

## RIP'S PIECE

As we go into another year of Nessletters may I take the opportunity of thanking you all for being members. NIS was formed with the hope of providing interested people with a means of exchanging news and airing views, and as a source of information. The response over the years indicates that on the whole it has been successful, and should continue so. Last year was one of differing aspects, the achievement of the International Society of Cryptozoology holding their Annual Membership Meeting at the Royal Museum of Scotland, as it were, getting a foot into the door of the establishment, presenting papers on the 'Search for Nessie', and 'Cryptozoological Cats'. All the excitement of Operation Deepscan, the build-up by the media, the feeling of now we will have an answer, followed by the anti-climax. Although there were limited positive results. Then the tragedy of Tim Dinsdale's death, the sudden shock followed by the knowledge that it left an unfillable gap in the ranks of the researchers; the seekers after truth. With the possible exception of the dolphins, the news of Tim's death evoked the greatest response from members. Practically every letter and note I have received since has said how sad the member was, and in many instances it was through either his books or lectures that interest had been sparked. Among it all Erik Beckjord's associate Alex Crosbie took a number of interesting pictures, although they are of doubtful use. Also rumbling along all season was the fish farm project. I have followed this in the local newspapers and will try to give you the story to date in this Nessletter. I also have a few odd ends to tidy up from last year. I will also be asking for an increase in subscription. I have totalled the ins and outs and last year I was out of pocket, therefore an increase to U.K. £2.75 and U.S.A. \$9.00 is forced on me. As I usually say at this time, if you have written with a query which has not received a reply, my apologies and please try again.

## JAMES BALDWIN

The first of the loose ends is a letter I received from James last November. He first comments on the I.S.C. Edinburgh meeting saying it seemed to have been just what was necessary, expressing gratitude to David Heppell for all the work that must have gone into it. This is a sentiment many members have expressed. He went on to make a brief, but strongly felt, comment about Stuart Campbell and his remarks in NIS 80. These had been, in part, concerned with a sighting report obtained by James and carried in NIS 76. James says that Stuart comments that Mr Scobie had seen an otter making a long neck. There are two facts he must bear in mind, 1) He was not there at the time of the sighting. 2) He was not there when James interviewed Mr Scobie. In these circumstances he has to accept that what he expresses is personal opinion, and it cannot have the same validity as it would have done if he had interviewed the witness himself. James says he went to some trouble to suggest that other phenomena were involved. One can only go so far with this when a witness is so obviously sure of what he had seen. It becomes insulting to proceed. James also observed Stuart had entirely failed to comment on the remainder of the statement, which relates a large water disturbance. Mr Scobie's opinion was that it was a large body submerging, James says that he has often observed otters, in the wild and in captivity, and they make practically no disturbance when submerging. He asks, "Is Stuart now going to suggest they make a 'long body' and perhaps that is how they cause large water disturbance?" James has a lot of respect for Stuart's often well-considered opinions, and says he simply damages his credibility with these weak arguments on eye witness reports. James finally comments: "In his book at p.15-15 he comments on evidence. He says the evidence the monster-hunters present "deserves to be examined". What examination has he made of this evidence before deciding the witness did not see what he says he did? He further says "evidence is not really evidence until it has passed a number of stringent tests. Thus in a court, while a witness may give his evidence, what he says may only be regarded as relevant evidence if it withstands cross-examination." (p.16) I hope he will accept from me, as a lawyer, this is factually wrong. Even if it were right. What cross-examination has Stuart made before rejecting the evidence? He needs to show consistency."

STEUART CAMPBELL

To continue tidying loose ends, Stuart sent me a short letter early in December, commenting on NIS 84 and Henry Bauer's Deepscan report. He says Henry mistakes the controversy between Nessie-hunters for a debate between scientists, but says that few scientists have ever hunted for Nessie. In fact he says that it could be argued that no reputable scientist could do so. Almost all Nessie-hunters being non-scientists either because they lack scientific qualifications or because they do not employ the scientific method, or both. He goes on, "Even those who do hold such qualifications have not always been careful with their method." Therefore Stuart thinks that Henry's conclusion that there is no consensus of opinion 'at Loch Ness' cannot be taken to mean that science has not reached a conclusion as to whether or not monsters live in the loch. Nessie hunters are necessarily people who believe in Nessie's existence. he concludes, "The consensus of scientists (physical anthropologists, biological limnologists, oceanographers and physical chemists) in 1978 was that reports of Nessie are due to imagination, hoaxes, myths and misidentified animals. Only 23% thought that the reports were due to living animals still unknown to science. Operation Deepscan showed that this majority opinion is justified. "Stewart did not give the source of his information, however a 23% vote in favour shows there are a number of scientific types with open minds out there. As I write this I am thinking, do we really need the scientists? Over the ages 'the scientists' have, in the main, been very conservative. They took some convincing that the earth was round, and not at the centre of the universe. The history of science is strewn with similar cases, many major breakthroughs being made by renegades, people with open enquiring minds not really accepted by their scientific contemporaries. It is people such as that which we need involved in the Loch Ness mystery, if they are scientists all well and good, but in my opinion it is not strictly necessary. I know evidence must be dealt with carefully and correctly, any experiments carried out must be repeatable. If that is the scientific approach I am for it, but it is also common sense. It could be said that what is needed, are people with the attributes of lawyers and police detectives, to investigate the eye-witness reports. Along with skilled technicians to operate sonar, cameras, hydrophones or whatever other equipment may be useful in the search, and analyse the results obtained. That, combined with financial support, perhaps from industry, would be a step in the right direction.

