

MAGAZINES AND BOOKS

Issues number 4 and 5 of 'Bilk' have appeared with improved layout and typing, Ulrich Magin, the editor, says he was not too happy about the quality of his first three issues. He is producing an interesting newsletter concerned with water-monsters and other related Fortean matters, details in NIS 69. In number 4 Ulrich has an interesting report from the Inverness Courier, of 1st July 1852. Ulrich says that he thinks it is of enormous interest and gave me permission to reprint it as long as I gave him credit for finding it. Many people watched two giant creatures swimming in the loch, near Lochend, and "some thought it was the sea serpent coiling along the surface", others thought it was the kelpie itself. Several men rushed to take their rifles, but before they could shoot at the creatures they realised that it was two ponies that had swum across the loch from Aldourie. This rather vague report has a negative side to it, it provides us with yet another ordinary explanation to something that at first sight seemed extraordinary. However, what is of great interest is the fact that as far back as 1852 there was an accepted association of a "sea serpent" with Loch Ness. This was an important find by Ulrich. It has always been a point raised by the "anti" brigade, why were there no newspaper accounts of Nessie before the early 1930's? The "for" people have always maintained that there were reports, but have experienced problems in tracing them. In issue number 5 Ulrich has two more pre-1930 mentions. In "Popular Superstitions" by W. G. Steward, 1823 (which was reprinted in 1970 by Wardlock Reprints), mentions the kelpie of Loch Ness on page 149. Also according to the Stuttgarter Zeitung, 19th July 1978 on page 3, William Thackeray (1811/63) mentions the monster of the loch but thinks that Scottish whiskey and mists are to blame. The references to Kelpies can, I think, be attributed to folklore and superstition. Very many stretches of water, even springs, are thought to be the homes of "spirits" and "kelpies", after all water is life. But I think that the "sea serpent" association is significant.

I have had word from Joe Zarzynski about the newsletter "Champ Channels" which he edits and publishes. The 1986 subscription for this quarterly newsletter, which is mainly concerned with Lake Champlain, is to be \$10 outside the USA and \$9 in the USA, an increase of \$1. Joe says there were 14 reported sightings of "Champ" in 1985. Lake Champlain is 109 miles long and is located in Vermont, New York, and Quebec. Ten of the sightings were from Vermont waters and the others from the New York area. Joe also said that the Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation, of which he is the director, conducted 31 days of field work at the lake in 1985, using camera gear, sonar, and scuba diving. A report of this work will be published sometime during 1986 in the Cryptozoology Journal (published by the International Society of Cryptozoology). To subscribe to "Champ Channels" or for any other enquiries about Lake Champlain, the address is ICPI, P.O. Box 2134, Wilton, NY, USA 12866. In "Champ Channels" number 3, which is printed in a new typeface, Joe gives news of his trip to Loch Ness to see the raising of the remains of the Wellington bomber. He also gives an account of a reported Nessie sighting during the activity to salvage the aircraft. This sighting has also been mentioned in the local Inverness papers. An unemployed Invernessian, Murdo Urquhart, has this year been the subject of a number of newspaper articles, he had taken to playing his bagpipes for the visitors in the car park at Castle Urquhart. Murdo dressed in kilt and tweed jacket, presented a better image than many of the itinerant pipers seen around the highlands, however, after a short time the "powers that be" had him moved on and took steps to prevent him playing at Urquhart. At this time Tony Harmsworth and Ronnie Bemner let it be known that Murdo was welcome to play in the Loch Ness Centre car park for the visitors going to the exhibition. Even this was short lived, as complaints were received from some of the neighbouring residents, and Murdo had to resort to moving around from lay-by to lay-by. It was while doing this on September 15th, playing for spectators to the salvage operations on the loch, that Murdo reported seeing something in the loch. Neither Joe nor the papers give any real details, just the scant description that "it looked just like a fireman's helmet." What "it" was is not explained, was it a head or a humped ridged back? Unfortunately this is one of those reports which must be considered questionable. Issue number 45 of the Fortean Times has arrived and is up to the usual high standard. The editor, Paul Sieveking, apologizes for the lateness of number 45, and

the fact that they have only managed three issues a year for some time now. However, with over 70 pages packed with news and features concerning all things Fortean, I think the FT is the best available and a must for anyone with a real interest in Fortean matters. The address is 96, Mansfield Road, London, NW3 2HX, and subscription is £6 for four issues.

