

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE  
NESSLETTER NO 71  
AUGUST 1985

## HOLIDAYS 1985

We, myself my wife Doris and daughter Heather, arrived on the lochside at 2.30 on July 21st. The country had been suffering a cool, wet, dismal summer, and unfortunately there was no sign of any improvement, however it was good to be back. We had a poor stay as far as the weather was concerned, but we did meet a number of NIS members as well as doing the rounds of our friends in the vicinity. The first visitor we had was Jim Skeldon, from Dores, he had seen us arrive on Sunday and having to go into Inverness on Monday he came out to see us. As it happens I had received a letter from him some time before concerning his theory about Nessie being connected to the leech family. This theory was published in an earlier Nessletter and Jim said that he had heard in the BBC television 'Condor' series that there were leeches some twenty feet long in parts of South America. When NIS member Colin Mather said he would like to see a photograph of one, Jim was smug, thinking when the BBC repeat the series Colin would have his wish. However the series was repeated and Jim's smugness suffered a severe blow, when in fact the leeches were twenty 'inches' long, not twenty 'feet'. In N.I.S. 68 this had been pointed out by Mike Dash. Jim offered his sincere apologies for his error and hoped he had not seriously misled anyone. Anyway we had a good chat about the loch and things in general. He told me he knew of a good recent sighting and would introduce me to the couple involved if I managed to get round to Dores during our stay at the loch. We had earlier on the Monday visited Alastair Boyd at Strone, Sue was out shopping as they themselves had only arrived the day before. We also visited then on the following Saturday. They had been up to the loch for a week over the Easter period, staying at Strone first then finishing with a night at the Foyers Hotel. No monster sightings, but they had several interesting talks with Henry Bauer, who was staying at Drumnadrochit for six weeks from March till May, they first contacted Henry through the NIS two years ago. They were to be at the loch for a month this time, the chalet they rent is in a very good position overlooking Urquhart Bay. Alastair has a new 800mm lens for his camera, and spends long hours watching a very promising stretch of water. With his equipment and a good vantage point he is very well prepared should he have another sighting, similar to his 1979 experience. Perhaps this could be his season. I visited Tony Harmsworth at the Loch Ness Centre, Drumnadrochit, twice, and he popped in to see us at the pier for a few minutes on our first Wednesday. We had a look around the exhibition, and appreciated the new layout the the new exhibits. Among them being an elephants trunk, mounted rather like the object in the Surgeon's Photograph, which it very obviously is not. There are aquariums with some examples of the types of fish to be found in the loch. There is also the large inflatable used by the Loch Ness Project during the 1981/82 seasons. The 'John Murray', at 40 feet by 10 feet, is claimed to be the largest inflatable in the world, and has been rigged up in the exhibition. Visitors are welcomed to go aboard and look round and see displays of typical sonar contacts. Tony also brought me up to date with some of the Project's work. As I reported in an earlier Nessletter they have now become the owners of a large trawler type vessel, this is now moored at the top of the Fort Augustus locks. It was pushed aground as it was manoeuvred into the canal, and sprung a seam, as a result it is taking in a little water, but the occasional use of a pump has it under control for now. The Project was only operating for four weeks this season, Tony said that this was partly due to lack of funding, however they had completed a very interesting over-winter experiment. Last season when they finished their work they used one of the raft moorings as an anchor for a large bundle of hessian sacking. The weighted bundle was fastened to the loose end of one of the raft mooring ropes, and dropped to the bottom 600 feet below. The rope, which was a bouyant type, then formed a 300 feet inverted 'u' shape. This season the Project's crew located this rope with sonar, that definitely shows that some types of rope show up on sonar, they then caught it with a grapple and pulled it to the surface a fair task in itself. The soggy muddy mass was then examined for signs of life or other items, and some interesting finds were made. There were Chironomid larvae, in 1982 the Project had dredged some of these from 220m, these are insect larva, the larvae of midges. The unanswered question is, how do they get to the surface when they become adult? There were also some small shrimps, 8/9mm long, these were possibly Mysis and this could be the first time they have been reported in the loch. There was also a lamprey, which is not strictly a fish, but is usually thought of as one. They have an eel-like shape and an open sucker-like mouth and when adult are entirely parasitic on fish.

