

Ness Information Service

Nessletter No 91

December 1988

Sightings

I received a letter from Betty Gallagher, of the Loch Ness Centre. She sent a copy of a rather strange communication they have received, and news of a reported sighting. The letter was from Geoffrey Halton, of Leeds; he had visited the Exhibition while on holiday in the area and had enjoyed it. It prompted him to send them his idea of how the monster story became so strong. "Whilst there may well have been something alive in the Loch over the centuries, in my opinion you should be looking BEYOND a monster. You should also be looking for the Ninth Legion - or what might remain of it after nearly 2,000 years! Though some dispute it, the popular story is that the Ninth Legion marched out of York northwards and was never seen again or heard of. Suppose it was ambushed by the Picts and the remains dumped in the Loch? Then in order to reduce the risk of awful Roman retribution, you create a voodoo about where the evidence was lying. This dreadful voodoo was well established by 565 AD when St Columba encountered 'it'. It is interesting to note that in later years (in 685 AD) the Picts lured Egfrid, the Anglian ruler of Northumbria, and his army to a sticky end in the marshes of Dunnichen Moss in Forfar (and, curiously, St Cuthbert, at the time in Carlisle, had a 'vision' of it all)." I think Geoffrey is not suggesting that there is not a monster, but that the fact that there was was put to good use. He finished by saying that perhaps metal detectors should be used in the loch, along with all the other research gear, in case something with SPQR on it could be found. A strange idea. The Romans did get that far north and it is a delightful thought to combine the 'myth' of the Ninth along with the 'myth' of Loch Ness.

The reported sighting was from Neal Stevenson, of Stoke-on-Trent, on October 25th 1988, and Betty said it was the first she had heard of since January and quoted: "I was standing on the castle tower chatting to a couple from Birmingham at 10.45 a.m. I am well used to Loch Ness, being an annual visitor with a boat for many years. I was looking towards Inverness when for no more than two seconds a rounded black shape appeared causing a rippling effect on the flat-calm water about 300 yards off the Castle headland. The couple turned but only saw the rippling effect. We continued talking and to my surprise I saw a thin neck and small head appear just to the left of where the previous shape had disappeared. It was just as brief and once more they (the couple) missed it. I thought perhaps it was an otter but feel it was too far into the deep water, also somehow the shape wasn't right."

While Erik Beckjord was at the loch he heard of three sightings, all in late August and all in the Urquhart Bay area. He gave just brief details, and I pass these on. First was by a youngster of seven; this boy on a cruiser said he had seen a tail, hump, and head-neck, between the boat in the bay and the castle. The second was at 9.30 in the evening, a time when most of the cruisers are tied up, and the light starting to go. A 14 year old boy in a chalet overlooking the bay, which could have been the same one that Alastair and Sue Boyd use, reported a twenty foot hump with what seemed like a long neck laid along the surface. It was off one of the river mouths in the corner of Urquhart Bay. These are the rivers Coiltie and Enrick. Erik did not specify which one. The Enrick is in the northern corner, furthest away from the suggested chalet, and would appear to be in the corner of the bay, so perhaps is the one intended. The third report was from a girl on the staff at Urquhart Castle, who was said to have seen a hump, no details at all. I pass these reports on as I received them. I cannot evaluate them without much more information. I would say that reports from young people should be viewed very carefully. They do tend to have more vivid imaginations, and to report seeing what they think they should see, and perhaps not what they have seen.

Erik Beckjord

I have had a number of letters from Erik, mostly covering ground already gone over in Nessletters, water-bird wakes, gargoyle head, etc. Referring to NIS 89 he suggests that perhaps I have allowed myself to be influenced by Aidrian Shine's opinions and rushed to the wrong conclusions about the 'tree stump' and 'gargoyle head'. While I always hope that I take into account whatever information and opinions are available, I do form my own conclusions. In the case of the 'stump' I was fortunate to be able to see it, and while the conditions were very different from its resting place on the loch floor, what was to be seen was too close to the 'gargoyle head' to be ignored. As I said, it placed a large question mark after the photograph and made it unacceptable as evidence. Back home Erik has been processing 11 rolls of still and 4 rolls of movie film. These show many types of water-birds, mergansers, divers, mallards and other

