

OBITUARY

I have had sad news from David Heppell, of the Royal Museum of Scotland, "You will be sorry to hear that our colleague Ian Lyster died during the night of Monday 27th April. As you will know he had been gravely ill since last May with a brain tumour, but his death after a good period of remission came as a shock to us all. He was only 49 years old. Ian bore his illness with remarkable fortitude, retaining to the end the sense of humour and warmth of personality that all those who knew him valued so much. I know he always enjoyed contact with fellow LN enthusiasts and many will remember Ian from his involvement with the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau." He asks if I would include a note about this in the next Nessletter, this I do with great sadness. Ian had been a NIS member almost from the beginning, during this time we had corresponded and spoken on the telephone, but I never met Ian I am sorry to say. His wife had taken the time among all her troubles to phone me to tell me of his illness, I was grateful for that. May I offer her our sincere sympathy at her loss.

DOC SHIELDS

Doc sent me a letter in response to NIS 80, he was unhappy about Erik Beckjord's 'press release'. It was the first he had heard of Erik's alternative convention, in Edinburgh, and says he certainly means to avoid it, and Erik. He is rather bored by the way Erik keeps using his name and photographs to boost his dubious exploits. Doc says, "He has not, at any time, informed me of this pseudo-event, and I have not received any form of invitation to attend. Beckjord, as usual, is allowing his limited imagination to run away with him. If he intends to use my name and photographs in any type of publication, video tape, or whatever, I intend to take legal action against him. I will, of course, inform him of this, personally, but I would be grateful if you would let your readers know that I do not support and am in no way connected with Beckjord's activities." Doc says that the ISC meeting sounds very interesting, and he will try to get there. He continued, saying we may be interested to know that, later this year Bob Rickard will be publishing a book entitled 'Monstermind', as one of his 'Fortean Tomes'. It will give the inside story, in detail, of Doc's monster-hunting experiences, theories, etc, fully illustrated. He concluded with brief word on Morgawr. In late February, or thereabouts, Morgawr, or at least a long-necked sea-serpent, was reported seen in the River Gannel, near Newquay. The lady who reported the sighting, described it on BBC Radio Cornwall, unfortunately Doc missed the broadcast, and has no more information at this stage.

HENRY BAUER

Another letter in response to NIS 80, this one from Henry Bauer. It concerns Erik Beckjord's plans for Edinburgh. Henry says he will try to be cool, but Erik tends to arouse his ire. He says, "I have not received an invitation to his 'alternative convention'; if I do, I shall not accept it. Let me explain by recounting some highlights (lowlights?) of my interaction with Beckjord. I first heard from him when he asked me to comment on the manuscript of an article in which he claimed that Nessies could easily get in and out of the loch via the River Ness. Some time after that, he asked me to send him photocopies of publications of the International Society of Cryptozoology because the Society had refused him membership (why didn't he just subscribe to the publications, if necessary under an assumed name?). He would call me every few weeks or months, often very late at night, and ramble on endlessly: for instance, that Bigfoot must be from another dimension because the prints he leaves would require so much pressure to make; he promised to send me all sorts of potentially interesting things, like his claimed film of 3 Nessies in Urquhart Bay, or his version of the Smith film, made less jerky or jumpy by rephotographing frame-by-frame; but I never actually received anything of the sort. A couple of years ago, in the Newsletter of the Society for Scientific Exploration, I referred to ISCAN'S failure to detect anything on their sonars, and then made what I hoped would be taken as a semi-jocular, tongue-in-cheek comment: "No results were obtained ... but this correspondent has a Super-8 film that shows a large black object breaking the surface a few tens of meters from the sonars." Soon Beckjord was plaguing me with phone calls and written communications, asking that I lend him the film, or give him a copy of it, and insisting that it was my duty to science to do that. My response was and is; when a scientist publishes or releases data, he is implicitly saying that the data is useful or significant; but I am not prepared to

