

## ISC Meeting

Leaving home alone on Friday evening, July 24th, I was commencing my annual holidays a day early. My wife Doris, and daughter Heather, were to be driven to Edinburgh by one of our sons, Colin, to join me on Saturday evening after spending the day at the Zoo. After a comfortable night on the outskirts of Edinburgh, an advantage of a motorcaravan, I was at the Royal Museum of Scotland by 9 o'clock Saturday morning. This is a most impressive building and although time did not allow for a good browse, the exhibits I did manage to see were very well done. After an initial informal gathering, we went into the Lecture Theatre, where the meeting got under way somewhat late. We were welcomed by Mr Anderson, Director, National Museums of Scotland, then Richard Fitter presented the first item, the History of the Hunt. Richard was one of the original board members of the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau, and so has been interested from the early days. His talk was illustrated with some archive and TV film put together by Tim Dinsdale. We were then addressed by Roy Mackal, on The Biology of the Loch Ness Monster. Roy was Research Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Chicago when he became a LNPIB board member in 1965, since then he has been very involved and interested in the work done at the loch. He discussed the various members of different species which could be considered to meet some of the reported characteristics of the creatures in Loch Ness. These varied from plesiosaurus, tortoise, turtle, through shark, ribbon fish, eel, to seal or small whale. Although none of the suggested candidates exactly met the required specifications. Roy said in his opinion the only way a satisfactory answer would be obtained would be to catch a specimen, preferably alive and undamaged. That is a thought he has had for many years, in an appendix to his book 'The Monsters of Loch Ness' he has the design for a monster trap to be used at the loch, although no one has ever tried one. Roy realizes the problems of working in Loch Ness and said that it may be better to try to capture a similar type of animal he has heard of in Canada. The local Eskimos say that these animals follow the salmon up the rivers from time to time, and Roy thought it could be possible to arrange for an attempt to net one. The next lecture 'Public Perception of the Loch Ness Monster' was presented by Henry Bauer, author of 'The Enigma of Loch Ness', and professor of chemistry and science studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Henry gave a very comprehensive talk on the way the press has handled the story of the Loch Ness Monster over the years. He compared the number of sightings with articles in the papers and magazines, also conversely how press coverage affects sightings. It seems that there are peaks and troughs of interest in subjects such as Nessie, and this affects how the stories are reported. During peak periods any little story is reported and during troughs even important events at the loch are virtually ignored. The last item before lunch was a presentation by Dr Paul LeBlond, an oceanographer at the University of British Columbia, Paul has taken the Wilson Nessie photograph and by using a mathematical formula has been able to work out the size of the waves, and from that the height of the object in the photograph. From his work as an oceanographer Paul knows that if the windspeed is known for an area of sea, wave size can be worked out. He therefore made enquiries at the two nearest weather stations to Loch Ness, Dalwhinnie and Aberdeen, to find out if they could tell him the windspeed on the dates involved. The date that is usually accepted as the one on which Wilson took his pictures is 19th April 1934, although there are some who suggest it should be 1st April. However on both days concerned the wind was Force 2. From that Paul calculated that the wave length was 5 metres and thus the object (head and neck) in the photograph is 1.2 metres tall. Paul illustrated his talk with slides to show the various wave patterns produced by differing wind speeds, and pointed out that an increase to Force 3 would give a 10% increase. He said he was pleased with the initial findings, but he would be happier to take the process further, even though it is much more complicated. That would be to digitise the photograph and by counting the pixels arrive at a more precise answer. While Paul's work is very interesting and has arrived at the sort of size we are looking for, I have some reservations to the validity of the basis for the calculations. Loch Ness is a fairly large body of water but obviously nothing much like the open seas and oceans which are the basis for Paul's equations.