Aidrian Shinetold Tony that he thought this was the first time lampreys had been found

in the loch, I was able to tell him it was not. In 1970 while helping to construct the LNI harbour on the shore below Achnahannet I caught a small one with my hands, in a few inches of water at the loch edge. Tony also told me of two recent sightings, the first he had no real detail of but gave me the background. Debbie Grimason, one of the girls who has worked at the Drumnadrochit Hotel for three seasons, reported seeing a hump in Urquhart Bay. It had been about three weeks earlier, early July, and she had been off duty and back at the cottage above Strone Point overlooking the bay. Tony had not had the chance to talk to her and could not provide further information, but did say she was an honest church-going girl. So she could be mistaken in what she had seen, but was certainly not lying. The second one was reported by an off duty Highland Omnibus driver, who had been in Dores with a friend, a young lady from Inverness, late in June. Tony did not have the exact date, but it could have been the afternoon of Thursday June 27th 1985. Tony knows the driver fairly well, and said he is a genuine type but that he did not want his name involved. He drives buses along the loch on a regular route, and is also a local, so he knows the loch and it's moods well. They had seen a huge hump at some 200/300 yards, when he was describing it to Tony he said it was 14 feet long. Tony then asked him "How high?" and he said 14 feet, Tony said "but you said it was 14 feet long", the driver said, yes it was, but it was also 14 feet high! He said it was "like the conning tower of a submarine". This Tony, and I, found disturbing, here we have a report by a reliable witness that does not fit in with the general pattern of reported shapes. 14 feet by 14 feet is huge, but even if the drivers estimate of size is wrong and it was 6 x 6 or 4 x 4, the proportions are not what we have come to expect. However as with all sightings reported in the Nessletters, there it is, it is up to members to make up their own minds.

On Sunday 28th August 1985, the weather was sunny although the loch surface was rough, and we drove round the loch as planned. When we arrived in Fort Augustus I made my way to the top of the locks to find the Project's new craft deserted. I was disappointed as I look forward to my brief meetings with Adrian and his crew, I understand they were away to Loch Morar doing some bottom sampling work. We then made our way, via Foyers, to Dores where we called on Jim Skeldon, and his wife. Jim telephoned and made arrangements for us to go up and see the Camerons, Ian and Candy, at the Dores riding stables. On the morning of Tuesday 16th July, about ten to nine, they were driving from the stables down to Dores, they had a friend with them one of the men who operate the ski-boats from Dores. He had been having some bother with his boat and it was out of commission at the time. As they drove over the rise the loch came into view, at this point the road is half a mile from the shore and about 500 feet above water level, the loch was rough with large waves, moving towards the north-west, curving into the shore and Dores Bay. Ian saw something about half way across the Loch, going through the waves making a fair commotion, he said to the friend, that is what you need for pulling your skiers, but as he spoke he realised that it was not a boat he was looking at. When I spoke to Candy and Ian they agreed that the object was about 10 to 15 feet long, Ian described a cylinder some three feet across, it was going slightly across the waves moving parallel to the shore making a lot of commotion, but not travelling as fast as one of the ski-boats, which they are used to seeing in the same area. Ian hesitated, wondering if he should stop and watch whatever it was from there, or motor on down the hill and try to get closer, they went on down the hill. They had it in view for a time and then it was obscured by some trees, when they reached the next gap it was still in view, then more trees, at the next gap there it was again, but possible slewing around towards the shore. More trees, and at the next gap, nothing more to be seen, they then drove into Dores and made their way to the shore, but there was nothing to be seen. When I spoke to them, Candy seemed sure they had seen something unusual. Ian was somewhat disturbed, he knew he had seen something out of the ordinary, but was still trying to explain it to himself as something normal, and was perplexed when it did not fit in with anything else he had experience on the loch. This seems to be one of the 'better' sightings, even though they were a mile from the object when first seen, their elevation gave them a good view of the loch surface and they did get closer as they drove down the hillside. They are two young people who know the area and loch well, genuine and honest, with nothing really to be gained by perpetrating a hoax, in fact they had not really spread the story about, Jim hearing of it in a roundabout way. Could they be mistaken, a boat perhaps, I asked them more than once, was it a boat and they were sure it was not. After we had spoken to them Jim and I drove back to Dores along the same road, for quite a way there is a very good view of the water before you reach the trees, I timed our run down, Jim slowing down as appropriate, and the object could have been in sight for almost two minutes.