#### SIGHTINGS

I have three reports, kindly sent to me by Mrs Gallagher of the Loch Ness Centre, Drumnadrochit. On Monday 21st September 1987 Jim Hogg, of Sydney, Australia, and Alan O'Hara, of Finchley, London, were opposite the Hydro Station at Foyers when they saw a series of round black objects on the surface. The objects, neither counted but there were more than three, were stationary with waves breaking over them, compared to the effect you may see on a reef, about 300 mtrs off shore. As they parked the car all the objects submerged, leaving a great turbulence, the incident was all over in about two minutes. The time of day was 3.50 p.m., the weather dull and windless, the surface being small ripples and a swell effect. They took photographs and said they would send prints regardless of quality, or content. Up to now they have not done so.

Secondly from Tommy Mattsson, of Sandviken, Sweden, in the form of a short letter. He wrote, "It was on Saturday 22nd of August between 14.46 - 14.48 hours when I sighted some strange V shaped waves in the middle of the Loch Ness heading towards Fort Augustus S.W. at about 10-20 km/H speed. The waves were about 8-10cm when they reached the shore. The spot where I sighted it was on a parking place 11 miles N.E. from the Tourist Parking place at Fort Augustus on the A82 road. I was going down to the loch to feel if the water was as cold as I had read about. I was down there for about 10 minutes when I saw the waves, but the thing which created the waves I could only see for about 1 minute. My wife was standing above me in the parking place and she saw it to." 11 miles N.E. from Fort Augustus brings you somewhere opposite Foyers. He did not say what it was that made the waves, but they were quite small when they came ashore. However at 4 inches, after having travelled a few hundred yards across the loch, they were larger than could be expected from water fowl, ducks, otter, etc. Mattsson did not remark on any boats they had seen as they drove along the road, as the effect could have been a decaying cruiser wake.

In another letter Mrs C Wilcox of Tattenhall, Cheshire, wrote. "August 29th 1987, Loch Ness Camping Site, 10.45 walking along the pathway with my husband a noise of large splashing sound. We turned to look at the water which was very calm except for swell where splashing died down to leave three round areas of bodies with ripples of water from each area, then very large waves coming into shore." No mention of size, colour, or anything else, but it was accompanied by a little sketch. This showed three ellipses with water disturbance and space between. The gaps being drawn slightly smaller than the objects.

As usual I report these almost with comment, not being able to interview the witnesses. I do not like multiple hump reports, as these can all too easily be boat wakes, and witnesses need to be carefully questioned about the time leading to the sighting and conditions at the time.

Bilk 21, the newsletter put out by Ulrich Magin, Stuhlbruderhofstr. 4, 6704 Mutterstadt, West Germany, contains two reports sent in by Andreas Trottmann, who collected them in May 1984, speaking to both witnesses himself. On November 24, 1982 a young farmer and hunter from Fort Augustus was on the A82 at the Cobb Cairn. It was 4.45 p.m., when from his car he noticed, at a distance of about 225m, a headneck some 2.4 - 2.7m high. The head was the size of a sheep's, with no features visible. He stopped his car, slammed the door and ran down to the shore. When he arrived there the thing had vanished. The loch was calm with little waves. A sketch he drew of what he had seen resembled the second Shiel's photo. The second report is very brief. Sometime in the early 1980's, a woman whom Trottmann describes as shy, saw two humps in the vicinity of Cobb's Cairn, on a calm loch surface. Ulrich says he has experienced people telling their Nessie stories, turning shy when a notebook is produced. Some comment on the first account, I know Andreas interviewed the person concerned but there seems to be some unusual features. It seems strange that someone should describe himself as a 'hunter'. And having stopped the car he 'slammed the door', what self respecting eye witness does not do this, according to the books. He then ran down to the shore, to find the head and neck had gone, of course, he had slammed the car door. Hadn't he? More interesting is his run to the shore. The Cobb Memorial is some 240/50 feet above the loch, the shore about 200 yards distant, most of this distance being nearly straight down. These conditions apply for some three quarters of a mile in both directions, become worse going toward Urquhart and only slightly easier at Achnahannet. So any 'run it the shore' would be more of a very arduous, dangerous scramble. The prospect of which, could be enough to deter anyone attempting it, even a young farmer/hunter. Strange he should say he had run to the shore at that place. A discrepancy such as this to known facts, must place a question mark against the rest of the account. I do not know how well Andreas knows the area, but feel that more light should have been thrown on that aspect of the report.