A new book by Loren Coleman was published in October, entitled Curious Encounters it deals with all sorts of strange phenomena from North America, Canada to Mexico. Loren Coleman has personally investigated all the cases in the book, it is said, these range from phantom trains, through gillmen, urban creatures, sky serpents, sea monsters to aliens, little people and spooky spots, and many more. I found it a fascinating book, but one that left me a little unsatisfied, because Coleman says that in true Fortean tradition he investigates cases and presents them but makes very little attempt at explanation. This is the second book, the first being "Mysterious America", he is an internationally known researcher and has been investigating the unexplained for 25 years. As well as the text, the book has extensive appendixes which list all the known haunted locations and railway lines with reported paranormal occurrences, as well as this there is a list of so called "magnetic hills" which are tourist traps and perhaps better avoided. The book is written in an easy story-telling style and should appeal to all with Fortean interests. It is published in America by Faber and Faber at \$9.95, I understand that it will be published in Britain some time early in 1986, by Faber and Faber at about £7.

David Taylor, 79 Sandringham Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 5HL, has a paperback copy of Dinsdale's "The Story of the Loch Ness Monster" for sale, £1.50 inc, P.P. Anyone interested should contact David.

Books wanted, member Karl Shuka would like copies of "Dragons in Amber" by Willy Ley, and "Exotic Zoology" both published by Viking Press (New York), and "Nature Parade" by Frank W. Lane and published by Jarrolds (England); as well, he would like a copy of Dinsdale's "The Leviathans". There are one or two others who would like to lay hands on "The Leviathans", I was offered a good copy earlier this year, by a firm who specialize in out of print books: but they were asking £25. If anybody has a copy of any of these books, or any other books dealing with our subject, I would be very pleased to hear from them.

ERICK BECKJORD

Erik has sent me his response to Steuart Campbell's attack on Col. Wilson. Erik's work with video cameras at Loch Ness has been covered in previous Nessletters, and although I do not agree with his interpretation of his results, I think he has some valid points to make on the article by Steuart Campbell.

"Steuart Campbell has embarked on the usual monster-debunker's route of trying to find minor discrepancies in a photographer's story of where he was and what he was doing on the day of his photo-taking, and combining this with the first normal natural explanation possible in an effort to make the photos themselves seem to be either a deliberate hoax or a silly mistake. The rationale is that if (in the mind of the debunker) one error can be found in the story, or if there is any sort of seemingly reasonably alternative to what was seen, that therefore the photography must have been either a fraud or an error. In this case, Campbell tries to make out that Dr. Wilson (the surgeon of the Surgeon's Photo) not only made an error, but later tried to lie about it, knowingly. In his article in the British Journal of Photography, April 1984, Campbell first attempts to discredit Wilson's integrity by comparing his account given in 1934 just after he took the photo, with his account to an author twenty years later! I know my own knowledge of what I did twenty years back is very hazy, even for important events. Looking at both accounts, I would tend to trust the former account, due to its freshness. I would possibly suspect that Wilson might not, at that time, have wanted to seem too eager to have been looking for the monster, and thus he might not then have wanted to reveal that the camera was his, if it indeed was, but that is a mere quibble. Today it is far more "OK" to be out monster hunting. Back in 1934, it wasn't. Campbell then tries to show that Wilson shot the photo from a lower level than he says he did, and thereby tries further to prove that the distance was 30 metres from the camera to monster rather than 200 to 300 metres, as Wilson reported. This is a huge difference.

