

Ness Information Service
 Nessletter No 100
 June 1990 (Nov '90)

100.

I have been sent some early congratulations on reaching Nessletter number 100 by one or two members. One asking how I was going to celebrate. The best way would have been to be able to report that the Loch Ness mystery had at last been solved. That someone had obtained that marvellous piece of film which we are all waiting for, or better still that one of the animals had crawled up the shore and bitten someone's ankle. However I am sorry that such news has not been reported. Another way to have celebrated would have been to bring Nessletter 100 out on time, another failure.

Egg.

Now this could have been the news to celebrate, but I think it is very questionable. The Highland News, November 10th '90, reported on a story carried by an American weekly newspaper, The Sun, published in Florida, claimed that a 'son of Nessie' was waiting to hatch out. Backing up the story was a picture of the Nessie egg, said to be some four feet long and three feet across. It was described as having a tough, rubbery shell, and to weigh 60 pounds. The Sun stated that the egg had been found on the shores of Loch Ness by a local farmer, who is not named. The paper quoted Dr Alistair McNabb, said to be an archaeologist at the University of Edinburgh, as saying, "It's definitely a reptile egg and could even be Nessie's. Finding any dinosaur egg is a remarkable thing, but to find one that is capable of hatching is mind-boggling. All previous examples are hundreds of thousands of years old and have turned to stone. The obvious conclusion is that the egg is that of Nessie." However, a university spokesman has insisted that no doctor by that name works as an archaeologist there. The Sun also quoted a Scottish tourism official Andrew Taggart as claiming, "If the egg does hatch, the existence of the Loch Ness Monster will be proven once and for all. It will be a kind of 'Ness Egg' for the future of Scotland's tourist industry and the Loch Ness area in particular, where the monster is worth £42 million a year. Mr Taggart added, "The egg proves conclusively that there is more than one creature in Loch Ness. Even among monsters it takes two to tango." The Highland News says that Andrew Taggart doesn't appear to exist either, according to Tourist Board sources. Betty Callagher, manageress of the Loch Ness Monster Exhibition Centre at Drumnadrochit, is reported as saying, "Nobody has reported finding Nessie's egg to us. But if it did happen, I'm sure it would have made worldwide news." As I said a very questionable account, lacking in essential information, who, where, when, where is it now? A strange story to have cropped up in an American paper, in November as well, instead of April. It does bring to mind a character who used to visit the Loch Ness Investigation from time to time during the 1960's, not as a member of the expedition, but just as a kindred spirit. Although he always tried to convince the LNI that we were wasting our time and energy surface watching with cameras. He suggested we should be searching the shoreline looking for eggs! He was quite precise, they would be on the bottom in fifteen feet, or slightly less, of water. I cannot remember his name, but he used to ride a moped. I believe he did get a mention in the Exhibition at Drumnadrochit.

Andreas Trottmann.

In August Andreas, from Switzerland, sent a note saying he would be at the loch in September. He would be doing sonar research out of Urquhart Bay, using a refitted fishing boat, 'Witch of the Mist', with a small cabin and inboard engine. He also sent an article from the Scots Magazine of June 1990. This is another strange report in the class of the Nessie Egg. L.McP. Fordyce tells how he, and his fiancée, saw an extraordinary creature the year before the label 'Loch Ness Monster' was tied to the phenomena. They were living in Kent and in April (!) 1932 travelled to Aberdeen to attend a family wedding. After the function they decided to see some of the country on their way home,