These equations allow for the wind to blow uninterrupted over the surface for a length of time, the wind energy is transferred to the water and wave size is then calculable. I wondered how the shape of the loch would affect that, the surrounding mountains, the funnel affect of the Glens Urquhart and Invermoriston, these all could have some affect on the results. However Paul's work is interesting and if due allowance can be made for the various topographical features of the loch, it could be of great assistance with interpretation of future photographic evidence. We then has the break for lunch. It was a very nice buffet, but more important it gave everyone the chance to mingle, as did the pre-meeting gathering. After lunch we were addressed by Aidrian Shine on the recent fieldwork at the loch by the Loch Ness and Morar Project. Over the seasons I have covered their activities in the Nessletters, but it was interesting to have it all presented by Aidrian and hear first hand of the large mid-water contacts the Project obtained especially those in 1982. Although Aidrian seems reluctant to say he actually believes in the animals, there must be something in their findings to keep him interested. Robert Rines, President, Academy of Applied Science, then reviewed the research contributions to date of the Academy. Recently the Academy has received a fair amount of criticism, about it's work at the loch, from various sources. Bob's address was an impassioned defence of their actions and activities over the years, his background as a lawyer showed. It is just a same that some of the debunkers were not present to hear the Academy's side. He also gave a graphic account of his own sighting in Urquhart Bay, a large back some 25 feet long, 8 feet wide, and 3 feet high, on June 23rd 1971. He was in the company of Carol, now his wife, and Wing Commander and Mrs Carey, some film was taken but it was late evening and although the wake being made can clearly be seen there is nothing to help indentify the animal making it, but whatever it was it was large. Bob rounded off his talk by saying the Academy was planning to return to the loch to renew it's efforts, saying that negotiations had taken place to enable the Academy to have the use of classified naval equipment that should be capable of obtaining very good results. When asked later what the equipment was and how he knew of it's existence, he would not say. It is my guess that it will be new generation sonar and it will have been developed by Marty Klein, whose side-scan sonar as used at Loch Ness has been used by the US Navy. After a belated break for coffee, the meeting was well behind time by now, we returned to hear Time Dinsdale give us his presentation, 'Three Decades of Nessie Hunting, a Personal Odyssey'. This, as it says, was the story of Tim's expeditions to the loch over the years, his activities, findings, theories, illustrated by slides and film. His 1960 film was shown, I was pleased to be able to see it again on a large screen. I have seen it a number of times over the years but it is still an awesome experience. I have looked for a word to describe how I feel when I view it on a screen larger than the TV, and awesome is the best I can manage. Not because it is very good, it is not, not because it enables us to identify the animals, it does not, but because it opens the door a fraction, it gives us the merest glimpse of something large, alive, and powerful moving in Loch Ness. Over the past months there has been a debate running in the Nessletters, between Steuart Campbell and mainly myself, Steuart has an article published in the February 1986 issue of The Photographic Journal, in which he developed the theory that what Tim had filmed was a boat. Others have put forward this idea before but Steuart said he had found discrepancies in the JARIC analysis etc. As I wrote then, I had seen Tim's film on a large cinema screen and I was certain whatever it was it was not a boat. I took the opportunity provided by the screening of the film at the meeting, to try hard to see Steuart's boat, but I could not. I am still sure that Tim did not film a boat in 1960. To round off the meeting there was a short period of questions from the audience, no one asked anything that, in effect, has not already been answered. Erik Beckjord announced final details of his Alternative Nessie, to be held that evening close by, and invited everyone along. So ended an historic occasion. The fact that the National Museums of Scotland have hosted a meeting of the Society of Cryptozoology, where a day had been spent discussing Nessie, which is considered a myth and legend by many of the establishment, made it so.

It could also be said that it was unique, it is doubtful if as many of the 'names' involved in the Loch ness Saga will ever be again gathered together at one venue. For my part I had a wonderful day, meeting again Roy Mackal, last seen back in my days with the LNI, Murray Stewart, again LNI, Bob Rines, Tim Dinsdale, Ivor Newby, it had been a few years since we connected at the loch; then there were the newer people, corresponded with but never met, Henry Bauer, Richard Greenwell, Andreas Trottmann,

Erik Beckjord really too many to get around in the limited time provided by the breaks. There were also some NIS members, the Macfarlanes, the Boyds, Terry and Ian Freshwater, Ricky Gardiner, it is a shame you all could not be there. Tony Harmsworth and Betty Gallagher from the Loch Ness Centre, Drumnadrochit, were there. I had a brief word with Steuart Campbell, clutching an armful of his books, he said it was surprising that so many people wanted to hear such rubbish; although he had happily sold over a dozen copies of his book. Later, after our holidays, I was in touch with David Heppell at the Museum, and found out that there were some 160 people at the Nessie meeting. As I have said I had a wonderful day, but it was also disappointing in a way, because it became clear that there has been a tailing off of organized work by groups at the loch over the last few seasons. The Academy of Applied Science has not been able to mount a real expedition for some seasons, the Loch Ness Project placed all its effort in the sonar sweep in 1986, the weather put paid to that. Henry Bauer's book and research for it has been based on the literature and newspaper coverage of Loch Ness in the past, interesting but not really extending our knowledge. Paul LeBlond's research was done on old photographic evidence, in the absence of newer I know, but once again not taking us forward. We were left to rely on the efforts of the individual, Doug Macfarlane and his echo sounder, Alastair Boyd and his camera, along with others who watched and waited by the loch.