say that my scrap of film is useful or significant, and I don't want anyone misrepresenting me by suggesting otherwise. (Incidentally, I am of course prepared to share my scrap of film with anyone whose opinion I would value and whom I could trust to use discretion; as soon as I could get a copy made, I sent it to Tim Dinsdale, who confirmed my view that it is not worth publishing.) In his announcement of the 'alternative convention', Beckjord has now misrepresented me. But already a couple of years ago, when I refused him the film, he had behaved unethically: he asked Alan Gillespie to get the film from me and hand it on to him! Last year when the Society for Scientific Exploration was to meet in San Francisco, Beckjord again urged me to bring the film out and show it to him; I refused to sponsor his attendance at the meeting, yet he told one of my friends that I was letting Beckjord use my hotel room for a showing of films about Loch Ness; and at the meeting itself, Beckjord made such a nuisance of himself that the President of the Society asked the hotel manager to have Beckjord removed from the premises (which he did). "There was more in a similar vein, illustrating the difficult time Erik has given Henry. So Henry was not surprised to hear that Erik had sent a letter to Richard Greenwell demanding to be on the programme at Edinburgh and threatening to hold a competing convention if his demand was turned down. He said he is certainly someone who wishes to distance himself from Beckjord, and who will not provide him with any material. It is a shame, but that is the effect Erik and his attitude has on many people. So while it is certain that Henry will be on the programme of the International Society of Cryptozoology, it is equally certain he is not associated in any manner with Erik and his 'Alternative Nessie'.

Henry has been researching the Loch Ness mystery for over ten years and has written a book on the subject, 'The Enigma of Loch Ness' which was published late in 1986. He admits to being a believer in Nessie now, although when he first read Dinsdale's book (Loch Ness Monster) he was intrigued but not immediately convinced. In his book Henry presents arguments for and against Nessie, but he also gives reasons for supporting the 'fors' rather than the 'againsts'. This is not a 'story' book giving an account of a person's, or group's efforts at the loch, nor does it give sightings in detail. It is a book for serious study and research into the mystery. Henry has amassed a tremendous amount of material about Loch Ness, books, newspaper articles, magazine articles, bits and pieces from all over, and he makes full use of these in copious notes at the end of each chapter. Also the bibliography given is very extensive, occupying some thirty pages. There are listed almost 800 reported sightings in an appendix, this is based on research done by Ulrich Magin, Henry has compressed the information given by Ulrich on each report to show only date, name of observer (where known), and published source of report, along with indication that a photograph or film was obtained. These last two items alone make the book a valuable asset to anyone's collection. The theme of the book is not really the search for Nessie but an analysis of the evidence and how it has been handled. Over the years a limited amount of evidence has been gathered and one of the questions frequently asked by newcomers to the problem is, why isn't the existence of Nessie accepted by the scientific world in the face of this evidence? Henry with his background in chemistry and his personal experience of the scientific establishment, explains why he thinks this breakthrough has not been achieved. He also sets out the steps that he thinks would be needed for scientific acceptance. The book is well illustrated with almost all the existing photographs, including some of the Searle fakes. I did not find it a very readable book in the main, but the last three chapters, 'Bad Reasons for Not Believing', 'Bad Reasons for Believing', and 'Nessie, Science, and Truth', were easier. Having said that, this is a very important book, and a very valuable addition to the Nessie literature. Published by Harper & Row Ltd., in cloth binding at an expensive £20.75.

ISC MEETING

I have a little more information about the Annual Membership Meeting of the ISC. In response to my request for a registration form, David Heppell sent me the following. The programme is now being printed and will be sent out sometime in May, it will also be given in the next ISC Newsletter. The Saturday Symposium, "The Search for Nessie in the 1980's", will include contributions by Richard Fitter, Roy Mackal, Henry Bauer, Paul LeBlond, Adrian Shine, Robert Rines and Tim Dinsdale. On Sunday the subject will be "Some Cats of Cryptozoology" and the speakers will be Karl Shuker, Di Francis, Lena and Paul Bottriell, Richard Greenwell and Victor Albert. There have also been arrangements made to provide lunches on both days, provided it is ordered in advance. There was sufficient positive response to the proposal for an Excursion to Loch Ness for it to take place, the minimum number of participants

will need to be 20. I will not give the full itinerary, but just outline, it is intended leaving Edinburgh at 4.00 p.m. Sunday for Inverness and arrive back at 6.00 p.m. on Monday; the cost will be £69.

