

### Holidays 1984

Twenty years ago I first visited Loch Ness, I have been back every year for various lengths of time. This year we arrived at Abriachan on 22nd July to start our holidays. As with most of Britain the Inverness area had enjoyed a long dry spell, this was to continue for most of our stay. Although we did have dull drizzle when we visited our eldest son and his wife for three days at the end of our first week. They have moved from Inverness and now live and work in Lochinver, on the West coast above Ullapool, a very beautiful part of the country. We did not meet as many NIS members this year, but it was good to see those we did. First was Doug Macfarlane, who with his wife and young son were just ending another trip to the loch. Doug is making progress with his own boat and sonar plans, and had been looking for suitable launching and mooring places. Doug will be keeping us up to date with developments. Jim Skeldon, from Dores, called to see us on Wednesday morning just before we left for Lochinver. We had a very interesting talk, and I was hoping to get round to Dores to visit him when we returned, but our time at the loch is too short to fit everything in. We did visit Alastair and Sue Boyd in their chalet overlooking Urquhart Bay. They arrived on the same day as we did, and were to be there for almost a month. Alastair is not only a very keen watcher, but he has a large collection of books, newspaper cuttings and other Loch Ness items. Enabling him to make a very close study of the subject. The Loch Ness Project was operating out of Fort Augustus, where they had living quarters arranged in a boat at the top of the flight of canal locks. Their sonar raft was moored off the Horseshoe Scree, by four anchors in some 700 feet of water, no mean feat. This change of search area has been prompted by further thinking about the repeatability of sonar experiments. Mooring the raft so it remains stationary in deep water removes one of the variables from any experiment. If a target is picked up by the sonar and then moves away, the question which is moving, the craft or the target, need not be asked. Also the sonar is searching the same area of water, which with a mobile craft is not always possible. By taking exchange crews out to the raft from Fort Augustus, it should be possible to maintain a 24 hour sonar watch in the deep water of the southern basin. I was disappointed as I did not manage to visit the Project this season, the above news coming from third parties. I did visit Tony Harmsworth at the Loch Ness Centre and had a look around the new lay-out. It contained some new exhibits, among them stuffed otters. Tony told me these had been sent to the taxidermist with the request that one be mounted to resemble the 'Surgeon's Photograph', but he had been told that it would not be possible without breaking bones. An interesting point. While mentioning the exhibition, Tony has offered a free look round to NIS members, if they produce a fairly current issue of a Nessletter (not a photocopy). Among the many items on sale at the Centre is a poster of an aerial photograph of Fort Augustus and Loch Ness (approx 21x30), this is one of the better photographs of the loch. The Centre is not able to send articles to individuals on a regular basis, but they have offered to send me a number of these posters for members, if there is an interest. The cost plus postage etc. should be around £1.25, if you would like one, write to me, send no money till I bill you. I was also fortunate enough to meet up with Bob Rines, (Academy of Applied Sciences), and family, and to join Ivor Newby and Mark H. DeCew for a trip across Urquhart Bay to pick up the camera. The Academy's effort this season is of a smaller nature than usual, being limited to one camera. They have simplified the operation to just the camera, doing away with the need for lights by trying the method that the Project tried in Loch Morar. This by placing the camera in a position where it can use the surface light to silhouette objects passing over it. The camera is the one used by the Academy in the early years of their expeditions, it uses an industrial type movie camera which can expose

one frame at a time, at intervals which can be set from 3 to 10 seconds. This unit is fitted in a waterproof housing, which now has a buoyancy collar to hold it upright in the water. They have anchored a pulley on the bottom in 30 feet of water off Goat Rock below Strone Point on the southern shore of Urquhart Bay, this enables the camera to be raised and lowered from the shore, although it needs a boat to pick it up. It is held at a depth of thirty feet and has a capability of taking photographs for a number of hours. Mark DeCew is a student of Charles Wyckoff and is helping with the deployment and retrieval of the camera, he is also processing the film on the spot. They are using black and white film, once again in the interests of keeping things uncomplicated. After many years with no positive results we can only hope the Academy manages to get something with this new approach. I met Stuart Campbell BA, very briefly, while at the loch. We had corresponded before, and I had sent him back issues of the Nessletters. Stuart has published an article on the 'Surgeon's Photograph', in which he puts forward the theory that what is represented is an otter's tail, he supports this with geometry. He has been asked to write a book in The Aquarian Press's series 'The Evidence for...' on the LNM and other lake creatures, the series is organized by ASSP. He says he is not a believer in Nessie, but he will try to be unprejudiced. The book should appear in the next year or so. We had some very good watching conditions during our stay, but I did not see anything unusual while there, the usual families of mergansers/grebes, ducks, one cormorant, and some very impressive wake waves. I did collect an interesting piece of driftwood from the shore, very 'monster head' in appearance. There were a number of sailboards and water-skiers operating around Dores Bay, and the usual through traffic of yachts and cruisers. The patches of sand I reported around the pier last year, had gone, the water level was low, but surprisingly not excessively so. Another good holidays but sadly still no monster.

