

CORRECTION

I start this Nessletter with a correction and an apology, it concerns the article by Stuart Campbell on the Tim Dinsdale film. In NIS 74 I reported that it appeared in the British Journal of Photography, wrong journal, it was in The Photographic Journal which is the magazine of The Royal Photographic Society. I also gave the month as February 1985, wrong again, it was February but 1986. The apology goes to any members who were misled and spent time trying to trace the article in the wrong magazine, also to Stuart. He wrote to me to correct the mistake, but as it happens he was not the first, he also suggested that I should have given the title of the article, it is "Monster or Boat". He also reminded me that in an earlier letter he had given me what he said was the correct title to a book mentioned in NIS 73. I reported that Ulrich Magin in his Bilk magazine number 5 had referred to a book 'Popular Superstitions' by W.G. Stewart, published in 1823, and reprinted in 1970. According to Stuart it was written by W.G. Stewart, published in 1823, and reprinted in 1970. According to Stuart it was written by W.G. Stewart, and entitled 'The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland', although he had been unable to trace the reprint. He also said that he was surprised that I had not commented on his article, considering the importance I place on the film. The reason I did not comment on it is that I am led to understand that Tim could be answering it in an article of his own.

STUART CAMPBELL

I must say that I was disappointed by the article, when Stuart and I had met at the loch last year he had said he had something rather special to say about Tim's film, as I would see when his book was published. But the article, which I presume is an extract from the book, is just another presentation of the 'boat' theory, similar to that put forward by Maurice Burton and Ron Binns. I had hoped that Stuart had produced something new by way of explanation. However, perhaps I should indulge myself with some comment on his article. In their report dated 24th January 1966 the Joint Air Intelligence Centre (UK) give their findings on the film taken by Tim Dinsdale on 23rd April 1960, this three page document consists of nineteen paragraphs. In paragraph three Jaric states that "In mensuration the basic data must first be considered and the following has been accepted." They go on to list five items, that the Observation Post (OP) was at the point shown on the map, that its height was 300 feet above the loch, (with a note to say how measurements would be affected if it were not), that the line of sight shown on the map is correct for the first sighting, (also noting that the track shown on the map is badly out of proportion), that the focal length of the camera was 135mm and that the speed was 24fps. In the article Stuart says that of these five assumptions he accepts three but questions the other two. He says that JARIC's acceptance that the Observation Post was 91.m above the water was a major error, and they do not appear to have realised that the loch level is above sea level, taking the Ordnance Survey map height to be the difference in height between the OP and the water, which he says is only 75.4m. At this point I will digress a little, you will note that Stuart is using metres as a unit of measure, likewise when he begins to examine speeds he gives his findings in metres per second (mps) or kilometres and hour (kmh), in their report JARIC use yards/feet/ and miles per hour. Now I know that we in the UK are being forced to accept 'foreign' measurements, but I think from the point of view of easy comparison by an interested reader Stuart could have perhaps used the Imperial scale for his calculations and results. Now back to the height of the OP above the loch. JARIC's accepted height of 300 feet is correct, I know this from conversations with Tim during 1970/1. He had been able to work out his height above the loch accurately with the aid of an Ordnance Survey marker, which was a little way along the road from his filming position, and he had allowed for the difference between loch and sea level. Stuart also challenges the assumption that the line of sight shown on the map is correct for the first sighting, he maintains that what JARIC says is the first sighting is in fact the first frame of film and not the point at which Tim first saw the object. This he says accounts for Tim's apparent misjudgement (by 22%) of the distance of the object from him when he first saw it, which JARIC took to illustrate the problems in judging distance in the Y scale (depth of view).

