around the lochside. It is worthwhile investing in an efficient deterrent; one I can recommend is 'Ole Time' Woodsman's Jungle Formula, I managed to get a bottle of it in Inverness - cost £2.25 for 2 fluid ounces. Another one which the Forestry Commission have ordered for their workers is 'Shoo'. To continue on the theme of the loch, and watching. I have mentioned before the keeping of a log-book, may I recommend and advise it again. Simple entries of weather, surface conditions, boats and other things on the surface and relevant comments. This can build into a use ful record over the years and enable you to check details season by season. Also if you have a camera, please do not go anywhere in sight of the loch without it, however basic. Use it, get to know it, take photographs of birds, driftwood, unusual wave formations; once again build a record and get to know the water and things in and on it. In previous Nessletters I have mentioned the new coach services for getting to and from Inverness. Now British Rail have introduced a '125' high speed service to Inverness., it has been running a short while and has been successful. Till now it has been a weekday service but as an experiment they are extending it to Sundays through July and August. Having arrived at the Loch a visit to the Loch Ness Centre at Drumnadrochit Hotel could be worthwhile.

It has been hoped to enlarge the exhibition by using some of the upstairs rooms but this was not to be. In January the Drumnadrochit Hotel was gutted by fire, the shell is still standing but to reopen as soon as possible the motel section has been extensively improved with a completely new front portion. This has a restaurant on the ground floor with new kitchen facilities on the second floor and a residents lounge on the third floor. There are now 29 letting bedrooms some of these have taken the space it was hoped could be occupied by the exhibition. This has been renovated and an improved lay out arranged, this includes over 40 exhibits among which are models, photographs and videos with voice over commentary. If you have not visited the exhibition, consider it, it is the best collection of facts and information available.

That brings another Nessletter to an end, please remember your news and views are always needed. My address is R.R.Heppele, Huntshildford, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham DL13 1RQ Tel: Weardale (0388) 537359.

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