#### Vodka Trap

I had heard of an attempt to catch one of the creatures in Loch Ness, and reported it in NIS 63. In late August I received a News Release from Valdivar Vodka concerning their expedition to the loch. Over the years many people have suggested that an attempt should be made to trap an animal, one of the problems about such a scheme is the cost involved, Steven Whittle, a civil servant from Blackpool, overcame that problem by approaching the Valdivar Vodka firm and getting them to back him to the tune of £20,000. On Tuesday 28th August the trap constructed from glass-fibre rods and looking like a huge climbing frame, was taken from Fort Augustus by helicopter and lowered into the loch off the Horseshoe Scree. My eldest son happened to be passing through Fort Augustus as this operation was taking place. He told me they had fun and games getting the thing into the air, as it showed a liking for catching hold of fences, bushes, gates, in fact anything at all. However they did manage it, and it was successfully placed into the loch. I understand it is suspended beneath the Loch Ness Project's raft, and while they are giving whatever help they can, they disclaim any responsibility for the operation. It is intended to have the trap, unbaited, in the water for two weeks; to allow the creatures to become accustomed to it. It is then to be baited, with salmon and trout, and will be kept there for up to another four weeks, or until an animal is caught. The trap measuring 30 feet x 50 feet x 30 feet, will be monitored from the raft using sonar and cameras. If a creature enters the trap, the door will be closed from the surface and the whole lot hauled to the surface. That should be quite a manoeuvre. Photographs would be taken, along with measurements and tissue samples. Then the creature would be released unharmed. An interesting effort, but one with a limited chance of success, I feel.

Well that is all from me for now, just one page, but Tony Harmsworth has provided the enclosed appraisal of the Loch Ness Project's work. Thank you for your contributions, views and subscriptions, please keep them coming. My address is: R.R.Hewle, Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Subs.U.K. £2,50 U.S.A. \$9.00

Rio.

## Assessment of the Project's Motives and Attitudes

I felt it is time I put pen to paper for you and in defence of some of the criticism Adrian Shine receives for his scepticism.

Adrian's view of the classic photographs is that if animals of these characteristics surfaced, even rarely, then the Bureau should have solved the mystery in the sixties. MacNab's picture looks nothing like Stuart's, which looks nothing like Wilson's, which looks nothing like Cockrell's, which looks nothing like Shiels', which looks nothing like Irving's, which looks nothing like Gray's, etc., etc.

While there are some vague similarities between the Surgeon's and Shiels' and Lachlan Stuart's and Dinsdale's, they are only alike if a good deal of imagination is used. If we are to accept the Project's assessment of Stuart's picture - that the objects are only in a few feet of water in the position of some rotting fence posts - does this add to Dinsdale's film or detract from it?

The unending variety of the classic pictures denies repeatability which is the only scientific method of collecting data. Experiments must be repeatable - if not they are invalid. Only a hardened and uncompromising believer will disagree - and that attitude is exactly what inspires books by such as Binns.

The gullible, such as I may once have been, would immediately spring to the monster's rescue with sonar contacts by Rival III, Cambridge University, Birmingham University, Love, Klein, Pisces and even Shine himself. Surely this is repeatability.

In fact closer inspection shows that each of the above, before Shine, have not repeated their results continuously or, if they have repeated at all, have used different equipment, different locations, different settings, different times of year and failed totally to do any really scientific calibration work. I must add that the failure to operate tight controls was not due to neglect, in every case, but time constraints on the expeditions.

Leaving aside the Rines flipper pictures at this time, it is easy to see why Binns can turn around and state that there is no "scientific" proof whatsoever for the Loch Ness Monster. It is true in fact if not in its implications. Even the Academy flipper pictures can be criticised in a number of ways which there is not time to discuss here and, while they remain unrepeated, their value is only in how they may direct future work, not in their worthiness as scientific proof (I emphasise "proof").

The pro-monster camp that has criticised Shine's scepticism, and most have at sometime or another including myself, do not appear to have understood the Project's objective.

The Project are not here to prove the monster's reality or to fight for a cause, they are here to discover the truth.

They dismiss all surface photographs as inconclusive - is that fair or not? They find the flipper pictures interesting, but feel they lack repeatability - is that fair or not? They find the sonar results too spasmodic and uncontrolled - is that fair or not?

You may answer these questions "not" on every occasion, but I think you will all agree that the sceptics will say the answer is always "fair".

No one is trying to convince believers - so why waste effort in the attempt - it is the sceptics who must be satisfied!

Now, dear reader, don't start to ask whether or not my belief is in doubt. That is not the issue for which I have put pen to paper. I have written the above as if I were a middle of the road sceptic. It is possible to be a good deal softer on the evidence just as I could be even more cutting if I wished to put a few noses out of joint.

So what is different about the Project's results?