Although now we can hope that Bob is able to obtain the new equipment, and that the Academy will be able to renew its hunt. There is also the Project's plan for another, larger, sonar sweep of the loch sometime during October, but this relies on a spell of half decent weather to enable them to use their boats and sonar to full advantage. To David Heppell and those who organized the meeting must go our sincere thanks for a memorable occasion.

I was sorry not to be able to go on to Erik Beckjord's Alternative meeting. But as I have said the family were sitting on the wall outside the Museum, they had been waiting for three quarters of an hour, and we were to make our way to Loch Ness next day. I heard that there has only been about a dozen people there, which was a shame, but that what was presented was well received.

#### Holidays 1987

Sunday 26th July 1987, early evening, and we were back on the old pier at Abriachan, after visiting our son and daughter-in-law at Fort William on the road from Stirling, where we had spent the night after Edinburgh. The weather during our stay was cool, most days being cloudy, there was some rain but not too much, we had some good calm watching weather but even those days seemed dull and cool. It was good to be back. I collected the canoe, although I did not use it as much this season, but when I did it was nice to be on the water. I saw nothing of Nessie, but others had. We saw a bat one evening, while fishing from the shore, that was a first for us at the loch. Alastair and Sue Boyd arrived at the chalet at Strone on Monday, they were to be there for the next few weeks. Ricky Gardiner was staying at the Lovat Hotel, Fort Augustus, I am not sure how long he was staying. Erik Beckjord along with Alex Crosbie, whom he met in Edinburgh, arrived to stay in one of the caravans at Achnahannet, above the old LNI site. This was presented to the local press as an expedition by the National Cryptozoological Society, a US based organisation. On our first Wednesday afternoon Sue and Alastair visited us as well as Ricky Gardiner, we all had a wonderful Nessie natter, I tried later in our stay to meet up with Ricky again, but could not manage to catch up with him. I did visit Sue and Alastair a couple of times at Strone, spending an afternoon with them, when Doris and Heather were away for a couple of days at Fort William.

I also popped into the Loch Ness Centre at Drumnadrochit a couple of times, I had a talk with Betty Gallagher, and a brief word with Tony Harmsworth. Tony had been on a TV chat show during the week following the Edinburgh meeting, his appearance had been put back to the Wednesday, instead of Monday, then a fire had necessitated a last minute change of studio's; so his slot was shortened and the sonar equipment he had intended to display could not be used. Betty told me of a recent sighting report, and was able to give me the basic details. Mrs Barbara Grant, of Drumnadrochit, was being driven along the A82, Inverness/Fort Augustus road, on Tuesday July 21st 1987, it was 8.30 am, the weather clear and loch calm.