#### FISH FARM

Late in April 1987 the members of Inverness divisional planning committee expressed their concern that the appearance of fish farms on Loch Ness could chase away visitors and Nessie alike, and deferred for further consideration an application by Bridge of Faille Smolts Ltd, to site up to 30 fish cages at Camus nam Mult, this is less than a mile down the shore from Dores. They agreed to ask the regional council to define clearly it's policy on fish farming to enable them to consider this and any future application. Then early in June the Highland Regional Council voted 14 to 8 to adopt a policy allowing fish farms on the loch, subject to strict controls. This brought together tourist operators, local councillors, and the Inverness and Highland Chamber of Commerce, in a bid to ban fish cages from the loch. Many believe that such a policy could lead to a torrent of applications from developers wishing to take advantage of the loch's ice-free winter conditions. Councillor Macrae, Dores, felt that fish farms would detract from the natural beauty of Loch Ness, one of the finest tourist attractions north of the border. Saying "We are it's keepers, it's part of our heritage and we should look after it. Fish farms are ten a penny, but there is only one Loch Ness. As a tourist attraction it means a great deal to Inverness.

There are three fish farms in the area I represent and between them they only employ one local person." Councillor Dan Corbett said he thought each application should be looked at on its own merits, and it would be wrong to take a blank negative view of fish farming. While he was concerned about tourism, he felt that fish farming was the only booming industry in the Highlands. Saying, "You can't see half Loch Ness for trees anyway. And planning conditions recommended for fish farms in Loch Ness are so stringent that I'd be surprised if any applications were passed at all." The foreshore and against rolled on over the following months. Winifred Ewing, Euro - M.P. for the Highlands and Islands was strongly in support of the campaign to stop fish farming on Loch Ness, while she was all for fish farming generally, she felt that so many other suitable lochs and coastal waters were available two lochs, Ness and Lomond, should be left alone because of their value to tourism. On 10th September 1987 the Highland Council voted 24 to 23 to allow Bridge of Faille Smolts Ltd to install up to 30 cages on the east shore near Dores.

Within a few days Mr JRG Menzies, of Temple Pier, Drumnadrochit, applied for permission to site 26 salmon cages close to his home. This application was turned down. January 15th 1988 and the first of the fish cages was moored in Loch Ness. 20,000 salmon parr will be placed in the cages to grow on for sale to West Coast fish farms, eventually it is intended to produce 800,000 smolts every year. The main objections to fish farming on the loch have been mainly concerned with the tourism aspect, spoiling views etc. However councillor Alex Mackenzie, Drumnadrochit, did raise the question of pollution early in the debate.

There is a growing body of opinion, from a number of scientific areas, that the fish farm boom is progressing too fast without adequate research into the possible problems. Pollution from excess food and faeces which fall into the bottom under the cages, will clear in 4 to 6 months when the cages are left empty. However these figures were given for sea-lochs, Loch Ness is fresh water. Little is known about soluble pollutants and their effects, but a very good water exchange rate is needed to dilute them. Once again obtainable in a sea-loch, but much more of a problem in a fresh water situation. One figure that has been quoted is that, 'the production of one ton of fish gives a biochemical oxygen demand or waste load which is equivalent to the treated sewage effluent from about 300 people.' The cages are on Loch Ness, despite what councillor Corbett said, they will be unsightly. They will be in that first wonderful view of the loch, as you top the rise approaching Dores on the Foyers road, and opposite the large lay-byes on the A84. We have just to wait to find out if any pollution problems arise.

#### DEEPCAN POSTSCRIPT

The tree stump thought to be the object in the 1975 'Gargoyle' photos, has been retrieved from the water. Only days after Deepscan, it was raised from 20 feet of water. It is as big as a large arm chair, and took four to move it, once ashore. Attempts have been made to get the lighting right to reproduce the 1975 pictures, unsuccessfully as yet. Lowrance have stated that one of the contacts obtained is the largest they have recorded in freshwater anywhere in the world, with an estimated weight of 400lb.

#### MAGAZINES

Issue 49 of Fortean Times to hand, among the mass of articles covering all matters Fortean are one reporting the Edinburgh ISC conference, and another discusses a forthcoming book, 'Lake Monster Traditions'. This article and book are a deep and extensive study of how cultural traditions affect our perception of lake and sea monsters.

A new magazine dealing with Fortean matters is being published, titled Strange, it is American and well produced in A4 format.

That is all for now, your news and views are always needed my address remains:- R.R. Hepple, Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, Tel. (0388) 537359. Subscriptions U.K. £2.75, U.S.A. \$9.00

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Send this strip to A.G.H.H. Ltd, Bogleashin, Drumnadrochit, Inverness to obtain £10 off a 'Nessie Hunt' game, normal price £17.95 plus £1.82 p&p.