ERIK BECKJORD

I have had two letters from Erik recently. He had some comments to make about NIS 80. I made reference to Erik's Achnahannet Film, unfortunately due to a typing error the sentence appeared as, 'Erik things the Burton, in 1960,...' it should have been, 'Erik thinks that Burton, in 1960,..' (sorry about that). However Erik would have liked it to have read; "Erik says that according to the Illustrated London News, July 16 1960, Dr Maurice Burton saw something similar and took a still photograph of it. Shortly afterward, Dr Burton's son saw a head and neck come up briefly." In regard to my comments about him being 'pushy'. Erik says, "let me assure you that while I was this way in the past, time has mellowed me somewhat, and I am interested in presenting a more conservative image. The approach of my Videocassette on LN will be the same as the Museum's, which is to present a three-way-view- Is Nessie: A) a normal zoological beast? B) non-existent as the skeptics claim? C) something of a metaphysical/physical nature?" He also points out that anyone entrusting material to him for the video will be paid an agreed share, and he intends keeping within the copyright laws. In his defence Erik says that Monster Hunters are very difficult and touchy, and it is very easy to alienate them. He cites his experience with Alistair Boyd in 1983. When Alistair learned that Erik had a psychic with him as an assistant, and that he supported Tony Shiels, he went to Erik in the middle of a late dinner and told him to remove his video equipment or he would dump it on the grass. Erik says he would not even let him finish his dinner. This would seem to an example of the 'Guilt by Association' factor, as discussed in Henry Bauer's book. Alistair had a hump sighting in 1979, in Urquhart Bay. Since that time he, and his wife Sue, have returned many times to the loch with camera equipment hoping to capture Nessie on film. Now Alistair holds what could be termed conventional views as to what Nessie could be, and he hopes that any evidence he may get, will be acceptable to the scientific establishment. Imagine his horror to find that he was associated, even tenuously, with such characters as a psychic and a wizard; either of which would be sufficient to keep the scientists at bay. I know it is unfortunate on Erik and Tony, but that is the way it is.

Erik also gave me more information about their Alternative Conference. It will go on as scheduled over July 25-26th, with sessions probably held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, and Sunday between 12 noon and 2.55. These sessions will be trimmed or shortened to fit the other sessions by the Museums should they change. It is their intention to be not only 'Alternative' but also 'Over flow or Supplemental'. Erik says he has been invited to show his 1983 Achnahannet film at the Museum, on Sunday pm, and has been told that there are a number of people who want to present material, but there is limited time and space. He suggested that the 'Alternative' could accommodate some of them. Erik invites any readers who are sympathetic to their conference to contact them as soon as practical, with ideas for locations near the Royal Museum of Scotland where they could hold their event. A pub back room, a restaurant side-room, a hotel meeting room, all would be good places, preferably close to Chambers Street. It is visualized that the Alternative Conference will be a place where young energy can let loose, and new idea can come into contact with old ones. Erik says that the entrance fee will be set to cover the cost of the room, hopefully around one pound.

STEUART CAMPBELL

In answer to my comments in NIS 80 I have had a letter and another section of map from Stuart. He says, "I stand corrected; I was confusing the 291ft. spot height (shown on the 1" OS with the bench mark shown on the 1:10000 OS. I enclose a copy of the 1899 25" (1:2500) OS which may clarify things. The 291' height is marked on this survey in yellow. " Stuart also marked the 368' spot height on the map, and says that if we assume that the road rises at a constant rate between these two spots and that Tim Dinsdale was 60ft higher than the lower; it is possible to calculate that he was at an intermediate point (351') also marked. He points out that it is difficult to judge whether or not this point corresponds to that shown on Tim's own sketch (which is out of proportion), but because it is almost 250yds from the 291' height and around a corner out of view, he doubts if it is. It is because he is an architect, he says, that he doubts the ability to judge the height of a rising road correctly, which is quite a different problem to judging the height of buildings and trees. He suspects that Tim was in fact lower down the road, perhaps