As it happens Ian's grandmother and great aunt, who has a family connection with Aldourie Castle (along from Tor Point), had a good sighting in 1947. He then returned to Jim's and I picked up my family and continued our drive round the loch, arriving back at the pier at 7.30. At 8 o' clock it started to rain and went on almost non-stop until 4 o' clock on the Monday afternoon.

We had earlier made arrangements to spend the Monday in, on site, as we were expecting our son, Michael, and daughter-in-law, Barbara, to visit us as they travelled back to Gairloch. We had also seen Steuart Campbell briefly on Sunday and knew he was to return. However the first to arrive were Mr and Mrs Macfarlane and their young son. Doug has been one of the more active independent hunters over the recent years, possibly helped by living in Largs, Ayrshire, which puts him a little nearer the Loch than most of us, and his working pattern which has been two weeks on and two weeks off. Now their youngster is at school his trips will have to be fitted into school holiday time, but he has plans to continue his efforts. He now has a ten foot boat, with outboard, which he is able to carry on the roof rack of his car while towing the caravan. On the water it is fitted with an echo sounder, a 200 kh Lowrance Eagle Mk 1, Doug has mounted the transducer on an arm with a quadrant, so he can tilt it from vertical to horizontal through twenty degree steps. Up to now Doug has done some calibration work on the loch, spending a few mornings getting the feel of his equipment around Urquhart Bay, where he has recorded a depth of 740 feet, and the opposite shore under Whitefields. On Tuesday, the next morning, I had been out in my canoe and as I returned past the Clansman Marina I saw Doug making his way back there. He has been bringing his boat and equipment by car from the camp site to the Clansman for an early morning trip, it takes him about half an hour to get it assembled and onto the water. I pulled ashore and waited for him to arrive, so was able to see how he had fitted the boat out. He has a no-maintenance type car battery, to power the echo sounder, fastened into a forward compartment so in the unlikely event of the boat turning over it will stay put. Likewise the sounder until itself is bolted to a thwart, and he has bags for his camera and other little bits positioned on the sides. Along with a tiller extension, so he can sit in the centre of the boat, which trims it out very nicely and puts him in a position to see the echo sounder plainly, it makes it a very useful craft. Doug is working on a fordeck with a small cabin to give some protection to the gear. It was just as he had described it on the Monday but it was very interesting to see it all set up. We had a good talk on the Monday and Doug said he was interested in finding out how the echo sounder would operate in the horizontal manner. As the Macfarlanes were preparing to leave Steuart Campbell arrived. Steuart took me to task over the piece in NIS 70 concerning him, he considered some of it was ambiguous, on second reading perhaps he was right, so I will try again. 'He also included a letter commenting on NIS 69. As yet the editor of SI has not published Bob Rines's response to their article, or a response from Steuart Campbell. In which he, Steuart, gives what he believes is the correct interpretation of the Rines's 1972 sonar targets. That interpretation will also be included in his book. Which has been delayed ....' Never-the-less we had a very good talk, Steuart is an interesting character, despite his views. In his forth-coming book he has investigated the evidence to support the theory that there are large unidentified creatures in Loch Ness, but his findings are against it. When I told him that as far as I was concerned the best piece of evidence was Tim Dinsdale's 1960 film, he smiled and said to wait to see what he says about it in the book. He had some interesting news about the photograph taken in November 1933 by Hugh Gray. Steuart has obtained a first generation print of this photograph, which he feels is of a Labrador dog swimming with something in its mouth, but out of focus of course. Steuart has a contact with the police personnel who operate a special computer used to un-blur out of focus film and photographs. As with most computers it is somewhat of a mystery how it works, but when the information is fed in it produces a picture, which it then blurs, the blurs are compared, if they match up, it knows what it blurred must be the same as the original blur, if they do not match, away it goes again blurring another picture of its own, and so on until it does match up with the blurred picture it was first given. This technique is used to help identify car number plates and football hooligans, among others, from photographs. Steuart was told that computer time being available the Gray photograph would be examined. When we talked he said that it had been through, but the computer had been unable to un-blur it, this is sometimes known to happen, but another try would be made if possible. I wonder if the reason it was not clarified is that there is nothing to clarify. Steuart, when he looks at the Gray photograph sees a blurred image of a dog, and expects the computer to clean it up. Hugh Gray said what he saw was long and low out of the water, throwing up spray. Now spray appears blurred even though it is not out of focus, in that case the computer has nothing to un-blur and will not be able to produce a clear picture. I await further developments with interest.