kinds of ducks, along with boats and other craft on the loch. While at the loch Erik noted that the nearer one is to water level the more the wakes of birds and craft appear as a single line. The higher you get it becomes more obvious that these wakes are vees. He says the bird wakes tend to be wide and disappear quite quickly, in seconds, as the water birds pass. Erik says that from about 100 feet elevation he could see the wakes of mergansers, and film some, and they were plainly vees. At over 1400 yards, with the naked eye, actual mergansers and other waterbirds were very hard to make out at all - pin pricks - and their wakes could be seen as a line. However even these could be made out to be vee wakes when a pair of binoculars, or telephoto lens, was used; also the birds making them could be seen, albeit tiny at the distance. Next to Scott. II they appeared like ants. Using Dick Raynor's large telephoto lens (1,000 mm ex-LNI I believe, Rig) Erik had photographed a blob in Borlum Bay at a distance of 1300 metres. At that range there was nothing shown to get excited about. Erik says they are still looking at other photos, as things can pop up in pictures when you do not expect anything. He cites the photograph taken by Jennifer Bruce in 1982. She took a shot from the Temple Pier area across Urquhart Bay; when it was processed there was what seems to be a snake-like head and neck close inshore. Although the large mooring buoy in the right hand side of the photograph is usually carefully left out of published prints. I am very pleased to note that Erik has taken the valuable chance to build on his knowledge of the loch and its various water fowl. I have always recommended members to keep log books and take photographs of ordinary things, if at all possible, when they visit the loch; there is very little as useful as experience. When Erik first wrote to me in 1983 his letter was headed: Lecturer-Photographer-Writer-Film-maker-Investigator of Anomalous Phenomena. A little later the heading became The National Cryptozoological Society. Then it became The Cryptozoology Museum Project (in progress) or (planning stage). This is an idea Erik has been trying to bring to fruition for some time. It seems that he has succeeded now, to a point. He says the Cryptozoology Museum will open in a large restaurant, and he encourages any holders of Nessie photos or evidence, drawings, etc., to contact him about displaying their material. The emphasis will not be on large gekko lizards nor long-legged cougars, but on the true mystery animals or creatures, such as Nessie, Bigfoot and the like, including the mystery cats of Britain. Some of the details given in a press release were, Erik Beckjord and Gene Ball, respectively the director of the museum and owner of TRANCAS restaurant, 30765 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, have agreed to instal a series of displays by the museum in the restaurant. These will give information on cryptozoology, which is the search for and study of mystery animals such as the Loch Ness Monster, Bigfoot, the Yeti, Canada's Ogopogo lake monster, Champ of Lake Champlain, the Mokele M'bembe of the Congo, sea serpents and other mysterious and uncollected animals and creatures world-wide. On display will be blood, hair and feces, samples of Bigfoot, track casts, photographs with analyses by experts, clippings, drawings, and eye-witness accounts. These will be displayed on the walls of the restaurant and dance areas, and visitors will be able to follow the panels from room to room in sequence. It was felt by the Museum staff that the clean northern Malibu coastline was an excellent spot to open the temporary museum, which plans to open in a larger building of its own at some future date. This coastal area has reported sea serpents in the past, and the mountains in nearby Ventura County have reported sightings of Bigfoot from time to time. The museum is affiliated with the National Cryptozoological Society, a group of volunteer researchers into cryptozoological mysteries all over the world. Thirteen years of field investigations have contributed to the museum display, as well as items contributed by other researchers and research groups. The approach of the museum will be threefold; a) skáptical; b) zoological; c) new explanations. TRANCAS is famous in the L.A. area as being a good dance spot as well as for being a good family restaurant serving American-style cuisine. The hours of the restaurant, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner at reasonable prices, are 6 to 9 daily. Admission to the museum section is free of charge. Parking is plentiful and the restaurant is not far past the famous Zuma Beach, which in turn is ten miles past Pepperdine University. Erik has also sent word of what he terms 'Low Cost Cryptozoology', the Cryptozoology Bulletin. "See all the articles that the other groups will not print. Learn the very latest from Loch Ness, the truth about Lizard Man of the SC swamps, and the New Guinea Mermaid debacle." I have had two slips with this information and the cost given as \$9.99; however the U.K. cost and number of issues differed in each one. One said two issues per year for £7.00 and the other states 4 issues for £8.50. The address is given as: N.C.S., Box 6534, Zuma Beach, Ca 90264, U.S.A. It would seem that the Bulletin has been published before as number 11 is mentioned. I have not seen a copy of C.B. and would suggest anyone interested should write and request a sample copy before subscribing.

Books etc.