Campbell tries to make the case for a shorter distance by attempting to measure the proportions of an alleged elliptical ring of disturbed water around the creature. While I see some elements of this ring, I would suggest that it is too vague in detail to determine any real proportions for making angular measurements. I would instead point out something that Campbell missed entirely - or else ignored - and that is the reflection of the monster's head and neck. The reader may make a test of his own about this reflection and its relationship to distance. Take a salt-shaker, and place it on a mirror, flat on the table. The greater the angle at which you look down at the shaker, the shorter the reflected image seems in relation to the actual object. If you squat down, and look at a low angle, the reflected image seems almost as long as the object. If you look at the Surgeon's photo no. 1, the reflected image is fairly long indicating that the distance from camera to monster was a considerable one, with a slight angle of depression being used. Campbell implies that Wilson was looking down at a greater angle, taking a photo of an otter, which was only 30 metres away, not 200 - 300 metres! Had this been the case, and Wilson is not alive to defend himself, the reflected image would be quite short - and it is not. Then there is much made about the exact spot where the photo was taken. Wilson says it was just down a bit from 30 metres above the loch. Campbell argues that the only clear spot with a view in that area was only 9 metres above. Obviously if the angle was slight as can be seen by the reflection test, then Wilson had to be high up, or else the reflection would be much longer. Wilson himself says he couldn't locate the exact spot where he stood, so why should Campbell expect to, 50 years later? And does it matter? I think not. Trees grow and are cut down, and who knows how many trees actually were there at that exact time, compared to now, and with a map printed in 1874?

The otter argument is an old one, and I am amazed at how rational men can yet again keep bringing it up. It is the equivalent of the Venus = UFOs argument. It goes like this, "Because an otter's tail might look like the photo object, it therefore has to be that object, no matter how tiny an otter is, and how large the monster is reported to be." It also is unlikely by Campbell's own argument. Campbell says the head and neck is only .7 of a metre high, then he quotes naturalists who say most otters tails are between .29 and .56 of a metre. It is Burton who is quoted as saying that some otters can reach 2.4 metres long, but this is 7.8 feet - a real Loch Ness Monster! Campbell's article states that most otters are about 1.25 metres long - and the Burton estimate is an absolute maximum. It seems highly unlikely that an 7.8 foot otter was floating below Wilson on that day, and if it had been, Campbell admits that Wilson knew otters in any case. Campbell admits that the second Wilson photo shows a head, not a tail, even though he thinks the first photo shows a kinky tail, which is not usually found in otters. What Campbell doesn't seem to realise is that in 1976 Tony "Doc" Shiels took two photos of Morgwar near Falmouth, while a newspaper editor (a skeptic, by the way) also took photos of the same creature. One of the two Morgwar photos shows the very same shape in silhouette as does the Wilson photo no. 2.

Last, I have some personal experience at Loch Ness, and am familiar with angles of view in relation to the opposite shore from many parts of the loch. I also have a good knowledge of the wave patterns, after spending hundreds of hours watching the loch (although I readily admit that other researchers have spent 10,000 hours or more and know it even better - but I suspect they will agree with me here) and now that Campbell has published the full frame photo by Wilson, I can offer my subjective opinion that the object in the photo is far too big to be an otter, and that the distance involved is certainly far more than 30 metres. In my opinion as a cameraman and photographer, Wilson did use a telephoto lens, albeit a moderate one, possibly twice the power of the standard lens for Wilson's camera, borrowed or not. In 1977 Tony Shiels photographed a head and neck of a creature twice, using a 135mm lens, on a 35mm type camera. The equivalent lens on Wilson's camera would not have shown any piece of the opposite shore, as indeed, Shiels' (to his chagrin) did not. Since Wilson did get some of the opposite shore, I conclude that his lens was at least a moderate telephoto.