Just South of the Abriachan turn off her attention was caught by an object about midway between the shores, 'swans neck' beige colour, moving fast towards Lochend causing a huge boiling in the water also a huge wash. It slowed and stopped in a swirl of water. Her driver stopped the car as Mrs Grant lost sight of object behind trees, when she was able to see the position again the object had gone, but there was still a swirling in the water. Mrs Grant said that what she saw looked very much like a swan's neck, but admitted that her eye-sight was not as good as it had been, so she knew that whatever it was, it was much bigger than a swan, as she could not spotted a swan at that distance. the colour is somewhat different to that usually reported by witnesses, but could have been the result of the sun being fairly low in the sky and off to one side of the object, giving a good reflection. The position given as 'midway between the shores' is a little vague, the road is low along that stretch and the far portion of the water tends to be forshortened, so 400 or 500 yards could appear midway. I also heard of another sighting around the same area. I was talking to Mr Davidson at the Abriachan Nurseries, just above the road by the pier, I was telling him of my interest in Nessie and he told me that he had seen one in Mid-June. The bungalow stands overlooking the loch, at about 150 feet, a good view but not vast, one early evening in mid-june 1987 he, and three others were in the front room when they saw a large dark back in the water. The loch was fairly calm with small waves. he went to get a camera and binoculars, as he returned the back submerged. No further details were seen, just a comparatively short look at what is the classic sighting, that is the upturned boat. He has been living there for many years and that is the first time he has seen anything. We also talked about otters in the loch. He fishes from the shore below the Nursery fairly often and has never seen an otter, he has however seen their tracks along the stream that borders his property. I also heard of a sighting in the Dores area, but was told that it could be connected with the anti-fish farming campaign. I have since learned that it was Mr Ron MacLennan from Dores who, along with a neighbour, reported seeing an animal off Tor Point. Over the years Mr MacLennan says he has had five sightings, while his neighbour has seen nothing unusual during the 35 years she has lived in Dores. On Thursday 23rd July 1987 at 4.40 pm they saw three humps travelling up the loch beyond Tor Point, they said there seemed to be some splashing associated with the humps. As Members will perhaps know when I report sighting I usually do so without being able to investigate them, I just present the story as I Hear it. In this case I have been able to talk to Mr MacLennan's wife who is very enthusiastic about Nessie, saying that in here opinion this season has been one of the best recently for Nessie activity. not that she has seen anything this year, just feeling that Dores Bay has shown signs. Also she said that someone staying in their caravan near the shore at Dores, took photographs of something under-water in the bay. Now as I have written before in Nessletters, I believe that it is very difficult to take photos of objects underwater from above the surface, conditions, lighting, angles needing to be just right. That Mrs MacClennan can easily accept such claims, makes me wary. I am not saying that Mr or Mrs MacLennan would deliberately fabricate a story, or a sighting, but it could be possible to allow their enthusiasm to carry them away. This is a good illustration of the need of serious researchers to interview eye-witnesses, to be able to form an opinion as to the value of the report. I am not very happy about Mr MacLennans sighting, at 4.30 in the afternoon Scott 2 goes steaming by the old Abriachan Pier heading for Lochend, very often, in good conditions, leaving an impressive wake pattern behind. That could give rise to a good multi-hump sighting to anyone who was enthusiastic and not too critical. On Friday July 31st I met Erik Beckjord briefly on the road, as we returned from Drumnadrochit, he was away into Inverness to collect a film that had been processed. On Wednesday, while he was away hiring a car, his companion at Achnahannet had taken some photographs of a wake close to a crusier and a yacht. Later that evening he called in at the pier as he returned with the prints. Alex Crosbie was with him. Alex now lives in Edinburgh, but had been a street sweeper in Fort Augustus for many years and claming to have had six sightings, he is something of an odd-ball, as Doris can testify, and has strange theories and ideas about the animals. On the Wednesday he was watching from Achnahannet, there were various craft around, when he saw a narrow wake, using a 35mm still camera he shot 7 frames. Erik had six of the prints with him, the seventh had been left with the Press and Journal, which had published the story that morning. I was able to have a good look at them but was not excited by them, as I am sure that it is the wake of a water bird of some description. Alex had said that one of cruisers had stopped and reversed engine to avoid whatever was creating the wake. There was no evidence of this in the pictures. The loch was very calm and the boat wakes showed extremely

well, with no sign of the disturbance caused by the reverse thrust of a propeller. In the first one or two of the photographs there is a yacht, motoring along not using its sails, out to the port side is the narrow wake, making to cross behind the yacht. In the next shot is a cruiser, with the narrow wake on the starboard side going away from it. In this shot there is no sign of the wake left by the yacht, which has already passed, indicating that there was a lapse of some time between the exposures, and that the bird, or whatever it was, was moving quite slowly. The photos were taken at such a range as to make it impossible to discern what is at the head of the narrow wake. Erik also has with him some enlargements taken from the film he had taken in 1983 from Achnahannet. These were blown up to such a stage that grain was very visible, in these grainy patterns Erik could see cat-like features and one he said looked like a human face covered by flour! Since returning home I have had a letter and press release, from Erik. He says that the small drawings he showed me of the head of the creature, seen under a magnifier, were correct; he has enlarged several photographically to verify it. As mergansers or other ducks do not have the head of a cat-like being, he assumes that that will eliminate even the few die-hards who want to see a duck where there is none. He feels the photographs are significant because they were taken from the same place, match the 1983 creature having the same cat-like head, and in both years it seems to be looking at the photographer, as was the creature in the 1977 Smith film, he says. His photos have been shown on NBC TV (US), and he was meeting with some of the staff at the LA County Museum of natural History, who will see if the photos show anything significant. Erik says that if they do then the museum, not himself, will call a press conference. He had shown the photos to various Loch Ness investigators before leaving and the concensus was that (with one exception) the wake was too narrow to be a duck or an otter etc. Several said that something unusual was to be seen, particularly since ordinary wakes, even from boats, die down after twenty feet at most; this wake is in a long streak, and does not die out for nearly seventy feet, leading him to suspect that the better part of wake is the creature itself. I do not know who told Erik that wakes do not last more than twenty or so feet, because it is not so. I have photographs of narrow wakes in calm water extending for hundreds of yards, and cruisers and other small craft make wakes that easily reach the shore from the centre of the loch. Something as large as Scott 2 can put out a wake that can extend from a turn at Aldourie Castle along the loch for as much as four mile. I am grateful that Erik gave me the chance to see the photos at first hand, and I do not wish to belittle his efforts or results, however what is needed is good evidence. Photographs that can be assessed and evaluated with the minimum of speculation, with no need for large degrees of enlargement to enable the examiner, with one eye closed and in a dim light, to be able to make out a blurred form. Unfortunately the seven shots obtained by Alex Crosbie do not fall into that category, and in my opinion are of a waterbird of some description.