I have a flyer from Danny Perez who has compiled 'Big Footnotes', a comprehensive bibliography concerning Bigfoot, The Abominable Snowman and related beings. Whether such beings exist or not, it says that because they are part of worldwide folklore there is a legitimate reason to study and examine their case. Storied, seldom seen, uncaught, Bigfoot is balanced on the edge of physical reality, they have been referred to countless times in print. Now for the first time ever those printed references are here in bibliographic form, from books, magazines, journals, newspapers, bulletins, encyclopedias, television, radio, records, tapes, comics, and miscellaneous publications. Thirteen chapters of methodically arranged entries, international in scope, page on page of exhaustive research. Danny says that no fledgling student of the Bigfoot mystery should be without a copy of 'Big Footnotes'. The price is \$14 plus \$2 post and packing; no U.K. equivalent is quoted. The address is: Center for Bigfoot Studies, 10926 Milano Avenue, Norwalk CA 90650, U.S.A.

A short note from Nick Witchell. A new 'up-dated' edition of 'The Loch Ness Story' will be published by Corgi Books on April 21st. It includes "The Zoologist's Tale" by Dr. Denys W. Tucker, the former Principal Scientific officer at the British Museum (Natural History): the first detailed comment by him on this subject for very nearly thirty years, since his dismissal from the Museum.

Word from Heather Malcolm, for the Loch Ness and Morar Project, which is to publish in the "Scottish Naturalist". They have secured a number of re-prints of the paper which are offered to NIS members; I hope to include an order form. The document is nearly 100 pages long, and contains much detailed information on the work of the Project over the last decade and is produced on high quality 90 gsm paper. The price will be £4.00 plus £1.00 P & P for U.K. or plus £5.00 P & P overseas. Offer limited to first 50 applicants.

Some time ago I gave details of the 'Out of Print Book Service', I have used their service, as have some members, and been satisfied. They are still operating but have a change of address; it is now: 13 Pantbach Road, Birchgrove, Cardiff CF4 1TU, Tel. Cardiff 627703. They will try and locate books and other literature of any type, S.A.E. will bring full details.

Just to round off this piece I have a letter from Stuart Campbell, and he suggests that I should have given the title of his article in the BJP, also that it is not a monthly and should have the precise date. The British Journal of Photography, 22nd September 1988, article by Stuart Campbell entitled 'The Key to the loch?'
Ulrich Magin

Ulrich who produces the interesting newsletter BILK, which is mentioned in Ness-letters from time to time, has sent me the latest 25/26 issue, and a note. He was on holiday in the U.K. in September, visiting Loch Ness, Kyle of Lochalsh, Barmouth and Falmouth, but he did not observe anything unusual. As usual when in Inverness he spent time searching through old newspaper records. There were half a dozen published in the area during the 19th century and three are indexed in the Inverness library. The Inverness Journal of 20th January 1832 reported on a mermaid at Ullapool; it also carried word of the Stronsa beast on 27th January 1809. During mid 1848 the Inverness Courier discussed on four occasions with much irony, the Daedakys sea seroent. The Inverness Advertiser had a letter from Mr. M. Banks in the edition of 3rd January 1854. He was asking for information from readers about, what he termed as 'large whales' in our Highland lochs. He said they had been repeatedly seen in Loch Bhadluachraich, by Udriglr, and also in Lochnasealg, in Ross-shire. Mr. Banks wrote again, 14th March, to complain that he had not received even one letter in reply. He went on to say that the 'big fish' were seen recently in Loch Bad-a-Luachrach. He then listed three sea serpent sightings from Scotland and said he was certain the loch fish were a different species. Along with the above Ulrich lists a number of other 'sea serpent', 'loch monster' and other related references, among them one about Loch Morar. The Highland News, of 14th April 1917, had an article on 'Traditional Monsters of the West'. In it reference is made to Morag with various details. It also said the last time it was seen was in 1698. Ulrich says that the first newspaper report he has found concerning Loch Ness is that of Ian Milne in the Inverness Courier of 29th August 1930, the start of the modern era, as Ulrich puts it. He concludes that "It is now quite clear that there were no monsters in Loch Ness prior to 1930, or the Inverness papers would have mentioned it. Also, the long-necked sea creature is a modern myth, earlier loch monsters were goblins, mermaids or big fish." Over the years Ulrich has done much by way of research in old newspaper files, and obviously should know how valid are findings based on such work. However I would make some comments. In 'The Loch Ness Story' by Nicholas Witchell, he quotes the Ian Milne sighting as being reported