and drove to Inverness, spending the night there. The next day they set off south down the Great Glen. It was a beautiful spring day and they had a lovely run by the side of Loch Ness as far as Foyers, where they visited the falls. He goes on, "Shortly after leaving Foyers the road to Fort William turns away from the lochside and runs through well-wooded country with the ground falling slightly towards the loch. Travelling at about 25mph in this wooded section, we were startled to see an enormous animal coming out of the woods on our left and making its way over the road about 150 yards ahead of us towards the loch. It had the gait of an elephant, but looked like a cross between a very large horse and a camel, with a hump on its back and a small head on a long neck. I stopped the car and followed the creature on foot for a short distance. From the rear it looked grey and shaggy. Its long thin neck gave it the appearance of an elephant with its trunk raised. Unfortunately, I had left my camera in the car, but in any case I quickly thought discretion the better part of valour and returned to the vehicle." As they continued their journey they discussed what they had seen, and concluded it was a freak of some type which had escaped from a menagerie or zoo. They felt that such a large beast would soon be tracked down and captured. Watching the national press for news of such an event, for some time. At the time they were unaware there was anything strange connected with Loch Ness, but in autumn of that year, stories started appearing in the Press of something strange being seen in and around the loch. As the years went by, reports on sightings kept appearing in the Press. Few tallied with what they had seen, although one or two did report strange animals crossing the road ahead of them, and a motor cyclist even followed one on foot for a little way, as he had done. He says that over the years the majority of the investigations have been focused on the loch itself, and not the surrounding countryside. He then raised the point, why has it taken him almost 60 years to make public what they saw in 1932? He gives a few reasons. He has never been in the habit of writing to the Press on any subject. Then the sceptics at that time would have dismissed the story as a hoax or an absurdity. As the years passed most of the subsequent sightings were in the loch, or on the surface of it, with no definite description of size or shape. A number of events decided him that he should tell their story in the Scots Magazine. Through the magazine he came across the book 'Sticking My Neck Out' by Edward H. Armstrong. This gave excellent coverage of many recordings both on land and in the water, some of them very close to his own experience. Then in the October 1983 issue there was an article by Roy Fraser which gave good descriptions of what some witnesses had seen, including some very similar to what he had seen. The two concluding paragraphs of the Fraser article bore out the theory held by his wife and himself that more attention should have been paid to the wooded land surrounding the loch, particularly the Monadhliath Mountains to the east - the direction from which their animal emerged. A glance at the map reveals the sort of terrain where almost anything could survive unobserved for any length of time. What gave him the final push into print, was a small paragraph in the book 'The Loch Ness Mystery Solved' by Ronald Binns, published in 1984. It mentions the blasting for a military road by General Wade's men in 1726, and that years later in 1771 a Patrick Rose heard about a monster that had been seen in Loch Ness. The description given tallied exactly with what they saw and described at the time - a cross between a Clydesdale and a camel. L.McP. Fordyce says that over the years he has seen many references to the mystery being solved, or the myths around the monster being exploded and says; "If what we saw on that lovely April day, and for want of a better name called 'the enormous freak', was to be called several months later 'The Loch Ness Monster', it is quite definitely no myth and the mystery so far has not been solved." He believes Nessie is an amphibian which lives on land. After more than 50 years, the beast they saw may have died, in which case there should be an enormous pile of bones somewhere either on land or in the loch. He asks, "What about its progeny? Surely what we saw was not the last of a very long line?" He points out that this leaves a challenge to anyone interested in trying to solve the mystery, that would be to carry out a controlled survey of the Mondahliath mountain area with its 14 or so peaks.

He finishes with a thought that has often crossed his mind over the years. The car he was driving was a six-cylinder Morris Isis with a black fabric body. If he had been about 12 seconds earlier on the road the animal may have blundered into them, which could have completely written off the vehicle. He wonders what would have been the reaction of his insurance company to so bizarre a claim? A strange account which raises a number of queries. It seems so far removed from what has been generally accepted as 'Nessie'. Is it a hoax? If so why, what has he to gain? The Scots Magazine has not a tremendous circulation, so does not reach very large numbers of readers. I would just comment on two things. In the Binns' book the 1771 account by Rose is mentioned, but only as an example of how the early accounts do not stand up to scrutiny and should be viewed, in Binns' opinion, with more scepticism. Fordyce gives a description of their car, which, it seems, he has remembered well. However his memory of the lochside and Foyers would seem to be at fault. In the article he says that after leaving Foyers the road turns away from the lochside, the country is well wooded with the ground falling away slightly towards the loch. In fact Foyers stands on a promontary, creating Foyers Bay, the road does turn away from the loch but it rises steeply to Glenlia, or Upper Foyers where the entrance to the falls is. At this point you are half a mile from the loch on the wrong side of a precipitous ravine. The road continues away from the loch and fairly soon is a mile from the water. The ground between rises then falls very steeply to the loch. That is the position today, but the o/s map does show an unfenced road which leaves Foyers on the loch side of the ravine. Although this is still a quarter of a mile from the water, and the ground still drops steeply away. Even if this was the accepted 'main' road in 1932 it still does not match his description, and neither area would seem to provide suitable access to the water by a large amphibious animal. Anyway that is the account as given, all I can do is leave it with you. Perhaps some of you may have some thoughts about it.

I received another little note from Andreas to say that he had spent nearly a month at the loch in 1990. That time included one week of sonar search. He also met up with Doug Macfarlane, and had some very animated discussions on the enigmas of the loch and the practical and technical point of views of sonar search. He remarks that such meetings between NIS members are very helpful and interesting and give a unique chance to get out of ones own tracks in the research.

Misplaced Castles.

Jean and Jim Skeldon lived in Dores during the early 1980's. They moved there when ill health forced Jim into early retirement and they took the chance to live by the loch in an area they both loved. Tragically Jim died in 1985. A little later Jean moved back to the Birmingham area, to be closer to her relations. Jean wrote to say NIS 99 had her wallowing in nostalgia. She and Jim used to do the run from Arrochar to Fort William and she queried my saying that I passed Eilean Donan on that trip; saying she thought it was on Loch Duich. Of course Jean is correct. We passed Eilean Donan on a trip we took to Kyle of Lochalsh and Plockton, as we drove along Loch Duich. I mixed it up with Castle Stalker, which stands in a similar position on Loch Linnhe, which is on the way from Oban to Fort William. Jean also has fond memories of the 'corkscrew', as she termed it, at Inverfarigaig. She and Jim, on his better days, often used to drive up it then clamber up the rocks to sit and look at the view.