Among the other defects Stuart says are in the report are the lack of any calculations and the failure to state margins of error. JARIC were producing a report of their findings and as such perhaps did not consider it the correct place for their calculations. The most serious error Stuart finds with the JARIC report is the lack of any recognition that the film sequences were not continuous. There appear to be 60 seconds of the Nessie sequence, yet Tim says in his book that the whole episode took four minutes. He had to stop to rewind the camera and he also paused while filming. The comparison footage of the boat was filmed in two independent parts. Stuart says that JARIC acknowledge none of this and appear to have treated the film as if it were shot in one piece without a break. This lies at the heart of Stuart's argument, he says that JARIC concluded that the object filmed could not have been a boat because of its high speed, but their high speed estimate was arrived at in ignorance of the breaks in filming. Even if they were in ignorance I do not believe that it is that important, when you consider how JARIC set about examining the film. Tim was using a clockwork Bolex camera, on a full wind at the settings he was using this would run for about 28 seconds. Although it is not usual to let it run for the full time, as film speed can slow down as the motor runs out. In paragraph nine JARIC says that between frame 1, which was the forth frame after filming commenced, and frame 384 (16 seconds) the object has travelled some 240 feet in Y (depth of view) but only some 30 feet in X (across the field of view). That meant that during that sequence, well within the first winding time, the object has been travelling almost entirely away from the OP at a speed of about 10mph. This was further confirmed by measures on frames 120 (5 secs), 192 (8 secs), 312 (13 secs). Even by frame 504 (21 secs), where curvature of the wake is already pronounced, movement across the field of view was still only about 75 feet, further confirming that during the first 16 secs movement was away from the OP. There is a note referring to paragraph five and the difficulties mentioned there of measuring Y movement, and that almost all of the measure during the sequence is Y measure. However since the object was travelling on a fixed bearing relative to the shore, the point of intersection on the shore became a fixed reference point and measures became more reliable. Moreover, the speed was calculated from observations on five separate frames and the given speed was the sensibly lowest speed from these observations. As you will see JARIC reached their findings on this first section of film without need to allow for winding breaks or pauses in filming. They go on in paragraph eleven to assess the film between frame 816 (34 secs) and frame 1440 (60 secs) during this time the object is travelling approximately 100 yards from the far loch shore, on a course roughly parallel to it. Measures made on several of the frames in this sequence suggest that the mean speed is at least 7mph and, due to the difficulties mentioned in paragraph five, that of measure in the depth of view, it seems likely that the speed may be as high as 10mph. This seemingly strange difference in JARIC's calculated speed can be explained if you consider that the object may not have been travelling exactly parallel to the shore, which in any case is not a perfect straight line. They calculated that the object was moving across the field of view at 7mph, any movement in the depth of view direction will increase this speed. Note also that they took measures on 'several of the frames' in this sequence, not on the overall time of the sequence. This negates Stuart's objection that no account had been taken of film breaks or winding. JARIC rounds off paragraph eleven by stating, "a reasonable assumption would be that during the complete film sequence the object was travelling at or approaching 10mph." So we are back where we started, Stuart says that because JARIC did not know of, or did not take into account, the winding breaks and pauses during Tim's film their calculation of a speed of 10mph is in error, and should be reduced to 7mph or a little less. My reading, and understanding, of the JARIC report leads me to believe that whether they knew of the breaks in filming, or not, is not important. Their method of studying the individual frames of the film does not need to take into account the overall time of the sequence, and their findings should be accurate. In his conclusions in his article, Stuart says that JARIC made fundamental errors, and drew arbitrary and inconsistent conclusions. Not only that, but in 1980 they compounded their mistakes by re-examining the film and endorsing their 1966 report. Could it be that in 1980 they came to the same conclusions as they did in 1966, because in 1966 they had been correct. As well as considering Stuart has based his explanation on a false premise, I must once again return to my own experience. I have a fair knowledge of the loch and its various moods, the different lighting and water effects, and of the types of craft to be seen there. I have also been fortunate enough to view a 35mm copy of Tim's film projected onto a large cinema screen. It is said that seeing is believing, well I am certain that whatever it was that Tim filmed, it was not a boat.

It is my opinion that Steuart has not been able to detract from the Dinsdale film as an interesting and useful piece of evidence in the Loch Ness mystery.