Over the years one of the questions most commonly asked, is, why aren't they seen more often? There are a number of factors involved, I think, one being that much of the loch is not easily seen, hidden by trees and secondary growth. This year I drove the length of the loch of number of times on the A82, to Fort Augustus and then down the Great Glen to Fort William, I was forcibly struck by how little of the water one can see, especially when driving alone. From Fort Augustus you reach Invermoriston with only two looks at the water, a mile or two after Invermoriston there were some road improvements done a few years ago, this provides a short stretch with a fairly good look at the loch, although even here one can see how quickly the undergrowth is sprouting. There is a place nearly opposite Foyers where the road runs low and close to the surface, in the LNI days it was referred to as the Fish Farm, there was just a jumble of large rocks between loch and road with a good view of the water, now the view is blocked by 15/20 foot tall fir trees. With one or two more glimpses of the water you reach Achnahannet, 150 feet above the surface, with a look out over the loch for another short while. Then to Urquhart Castle and Bay, with some better views of the water, leaving the bay and rounding the headland there are some good panoramas, better going south than north, a few more glimpses of the water passing the Clansman Hotel and Abriachan and you reach two long lay-bys opposite Tor Point and Aldourie Castle with a good look at the water, then on to Lochend. As the driver on a twisting, narrow road, you have seen very little of the water, if you had passengers they will have had the chance to see more of it, but even they see surprisingly little of the southern end of the loch. The B852, General Wade's road from Dores to Foyers is no better, being narrower and more twisting, in some places being single track with passing places,

although there are a few places where a good view of the water is possible but it is really necessary to stop. This year while we were at the loch there were road survey teams working along the A82, which is due for improvement. When the work eventually begins it should open up views of the water, and I wonder if it will lead to a spate of sightings as did the road works in the 1930's. As I wrote earlier another holiday over and I still have not seen Nessie, but I had a memorable time at the ISC meeting and it is always good to be back at the lochside and visit old friends and places. Now to start thinking about next year.

### Loch Ness Project

The Project is planning another sonar sweep of Loch Ness sometime in October, at the moment I do not have an exact date. Last year's attempt, using ten cruisers had to be abandoned at Castle Urquhart owing to gale force wind and very rough water. I was told that to get the best results from the sonar equipment, the boats had to travel slowly and in the rough conditions there were times when they did not have steerage way, making things potentially dangerous. This year Caley Cruisers are to supply twenty craft, charge free as last year, and the sonar is to be provided by Lowrance again. Lowrance is said to be the largest manufacturer of fish finding equipment worldwide. All that is needed is a spell of fair weather, to go along with the Project's efforts. During Operation Deepscan they are not only looking for the Monster, but will be doing a fish count, numbers, types, and distribution, which they hope will be extremely accurate.

There is to be another sonar search in the loch early in September, the Norwegian firm Simrad Subsea is to make its demonstration yacht available to Aidrian Shine and the Project. Simrad UK were holding demonstrations in the Shetlands, and were going on to undertake others in the North East. There was a gap in their programme and they offered their yacht and equipment to the Project. Among the equipment aboard is a broad swathe multi-beam echo sounder, which takes 32 shots of the bottom in a broad angle across the craft's path, this is said to be more accurate than the usual single-beam echo sounders. It is claimed that this gear can tell if a shoal of fish is sufficiently dense, or if the individual fish are large enough, to be worthwhile fishing. They are to work in an area of loch off Urquhart Castle, a Simrad director said that if they come across a large mammal they will certainly see it.

All this effort should produce some positive results. One thing I am not too happy about, is that I have heard Operation Deepscan referred to as the once and for all effort, suggesting that if no good results are obtained, that will be that. As members know I am not a sonar expert, but I do know how difficult it is to use in the loch, and I think it would be impossible to improve a negative with it. Also the Simrad director's remark that they will certainly be able to see a large mammal; what if it is not a mammal they are looking for?

That's it for this time, please remember your comments, news and views are always needed and welcome, the address is:- R.R. Hepple, Huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel. Weardale (0388) 537359. Subscriptions. U.K. £2.50. U.S.A. \$7.00.

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