Steuart also had some comments about Henry Bauer's review of the Binn's book, and asked if I would be willing to include them with a Nessletter. They are included with this one, without comment. Steuart is interesting to talk to, but I do wonder how he is going to try to explain Tim's film. On Tuesday afternoon we visited Bob and Carol Rines and heard about the Academy of Applied Science's lack of work this season. Their two boats had not been sorted out or put into the water. One of the motors has a damaged bottom end, and the other craft was without its windows, they had been removed at the end of last year because they were letting water in, and not replaced. The hitch had been caused by Ivor Newby's ill health. Over the years Ivor has been invaluable to the Academy, seeing to the maintenance of the boats and doing the majority of the boat handling on the water. Earlier this year on his first planned trip to the loch his car broke down and he did not make it. He then had a spell in hospital for an operation, that did not go well and he had to return twice to have the job done again. This prevented him getting to the loch to do the usual preparation. So as far as the Academy is concerned it has been a blank season so far, but Bob told me there are plans to conduct some experiments during the winter months. They hope to be able to repeat some of their earlier work, and results, something to look forward to. On Tuesday evening we were visited by Mrs Robinson, a NIS member who lives near Beaulay, and her sister Mrs Percival another member, who lives in Ormskirk, Lancashire, and we had a good chat, it is good to meet members like this. It gives me a chance to get their opinions on the NIS, I am pleased that on the whole it seems to be meeting their needs. They were our last NIS visitors. I drew a blank as far as Nessie was concerned, again. We saw quite a lot of the mergansers, they were back and forth on a number of occasions. I also came across a live domestic goose on the shore about half a mile towards Lochend from the old pier, rather strange as there are no crofts of farms anywhere near, it must have been blown away from its home by the strong wind we had the night before. The seal was no longer in the loch I was told by Candy Cameron when I was there to see them about their sighting. She said she had heard it had been shot, and the rotting carcass was on the shore blow Boleskin. A great shame but inevitable I suppose, as it had been making a nuisance of itself with the anglers. It would be easier to get one of the local hunters to shoot it, than to try to catch it and transport it back to the sea. On one of our trips into Inverness we had a look round the new exhibition that has opened in the Old Sandstone Warehouse. It has been put together by Lawrence Lockhart and it is obvious he believes that we have some kind of Plesiosaurus in Loch Ness. Most of the exhibits are based on the work done by the Academy of Applied Science, the 'flipper picture' and 'head and Neck' featuring prominently. He has a life size model based on the 'head and neck' photograph, this is mounted and lit from the same angle as the Academy say the photograph was, and it makes quite an impact. The exhibition is a little sparse and does not have the professional finish of the one at Drumnadrochit. It could appeal to some of the tourists passing through Inverness, although I did hear that Lawrence is trying to move it out to the Clansman Hotel. That would put it on the loch side, better for the tourists, but it could cause conflict with the Loch Ness Monster Exhibition Centre in Drumnadrochit. Despite the overall poor weather we did have some fairly good calm mornings, and I did get out on the loch in my canoe a few times our first Thursday morning was calm, but very misty with visibility down to about 150 yards. I took the canoe out, it was the first time I had been out with it in thick mist. It was a very eerie experience, the water surface was like glass and just merged with the mist, it was also very quiet. I had the shoreline in sight as a dark smudge in the haze, I knew I had to keep in touch with it or I could have gone round in circles. As I returned towards the pier the mist was thinning and the four tall pines above the road were standing out above it, quite striking. As I have said in previous Nessletters a canoe is not the ideal craft for camera work, but you certainly get the feel of the water. The day before, we had some quiet excitement, the Jacobite Princess had been down past us on its tea-time run, it went back at about five o'clock, shortly after passing us it lost way, turned sideways, and started drifting. For the next hour it drifted slowly towards Lochend, and eventually came to a stop when it presumably caught its anchor in the shallower water right in the corner. Some twenty minutes later the Jacobite Lady, the double decker trip boat, came out of the canal at full speed looking for the little Jacobite, she went into the corner and tied up alongside. It took about twenty minutes to transfer the passengers, then the Jacobite came back to life and followed into the canal. On the whole a smooth operation, but there must have been a few anxious moments for the passengers. As I said earlier it was another monster-less trip but it was good the back near the loch, and nice to meet so may interesting people. Now I start to plan and dream about next season.