around 325ft, (273ft above loch surface). Steuart states that the problem would not have arisen if Dinsdale had made an accurate map in the first place. Also that it is a trivial matter; and makes little difference to the analysis of the film. There are far more important aspects of the film and it's analysis that could be discussed. He asks if I would care to publish his qualified retraction and show how he 'tends to handle the interpretation of evidence' I do so with pleasure, and perhaps a little amusement. Strange how he goes so far to accept what Tim says, but seems determined to split the difference, willing to go from 250 ft above loch, to 273 ft, but not to 300 ft.

Steuart continues, "Regarding the Hodge's 'otter' report, Peter Hodge may deny that he saw an otter but in my opinion that is what he saw (i.e. that is the simplest explanation).

He says that I accuse him of putting his own interpretation on the evidence. Asking why I chastize him for this as it is what everyone does, even N buffs. They place their own interpretation on the evidence. He says, "Of course you put it this way simply because I interpret the evidence in a different way to you. Can you not see this? How about being fair and simply saying that you do not agree with my interpretation? Mind you that, on its own, is not enough; it would be necessary to detail your objection to my interpretation." I did point out that Steuart puts his own interpretation on the evidence, but I also said, "Like others before him, he has written a book which supports his explanations of the phenomena." Suggesting that when we read his book we bear that in mind. I did not say he was alone in interpreting the evidence in his own way. In NIS 76 with regard to the winding breaks in the Dinsdale film, I said it was one of the things Steuart and I must agree to disagree about. In other Nessletters I have pointed out that Steuart and I look at things from a different standpoint. He went to answer why he omitted 200+N reports from his book, lack of space, he was restricted to 42000 words, few reports are detailed enough for analysis and comment. He thinks it is enough to deal with the most prominent reports, as a sample of the whole, also he made it clear in his book that he considers eye-witnesses are unreliable. He went on to my comment that he seems to rely heavily on the work of other authors. Asking, should he ignore them, which he feels could be justly criticized. Saying he merely refers to them where relevant, often as a source of reference. He says I imply that the authors he quotes are not reliable. I did not, I pointed out that Steuart seemed to pick and choose what he used from others, such as Roy Mackal. This could lead to the bias of their arguments being altered. About Mackal, Steuart said, "If I select from his book that is because I do not agree with everything he says. No author is going to quote opinions with which he disagrees without saying so and there was no space to do this at length." He finished by saying that he does not have an impossible task, being under no obligation to explain all the reports, even if he could locate them, and his case is not unproven if only one remains unexplained. He says the burden of proof is on those who claim that N exists; he does not have to prove N does not exist. He has gone to the trouble of showing how none of the principal reports are acceptable evidence. But he says, "I am willing to examine any report of your choice." Seems a good offer, however it is not really much use, after all Steuart has already made his decision, as we have. Remember he says that Peter Hodge saw an otter, when Peter is certain that he did not. Any report that may be suggested to Steuart for analysis, will receive similar treatment.

SIGHTING

The March 7th 1987 issue of the Press and Journal had a report of a sighting. Dr Ayles and his wife, from Edinburgh, where near the Foyers Power Station one day early in March. The loch was fairly rough when at about 3.35pm, they saw a black cylindrical object rise from the surface in mid-loch. Although previously sceptical, they are sure they saw the head and neck of an animal, a Nessie, but their camera was in the car and they did not obtain pictures.

That is it for now, however I wish to apologise to two members who are going to receive a subscription reminder, after sending a cheque. Two letters and cheques were accidentally destroyed on 25th April 1987, I had opened them but cannot remember their names, very sorry. My address is still:- R.R. Hepple, Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel. 0388 537359, Subscriptions U.K. £2.50, U.S.A. \$7.00.

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