

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER NO 87

APRIL 1988

KEN CROAL

Ken lives in Edinburgh and has been a NIS member for a number of years. He recently wrote to pass on his own experience on Operation Deepscan. He and his wife had been fortunate to have been able to take part. He has relations who are friends of Jim Hogan, of Caley Cruisers, who had been invited to crew one of the four berth cruisers. Bill, his brother-in-law, knowing Ken's interest in the loch and how upset he would be if not given the chance, asked him and his wife to join them. They arrived on Thursday October 8th and had a trial on the loch to familiarise themselves with the boat and equipment, and as their wives are not good sailors it was suggested they tie up for the night at Dochgarrock, meeting the fleet at Lochend at 9.0 am the next morning for the sweep south to Fort Augustus. Ken goes on, "So it would seem that on the Thursday afternoon at least, the intention was to sweep the loch from end to end. However, finding no fleet at Lochend the next morning, we decided to keep going until we made contact with them, which was just as well, as we arrived just in time to joint the line-up at the Clansman. Our boat was attached to the 'Command Squadron' which formed up in single file in the middle, behind the line of twenty boats to form a 'T' formation. We were on station directly behind Adrian Shine's command vessel. When one of the line boats made a possible contact they radioed the command boat, and threw a fender over the side to mark the position. One of the two high-tec boats were sent in to check the contact with their sonar, then lastly our boat was sent in to recover the finder, also checking the area with our sonar. Great emphasis was put on keeping a tight 'T' formation and 'making it look good for the press' which at that time were taking ariel shots from the helicopter which constantly buzzed up and down the line. A very alert Adrian Shine was quick to come down on anybody wandering even slightly off station. The whole operation, while on the water was carried out in a very disciplined manner, with Adrian Shine very obviously in charge directing everything by radio. Admittance to the press conferences in the evening was very strictly controlled, only media and principal characters being admitted. Therefore I found Henry Bauer's 'behind the scenes' account in NIS 84 very interesting. Although I don't agree with a lot of Adrian Shine's views, mainly his interpretation of what he calls 'Jurassic Reptile', (in my opinion to doubt Adrian's 'Jurassic Reptile' is doubt the fundamental basis for the phenomena at Loch Ness, mainly the hundreds of eye witnesses who throughout the years have claimed to see a large living creature with a small, long neck and great body moving in the loch). I have nothing but admiration for the way he held the whole thing together. To work with all the different agencies, media, boat-crews, as well as the exercise itself, must have been a harrowing task indeed. The one thing I would question of the operation, is why the loch was not scanned from end to end as it seems was first intended? I have wondered if perhaps in the event of the absence of any significant results it could have provided a way out 'After all, we didn't scan the whole loch, did we? Nessie must have been at Lochend that day.' It is perhaps, an unfair comment. I know Deepscan was never meant to be absolutely conclusive, and as far as the public is concerned it's maybe better this way with the absence of any concrete 'proof'. I know this personally from the reaction of friends and associates on my return that 'we hadn't found anything'. I grew tired of trying to explain that the best that could be hoped for from Deepscan was the obtaining of sonar results showing large unidentified targets worthy of further investigation. People in Scotland, generally, tend to be very sceptical of the whole Loch Ness thing." Ken finishes by saying, "Overall, I found the whole Deepscan experience very exciting, I would not have missed it for anything. I look forward to further information on results obtained."

It is good to have another view of a different aspect of Deepscan. Up to now I have had no official news release from the Deepscan organisers, therefore the personal reports from Henry Bauer, Doug Macfarlane and now Ken Croal, have at least given us some news of the operation.

MILES CATO

Miles sent word of his third one-man 'expedition' to the loch, he was there from the 12th to the 18th March '88. He stayed the first few nights in Inverness, at the Windsor House Hotel, which he recommends as very friendly and comfortable, and the last two at Fort Augustus.