## CAMPBELL ON BAUER ON BINNS!

Henry Bauer probably did not tell you that he has had difficulty getting his 'review' of Binns's book published; by April 1984 it had been rejected by two journals as being 'too long and too intemperate'. Another reason for the rejections could be that it is not a review at all; it is a somewhat hysterical catalogue of real and imagined errors and insults.

Surprisingly, Bauer himself is not free of error. He claims that JARIC concluded that the object in Dinsdale's film was '3 feet by 5 feet by 10-12 feet above the water' (his italics). Whatever this means, JARIC did not determine a specific length and their estimates of width and height above the water were 6 feet and 3 feet respectively. Seizing on Binns's error (in claiming that Penguin Books published a revised edition of Mitchell's book in 1976), he claimed that the revised edition was published by Dalton, 'not by Penguin'. In fact a revised edition was published by Penguin, but in 1975; it was followed by Dalton's revised edition in 1976, and by the Corgi edition in 1982. All this was noted correctly by Binns in his bibliography. Bauer claims that 'Dinsdale's hump left only a wide bow-wake'; in fact the still from the film shows that the 'hump' also left a screw-wake (something Bauer is loath to recognize)!

Bauer also makes some unjustified attacks. He accuses Binns of insulting all and sundry, including the RAF Photographic Interpretation Unit (PIU, which later became JARIC). However, Binns merely quoted the criticism made of PIU by Prof. R V Jones. Bauer thinks that Binns 'maligned' Rines, when all he did was to quote what others had written, correctly as far as I can tell. Binns's criticism of O'Connor (in which he is not alone) was entirely justified, and I, for one, agree that Shiers's exploits are 'wearisome'. Having accused Binns of insults, Bauer viciously insults Binns, calling him an 'academic manque' (sic)!