I have heard that Steuart's book will be published on 12th June 1986 by Aquarian Press in paper back at £3.99. It is to be part of the 'Evidence for' series, and entitled 'Loch Ness Monster - the Evidence', with the ISBN 085 030 4512. It should be an interesting read, with reservations. In his letter Steuart also explained his use of the word 'attack', as I mentioned in NIS 74. He drew my attention to the various definitions of the word in the Concise Oxford Dictionary. 'Act against with (esp. armed) force; seek to hurt or defeat; criticise adversely; act harmfully on; begin vigorous work on; ...' He said he used the word in the third sense, and to some extent also in the last sense. "So I am still careful in my choice of words". He said. "When you require clarification of what I write, it would be better if you asked me privately first." So when you do read his book, have a copy of the COD to hand, and then you can amuse yourselves by trying to decide how far down the list of definitions he has gone for his precise meaning. He also wrote, "Please note that I have not adopted an 'against' attitude just to take a new angle or to increase sales (I doubt that it will help the latter). In fact I have not adopted any attitude other than a strictly scientific approach." As I reported in NIS 73 Steuart has said that "Because JARIC has examined the evidence there is no need for me to do so." Even allowing for the difficulties involved in trying to view the film, that is not a scientific response. I also know that on Steuart's early visits to Loch Ness, and the surrounding area, he made no attempt to interview any of the eye-witnesses, and was said to have commented that he did not believe them to be relevant. Hardly the correct scientific approach. Although I am pleased that he now seems to take some interest in the eye-witness evidence. I look forward to seeing his book. In a recent letter to me Tony Shiels says, it is interesting that in announcing Steuart's book, Thorson's say it contains the best-ever photographs of something that does not exist, and then proceed to pretend that it is totally 'objective'. He goes on "Amusingly, one of my photographs is being used on the cover ... so, at least, I'll get the price of a couple of pints out of Campbell and/or his publisher!"

THEORY

I have had a letter from Robert Cornes in the file for some time, in it he says that he feels that the Long-Necked Seal theory as pioneered by Dr A C Oudemans and Dr Bernard Heuvelmans has been overlooked. He includes three accounts of sea-serpents from Heuvelman's book 'In the Wake of Sea Serpents'. The first was reported by a mining prospector and his mate on the west coast of Tasmania in 1913, (page 391 of ITWOSS). "It was 15ft long, had a very small head, only about the size of a kangaroo dog. It had a thick arched neck passing into the barrel of the body. It had no definite tail and no fins. It was furred, the coat resembling that of a chest-nut coloured horse, well groomed and shining. It had four distinct legs and travelled by bounding, arching its back and gathering up its body so that the forefeet were level with the hind ones. No evidence for or against webbing. The creature travelled very fast. When first disturbed it reared up and turned on its hind legs. Its height standing on four legs would be from 3ft-4ft." This report reminded me of one from Iceland in November 1984, an account was in NIS70. Robert's second account comes from the quartermaster of the Corinthian of Newfoundland (see page 393). "First appeared a great head, long fin-like ears and great blue eyes. The eyes were mild and liquid with no sign of ferocity. Following sad eyes, came a neck all of 20ft which greatly resembled a Giraffe. The neck seemed to be set on a ball-bearing, so supple was it and so easily and rhythmically did it sway while the large eyes took in the ship with a surprised, injured and fearful state. The creature was well fixed for side arms. Three horned fins surmounted its bony head. The body was about the same length as the neck very much like that of a monster seal or sealion with short water smoothed fur. Its colour was light-brownish yellow with spots of darker hue. Its whole attitude while in sight was one of 'moving about in worlds unrealised' I almost felt a tenderness for it." He of course thought he had seen a Plesiosaur! The last one is reported by a Scottish lawyer who was on holiday with friends on a cod fishing boat near the Orkneys, (see page 402). "A long thin neck as thick as an elephants foreleg, and rough looking like an elephants hide, was sticking up. The head was like that of a dog coming sharp to the nose. The eye was black and small, and the whiskers were black. The neck stuck 5 or 6ft out of the water. The animal was very shy, and kept pushing its head up then pulling it down but never going out of sight. It disappeared and as was its custom swam alongside the boat about 10ft under."