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He spent the days at the loch, being lucky with the weather, five good days cold but sunny, only one of torrential rain and a little snow; with hardly a breath of wind at any time. Giving good watching conditions with a generally calm loch with perfectly still one for two days. Miles says, "While some of the best evidence has been obtained from such one-man shows, particularly the Dinsdale film, I was struck by the solitariness of my quest and unlike the summer when others are there watching (like the Boyds and yourself) one feels the task is gargantuan and given limited equipment and a very limited area of the loch that is in view by one man, it is hard not to feel that some sort of concerted group watch must be re-established if results are to be forthcoming." He saw nothing unusual until his last day. At about 11.15am on the Thursday he was sitting by the shore in Borlum Bay looking up the loch towards Inverness. He does not say but I think this will be the Borlum Bay at Fort Augustus rather than the bay in Urquhart Bay. There are other examples of duplicated place names around Loch Ness, one being Strone overlooking Urquhart Bay, and Strone near Invermoriston Bay. The weather was calm and sunny, visibility very good. He has excellent binoculars, 7 x 50 Zeiss, and was examining the far horizon, where he could clearly see an orange coloured boat. He goes on, "I also noticed that to it's left, about half way across the loch, there was a black pole-like object protruding from the surface. It was apparently of some size, appearing to be about twice the height of the boat (therefore about 4 feet tall or more) My excitement grew as it began to move rapidly across the loch, at one point submerging completely only to resurface a considerable distance away. I watched the head and neck (they were not distinguishable from each other) for some 5 minutes, becoming more and more convinced that I was watching something significant. However, to my great surprise the pole-like object suddenly sprouted wings and took off. It had been a large black bird - perhaps a cormorant. This superficially may be a sceptic's dream sighting but I believe otherwise. Firstly, it was not visible with the naked eye at all yet with the binoculars it was quite distinct from the boat at the same range. My binoculars were the same as Tim Dinsdale's and this would lend further weight to the assertion that he could not (at a lower range) mistake a boat for a hump. Secondly, although the object behaved in a way one might associate with the Loch Ness animals it cannot be overlooked that it quite clearly showed itself to be a bird by flying away. The bird had to resurface and as the entire breadth of the loch surface was in view, and I was going to watch (as surely any interested party would) until it disappeared, the chances are very great that I would see if it was a bird, i.e. by whether it eventually took off. Thirdly, a 'sighting' such as this is highly useful to the regular Loch Ness watcher. By building a knowledge of the possible misleading factors it will help to make those primary sightings all the more useful. The more we understand such phenomena at the loch the more prepared we are for the truly unusual." Miles left the loch eager to return as usual, but convinced that some kind of co-ordinated effort is needed, one in which he would be prepared to help.

This illustrates a point I have made before in Nessletters, that it is important to try to get to know the loch and it's various moods and flora and fauna. To take photographs of water birds, flotsam, strange waves, otters, even to keep a log book if possible. As to the formation of a group for watching, I do not think it is now a viable proposition, although I do like the idea. The running costs of the old Loch Ness Investigation were expensive, keeping vehicles on the road, cameras and lenses, film stock, all added to the total and despite the fact that the manpower was supplied by volunteers there were large bills to be met. That is going back to the 1960's and early '70's, with today's prices and costs it would take substantial funds to mount and run such an expedition. Perhaps the best that could be done would be small self organised groups, providing their own transport and equipment, visiting the loch either together or in sequence. Over the years some NIS members have suggested such schemes in the Nessletters, but without much success.

RICHARD GREENWELL

Richard is the Secretary of the International Society of Cryptozoology, co-hosts/organisers of the 1987 Edinburgh Symposium. He wrote in response to Nessletter 86, "I refer to Stuart Campbell's making reference to belief in Nessie by scientists, particularly is figure of a positive response rate of 23%. Actually, the picture is better than implied by Campbell. I know, because I was the one who conducted the study! You may see the results in vol. 2 (1983) of Cryptozoology, co-authored by James E. King and myself.

The 23% positive response rate by "scientists" is a little misleading, as it includes the physical anthropologists who were being queried on Sasquatch, and the physical chemists, who were merely used as a control group. The important data is that generated by the responses from the marine and freshwater biologists (biological oceanographers and limnologists). Almost 40% - 38.7% to be exact - responded that they thought Nessie represented 'living animals still unknown to science! Although the survey was conducted some years ago, I doubt if the responses would be much different today; if anything, they probably would be slightly more positive.

And who were these responding individuals? They were randomly selected from the membership list of the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography, which has over 1,500 members. All the targeted individuals held doctoral degrees and were professionally employed at universities and other research institutions in the U.S. and Canada. For your interest, a majority of 64.5% of these professional respondents believed that scientists should undertake Nessie research - even when they personally doubted the existence of the animals - and 77.4% claimed to have actually read some scientific literature on the topic at one time or another. This demonstrates that Marine and freshwater biologists - at least in the U.S. and Canada - are not nearly so negative on Nessie as many proponents (and some debunkers!) would have us believe. I have often wondered what results we would get by conducting a similar survey in Britain, and once even discussed such a possibility with Roger Tippett, a University of Glasgow limnologist. I hope this helps put Campbell's peculiar opinions in the proper perspective."

I must thank Richard for giving me the chance to set the record straight. It is interesting to note that not only is Stuart Campbell adept in choosing the evidence that suits his arguments, and interpreting it thus, but he would seem to be able to do the same with facts and figures.