Nor is Bauer's judgement sound. He claims that 16 photographs of common objects are irrelevant because they 'bear no relation to published photographs ... nor to eyewitness descriptions'. In fact Binns's picture of a rock does bear a relation to the Stuart photograph, the photograph of a motor boat on L Morar does bear a relation to the object in Dinsdale's film, Ian Johnson's pictures of an otter's tail do bear a relation to The Surgeon's Photograph, etc. It is perverse of Bauer to pretend to miss Binns's point that if Nessie does not exist then the reports must be stimulated by misperception of common objects (no doubt he would have criticized Binns if there had been no such photographs).

Bauer accuses Binns of being sceptical 'to the point of perversity'; if a perverse sceptic is one who refuses to believe in the existence of Nessie even though very many people witness to her existence then Binns need not apologize. Such an approach is merely justified caution.

As a scientist Bauer ought to know how fallible human testimony can be and how a witness' interpretation of what he sees is always open to question. He appears to condemn the belief that Nessie does not exist while himself believing that she does! He suffers from superstitions that at least he did not find in Binns. He believes that sonar echoes have been received from 'large, rapidly moving objects under the water' and that these same objects have been detected over a period of 15 years with different apparatus by many independent investigators. There is no justification for this belief. The various sonar traces offer no evidence of large, rapidly moving objects, and it cannot be established that different operators at different times have detected the same objects (or any objects). He believes that Dinsdale's film was 'attested' by JARIC's 'expert analysts' and computer enhancement. JARIC's expertise is flawed, as Jones has demonstrated and I shall demonstrate, and the computer enhancement of one frame has solved nothing. He believes that L Ness was 'cut off from the ocean some 5000 to 10000 years ago, there is no evidence that L Ness was ever connected to the North Sea (which is not an ocean).

There is much justified comment in Binns's book, and much truth in Bauer's 'intemperate' criticism. However, Bauer, in his anger, has left himself open to the same criticisms he makes of Binns. One expects more objective comment from a scientist.

Stewart Campbell, July 1985

## LAKE TAHOE

Erik Beckjord sent a letter about the situation at Lake Tahoe. He says it is typically Fortean. 18 people saw the Tessie creature, and 3 took photographs. Of these one did not turn out, one was a 20 second strip of professional movie film and one was a 35mm slide. However, the South Lake Tahoe Visitors' Bureau has denied permission for the film to be shown to the press or public, for it owns the strip. The 35mm slide, privately owned, is being held back in fear that the owner, Mike Conway would not get future jobs with the Bureau! The Bureau fears that releasing the photos would "make a circus" out of Lake Tahoe, and would scare off swimmers and water skiers. Erik thinks this is familiar to the 'lost' photographs of Loch Ness, and camera malfunctions, and slides lost in the post.

In July, a Reno, Nevada newspaper planned to fly Erik and biologist from the University of California up to the lake to compare Nessie photos with the film, which, the Bureau is reluctantly permitting under pressure from the newspaper. Regardless of how the meeting turns out Erik plans to take some National Cryptozoological Society members with him to the lake in August, where they will set up one or more video-camera watching posts and they will use the same continuous-recording technique that Erik used at Loch Ness in 1983.

## TAIL ENDS

In August, little snippets appeared in the press stating that Chinese scientists have solved one monster mystery. Lake Hanas, in China's far north-west, was reputed to be home of a water monster. Now it has been found to be inhabited by huge fish, these belong to the salmon family and are red in colour and have heads three feet or more across.

On Thursday August 1st a Mini Metro car was badly damaged in an unusual accident on the road near Temple Pier. A half ton bale of hay, one of the newer round ones, got out of control and bounded down one of the sloping fields adjoining the road, it caught the car and wiped it off the road. The two men in it were taken to hospital, but were released after treatment for slight injuries.

It has been reported that an attempt will be made early in September to raise the Wellington aircraft from Loch Ness.

Well that is all for now, please remember your news and views are always needed and welcome, my address is :- R.R. Hepple, Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Subscriptions, U.K. £2.50, America, \$7.00.

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