My friends said they had seen it before. We all saw it plainly, its body below the water was, dark brown getting slightly lighter as it got to the outer edge, then at the edge appeared almost grey. It had two paddles or fins on its side and two at its stern." Dimensions: "Neck 6-7ft. When under water swimming the body I think to the end of the tail flappers about 12ft long. The thickness of the neck was about 1ft. Its head like a black retriever, 6 inches long, 4 inches broad. Whiskers, black and short. Circumference of body say 10-11ft, would be 4-5ft across the back." Robert enclosed a sketch of this latter creature, this also appears in Tim Dinsdale's 'Loch Ness Monster' page 190 figure 23. From these accounts Robert is of the opinion that our animals are mammals, he also says we should not how the L.M.N. is said to move on land. He thinks there are similarities between illustrations in ITWOSS and the 'Flipper' picture. He explains the tail by noting Arthur Grant's encounter on the road near Abriachan Pier in January 1934. One of the animals is stretching itself out on the side of a road when suddenly it is disturbed by a motorbike. In fright it waddles forward using its two front flippers (its belly and hindquarters trailing) then springs up like a sea lion and disappears. "If we are to consider then, Robert says, that sea serpents as written of in this letter are the same as Lake monsters, the long necked seal sees quite an adequate explanation; a warm blooded animal in a cold loch." He ends by saying that the creatures are probably the most developed in the family Pinnepedia. With an elongated head and tail end the seal is a good swimming shape, it can stay under for remarkable lengths of time. A Weddells' seal was recorded to have dived to 180ft for an hour.

NIS AT THE LOCHSIDE

I have heard from Terry Freshwater, who, with his son Ian, was at Loch Ness during the first week of July 1985. They stayed at the Foyers Hotel and were well pleased. They did not have a sighting during quite long periods of surveillance at Loch Ness and a day they spent at Loch Morar. During one morning they took a trip on the Caledonian Queen cruiser from Fort Augustus. The cruise lasted for an hour and Terry took the chance to ask the skipper if he had ever seen anything unusual in the loch. He was told quite frankly that the skipper had never seen Nessie although he had spent 50 years on or around the loch. During most of that time he had spent several hours a day on the water. When Terry said to him "You don't believe in the Loch Ness Monster then?" He replied "Oh I certainly do. The American research has shown that there is something huge in the loch. Just because I have not seen anything doesn't mean that I don't believe in it. My own view is that it is probably some kind of giant eel that very rarely comes to the surface." Terry asked him if he had known Alex Campbell. He said, "Yes, I grew up with him and knew him all his life. I'll tell you this. He was a man whose word you could rely upon. If Alex Campbell said he saw something in the loch then you can take it from me that he was telling the truth." Terry says that while this conversation on the boat was of no major importance it did show that a lifetime on or around the loch was no guarantee of a Monster sighting. What chance then for anyone who can only spend a few days at the loch in the summer? He supposes that the real answer to that is that you may be lucky, and we must always remember that one day a person will be at the right place, at the right time, with a reasonable camera, and there will be a good head and neck sighting reasonably close to shore. He will continue to try his luck as often as he can get up to the loch.

Word from Alastair and Sue Boyd, they will be back to Strone from 26th July until 22nd August.

I hope to be at Abriachan Pier, with my family, from 20th July until August 1st. We have a different motorcaravan, it is still a Bedford but has hi-top and is blue, registration number FVY 811S.

Perhaps not really NIS, but the Scottish Highland Hotels are running Family Ness weekends at their hotels. They are offering 2 night weekends at competitive prices, with a pack of Family Ness goodies for the children. The main drawback for us is that they do not have a hotel near the loch. The nearest, Oban, Gairloch or Pitlochry, for brochures and details write to Scottish Highland Hotels, 98 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1PW.

Well that rounds off another Nessletter, the address is still: R R Hepple, Huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham. DL13 1RQ. Tel: 0388 537359 remember your news and views are always needed. Subs UK £2.50 USA \$7.00 Rip.