### 1981

1. The Project came into possession of their own sonar equipment which would be available for maximum utilisation over many years for long periods.
2. The equipment is NOT sophisticated, it is simple fish-finding equipment, ideal for finding fish or similar creatures, however LARGE they may be.
3. The Project spent the whole of 1981 testing the equipment and devising operating procedures. Contrary to popular belief, they did get strong targets in 1981, but discounted them due to lack of controls and calibrations. Some of their targets would have made headlines in the hands of some other investigators. Were they right to ignore these targets? If you say "no", I put it to you that you are not thinking sufficiently sceptically. If you say "yes", I trust you now discount all previous sonar expeditions? Interesting implications, eh?
4. With the working methods devised, procedures established and their own equipment, the Project could, for the first time in 6 years, look forward to some "monster hunting" in earnest.

### 1982

1. Using the barge Phyllis, sonar patrols were operated in the deep basins, clear of the sides and bottom.
2. Echo sounders were operated regularly to confirm the presence of surface fish which also appear on the scanning sonar.
3. All controls were fixed for consistent results.
4. 12 strong sonar targets were obtained that appeared much stronger than the fish that would be expected. They showed apparent (an important word) motion and were tracked for varying times.
5. Sonar calibrations were made to compare a known sonar target with the unknown targets at the same range.
6. New Atlantis was chartered and the same experiments performed using similar equipment in exactly the same manner.
7. 28 further sonar targets were obtained showing considerable strength and very deep on occasion.

8. The Project announced their results in their own report and also in New Scientist - who hacked it about incidentally and changed the meaning. They even called the equipment sophisticated - something that has never been claimed for it. The actual report is available from the Centre - £1.10 including postage and packing.
9. They hoped the Report and its related publicity would encourage a sponsor but with no luck.
10. Birmingham University suggested some additional controls to eliminate freak side echo possibilities.

#### 1983

1. The Project attempted to repeat their targets from a mooring in mid water. Again contacts were obtained.
2. They operated the controls suggested by Birmingham and confirmed the targets were mid water.
3. They decided not to publish their results as they needed a more secure point to moor and also wished to put in more comprehensive calibrations.

Incidentally the one page dismissal of the Project's 7 years of work at the end of the new Binns paperback, is factually inaccurate. Dozens of calibrations were made and are still made. Not "one" as suggested in his usual snide way.

#### 1984

1. At last some sponsorship money - someone believes their objectives are worthwhile.
2. From an isolated mooring in 700 feet of water off the horse-shoe scree an intensive sonar investigation is under way from the time of writing - 2nd July.
3. The mooring is stable, clear of boats and traffic and should show conclusively if the targets really are moving.
4. Should contacts be obtained and stand up to the new controls and multiple calibrations, the way forward will be identification.

Adrian will still not be anything other than sceptical about his own sonar results. He needs to be 100% sure that they are animate before spending a six-figure sum to identify them with video. No mean task in Loch Ness and a return to Morar may be inevitable.

Monster believers, far from criticising Adrian's scepticism, should be praising it. Without self assessment there can be no way forward.

As an interesting addition, the Project are most of the way through a thorough limnological study of the Loch with Holloway College. They have also spent great time, effort and resources on studying Side Echos, 2nd Time Around Returns, Ghost Echos, Side Lobe Echos, Wake Echos, Gas Bubble Echos, etc., etc., in order to be sure that animate echos are really animate.

Sadly, as part of this study, they have discovered that many sonar paper traces that were once thought to be monsters by previous expeditions and teams, are no more than wake effects.

Adrian's failure to publicise this type of information may be criticised by sceptics. If he did publish he would come under still more criticism from believers.

Adrian is doing a good job, methodically and scientifically. If some of his findings disagree with our own pet beliefs and theories, as they have with me, then it is only right to question his methods. If the methods are sound, the pet beliefs and theories must change. There is no alternative.

While still convinced, in fact even more so after seeing Adrian's results, that the monsters exist, I find that my own theories, published in *Mysterious Monsters of Loch Ness*, have taken a knock, but they can bend and be adjusted. By such methods a theory can be made to fit the facts - real facts. There is no point in accepting and rejecting various pieces of evidence out of hand in order to fit any particular theory. I have done that once, but never again!

Adrian's view is that, while people say that they see large unknown animals in Loch Ness, and now that it is certain the food chain can support a colony of large predators, surely it is important to resolve the matter with relevant equipment used in a long term and scientific way. If, when this is attempted, positive contacts are still obtained, it proves not that the monster exists, but that there is still a case to answer. They are not at that point of proof yet, but it is close. Then it will be only fair to pursue the matter to its conclusion.

We should all hope to see Adrian back in 1985. If he isn't, there must be grave doubts as to the monster's physical presence in Loch Ness ever being established beyond doubt. All that may be left are the bizarre and impossible-seeming characteristics that Tony Shiels suggests should be investigated in NIS63. If readers really want to connect the paranormal with Nessie, the next time I put pen to paper may be when I'm watching a Yeti from my flying saucer. The word "credible" has a meaning I'm afraid.

TONY HARMSWORTH

24.7.84