STUART CAMPBELL

Stuart sent me a letter with comments on NIS86, it was nice to note the date 1988 Apr 01. He covered most of the ground already gone over in previous Nessletters. Pointing out that it is arguable that his views on the Scobie report would be more valid if he had interviewed Mr Scobie, or been with him when he saw whatever it was in the loch. He noted that Mr Scobie did not mention otters as an explanation, although he did mention deer and birds. Stuart asks "Why not? Had he ever seen otters?" He feels it is pointless to say that the object could not be confused with something else, when that something else is not known. Stuart still says that the behaviour of the object reported by Mr Scobie was consistent with that of an otter; and therefore as the simplest explanation it is the one to accept. As to James Baldwin's observation that he did not comment on the latter part of Scobie's account. Stuart says that while Mr Scobie was convinced that the disturbance was not caused by flippers, he suggests that it was the result of the action of a diving otter's hind quarters. It is true that normally an otter will make little disturbance when submerging, but Stuart says that as in this case there were salmon running in the area the otter could have been hunting, it cannot be argued that a hunting otter cannot make a disturbance when submerging. He went on to suggest that also there could have been more than one otter present. He also said Mr Scobie's idea of size cannot be trusted saying "although if it was too big for birds who says it was too big for an otter?" Once again Stuart interprets events to suit his own arguments. Mr Scobie had lived around the loch for 46 years, half a lifetime, he said he was familiar with all the sights on the loch. He did not detail them, but driftwood, strange waves, water-birds, even otters, would be included. James went to some trouble to suggest that other phenomena were involved, when he interviewed Mr Scobie. He did not list them for us, but I do not think it is presumptuous to say that otters would be mentioned. Who says the object was too big for an otter or otters? Mr Scobie does. Stuart advocates the acceptance of the 'simplest' explanations, as I have said before, I agree with him, however it must remain the simplest. Stuart says, perhaps the otter made a disturbance, perhaps there were two, perhaps Mr Scobie has never seen otters, perhaps Mr Scobie's judgement of size is faulty, in all too many 'perhaps'. Stuart concluded by saying that it was not scientists who thought the world was flat and the centre of the universe. These were the views of the Church. It was Greek scientists who first demonstrated that the earth is round and Copernicus who claim it was orbiting the sun. Stuart says, "If you want to solve the Loch Ness mystery you most certainly need scientists (indeed, I have already solving it for you)!"

Is Stewart claiming to be a scientist? He does head his note paper "Science Writer" and have Dip Arch BA after his name, after all.

OLD ORKNEY MONSTER

Alastair Boyd sent a cutting from the Press and Journal of 10th Dec 1987. Lt. Col E M Malone, of Pretoria, recalled an unusual experience after seeing a South African TV programme about Operation Deepscan. He was a newly-joined RAF volunteer in the Orkney Islands during September 1941, at Netherbutton radar station in Scarpa Flow. It was his custom when off-duty to wander the cliffs over-looking the Flow, taking pot-shots at the man rabbits that were around. One afternoon he made his way down to a narrow shingle beach to retrieve a rabbit that had fallen to the foot of the cliffs when he shot it. There on the shore he encountered a most extraordinary, and very dead, creature. Col Malone says, "The animal - for it was certainly not a fish - was about 10 feet long. It has a small head resembling that of a horse with ears and nostrils. The head was joined to the body, about the size of that of a carthorse, by a long thick neck. The body had a dorsal hump, similar to that of a camel, with spines. Two large flippers came from the shoulders. There were no rear flippers and the body ended in a horizontal tail, very similar to the flukes of a whale. Had this creature been swimming, one would have seen only the small horse-like head, a long thick neck and then, a few feet behind, part of the dorsal hump." He immediately went to the Kirkwall museum to report his find. But by the time one of their officials got to the scene the next day, the tides had taken the body away. He has no idea what the creature was but thinks that possibly someone with the correct scientific background could have hazarded a guess to identity.

In an accompanying note Alastair reminds us of two other carcasses discovered at Deepdale and Hunda at the end of 1941, which are described in Tim Dinsdale's 'Loch Ness Monster' and 'Leviathans'. The body which Col Malone observed was only half the size of the later ones and could not have been responsible for either of those reports. The Deepdale Holme skull was sent to the Royal Scottish Museum, where it was identified as that of a shark. Alastair suspects that, as Tim suggests, the discovery of these bodies near the heavily-mined naval base at Scapa Flow indicates they were innocent victims of the Second World War. Our thanks to Alastair for this.

EXPEDITIONS

I have word from Paul Collins, of Prestwich, Manchester, of a fund raising expedition to the loch for two weeks in May. They are trying to buy a brain-scanner for a local childrens hospital. They have constructed a 20ft by 10ft raft, with a 12ft high cabin, it is to be powered by a Volvo engine driving a rear paddle. It is equipped with all sorts of bits and bobs, but is also supposed to have a radar scanner and sonar system, (no details). In correspondence with Paul, he says that at least three crew members are treating this monster-hunt very seriously. Good luck, both in raising cash and Nessie spotting.

Peter Davenport will be at the loch sometime in June/early July. He will be driving a red Escort R.S. Turbo reg; E99YDB, and says look out for him.

My family and myself hope to be there, Abriachan as usual. 23rd July/4th August, blue Bedford motorcaravan reg; FVY 811S.

Another Nessletter at an end, please remember your news and views are always needed and welcome, the address remains; R R Hepple, Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, Tel: (0388) 537359. subs UK £2.75 USA \$9.00.
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