In conclusion, I would urge critics like Campbell to simply stick to the very best argument there is that the LNM does not exist on a physical basis - which is that no solid physical remains have been found, after 1200 years. Photos such as Wilson's are simply indications that some sort of phenomena that is as yet unexplained exists

in the loch, and should warrent study. Campbell would be better advised to put his time into watching the loch on his own, rather than pulling out such specious arguments as otters and wrong angles, trying to malign the reputation of a man now dead and unable to answer. I have interviewed several dozen people who have seen various lake monsters, and hundreds in relation to the American Yeti (Bigfoot), and I believe it takes a rare courage to be publically identified as a person who has made a sighting. The flack and harrassment one endures later is considerable and jobs are often lost, and even divorces occur. Dr. Robert Wilson was a brave man to step forth in 1934. and "I take my hat off to him."

Steuart Campbell has been mentioned in Nessletters a number of times recently, and his "Wilson article" was referred to in NIS65 and 70. I felt myself, that he had based his calculations on factors that were variable, the elliptical ring of ripples for one, and the fact that the "whole" print of Wilson's photograph that he unearthed; had in fact been cropped at least in one direction. Erik's point about the reflection is worth studying, and his other points should be considered.

STEUART CAMPBELL

In response to Nessletter 72 I had another letter from Steuart, almost return of post. To begin he comments that he is not too sure whether the debate between himself and Harry Bauer is clarifying matters, but asks to be able to respond. He then goes on to say that the width that JARIC attribute to the object filmed by Tim Dinsdale, does not really matter, be it 6' or 5'. What does matter is that Henry claimed that JARIC gave it a length of 10 to 12 feet, while for reasons they gave, they were unable to estimate a length. He then points out that it is not true that he has never seen the Dinsdale film screened, but it is true that he has never seen the original, but feels that it is not relevant. The reason he has not been able to view the original film, apart from being a relative newcomer to the research, is that Dinsdale will not now release the film for study. Still photographs from the film have been published and in these Steuart is sure that he can see a screw wake behind the hump. He says that Henry is fortunate in having seen the film a number of times on Dinsdale's visits to America. However, judgement of the film views in these circumstances is bound to be subjective, with Dinsdale explaining how it shows Nessie. The only objective study is that by JARIC, held in high esteem by 'pro' researchers, which is why he comments on their report. However he thinks they, unfortunately, made some serious errors in their analysis, his arguments for this have not yet been published. He also says, "Because JARIC have examined the evidence there is no need for me to do so." He criticized Henry for stating that Binn's photographs show no relation to published photographs, assumed to show Nessie. He then goes on to say that Henry now uses the words 'interesting relationship', and alledges that Steuart finds there is. Steuart says he did not use that wording and at first neither did Henry. This makes little difference, but shows there must be a distinction between what individuals find interesting. "Henry's original statement is still unjustified and plainly wrong." Steuart goes on to say he does not think it perverse to point out that the Wilson photograph resembles an otters tail, even though Henry does say that he thinks it is a bit perverse of him to do so. He also thinks that Henry over stressed the fact that Ian Johnson disagreed with him (Steuart). He says that he has never said that he insists that all the alleged evidence can be proved to be other than Nessie. He has said that when the evidence is examined properly mundane explanations emerge, and feels that such explanations be preferred to the exotic.

In response to Tony Shiels, Steuart points out that he did not originate the Labrador dog interpretation of the Gray photograph, he thinks it originated at the Drumnadrochit exhibition. He just noted the fact and agrees the dog can be seen. Which is the more likely explanation, he asks, dog or elephant squid, the simplest should be preferred. As to what can be done to discredit 'hoax' photographs of Nessie, "Shiels will find out that more can be done than make accusations. Hoaxers are eventually exposed."

To finish, I have a VHS video recording of the BBC TV programme about the raising of the Wellington bomber. Anyone wishing to borrow it, send a couple of stamps for postage. My address is still: R R Hepple, Huntshfieldford, St John's Chapel, BISHOP AUCKLAND, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, also remember you news and views are always welcome. Subs. UK £2.50 USA \$7.00 Rip.