Erik Beckjord

Erik sent a letter in July commenting on Alastair Boyd's views on the Chaffin Video (NIS 97). "On the Chaffin Video, responding to Boyd, let me point out that the Chaffins lent me their original video for several months, and I analyzed it and then made them a slow motion copy and returned it to them.

I am now making a UK/PAL copy for Dr Williamson, and perhaps he can show others this when it is in his hands. I must totally disagree with Boyd. Whatever Judy Chaffin says, or thinks, before or during the shooting of the video, is irrelevant. What counts is the video itself, not what she says. Her expectations are not relevant. This is a video, not a mere sighting. Her words cannot make a duck into a Nessie, nor can they make a Nessie into a duck, as Boyd is trying to do. Boyd seems to be basing most of what he says on comments by Williamson, and not on any direct, and good viewing of the video itself, on a regular screen on tv. Having done so, in 8 mm, in $\frac{1}{2}$ in and in $\frac{1}{4}$ in vhs, plus slow motion, I can assure one and all that while we do not have fine detail on the object, that it is definitely not a duck. From our adventures in 1983, we at the museum have a number of videos of ducks and also swans in Urquhart Bay, filmed from the opposite side, plus some row boats and cruisers. We also have 16 mm films and stills of various types of ducks from the 1988 expeditions. There is absolutely no comparison. The object is blunt, black, rounded, and has an apparant width of twice that of a swan. To me, it seems like a double-sized bowling ball, or a medicine ball, the kind we used to toss in gym at school. It seems half submerged, and half way on the surface, if it were a ball, and simply could be the rounded top part of a head of some kind, or of a rounded and blunt hump. I would venture to guess at 24 inches as the right width, and I am sure that by now others have used the same type of video camera, Sony 8 mm video, to shoot various sized objects and balls at that range for comparison. I expect soon to release a comparison set of photos of swans and the Chaffin object. To further respond to Boyd, the object is seen swimming 50-100 yards, not just a few yards, and as it does so, it swims fairly steadily, with a few changes in course, but not in any sort of rapid zig zags. In general, the object simply is too darn big to put off as a bird. Further, it also shows a few feet, maybe 6 feet, of black body behind the head or forepart, in a few seconds here and there. But please, let us not hear any more about 'a line of swimming mergansers'.... The video is good quality, for being a video, but the zoom lens was limited, and the resolution is such that no details can be made out in the black blob. BUT it does not seem to match any known animal, and thus, it is either an unknown animal, or a new phenomena. In this respect, the Crosbie photos bear some similarity. In closing on this, let me respond to Boyd's comment about my having once claimed to have seen on video 'three pliososaurs' that later were found to be ducks... This case, my mistaken 1983 long range video of two whitish objects that zig zagged and took off with long streaks of white water is a good case for the Chaffin film being valid - our telephoto lens was better than theirs, and still the ducks, grebes, I suspect, were largely not visible, in mirror-still water. The Chaffins took a video of a large black object, bigger than a dog's head or a deer's, etc, with a smaller telephoto lens, riding through 2-3 inch swells and leaving a strong wake. (The three pliososaurs were a mistake I made about three dark waves that the grebes made when they took off, and this I have admitted was a mistake in a past NIS. Tony Harmsworth did assist me in understanding this mistake, and for that I am grateful. However, now Boyd would have it that I mistook grebes (not waves) for pliososaurs, and I would prefer not to have readers think my judgement of scale was 'that' far off. Boyd has spent 3000 hours at the Ross Chalet - and he can be understandably miffed that two brief visitors could succeed in getting a video so fast. But he should recall that at times, an entire busload of fresh tourists has seen Nessie, once with Freddie Cary next to them, a case of massive beginner's luck. In 1988, I reported a boy who was staying in the Ross Chalet saw Nessie when he wasn't even really looking for it, so perhaps the act of straining to look has an adverse effect. 'Indirection' seems to work better. I will credit Boyd with now using video as a backup, something I suggested to him in 1983. However, considering the bad definition of the Chaffin's, I would also suggest super 8 mm movie film as a prime recording means, or 16 mm with video as a back up, but not stills as the prime means at all. This is the lesson of the Dinsdale and Raynor films." We will all have our own thoughts about Erik's comments. I have one or two. Erik says the video is of good quality, then points out the limitations of the zoom lens. He says "... we do not have fine

detail on the object... "and" ...no details can be made out in the black blob." Then he states that the black blob does not match any known animal. Am I alone in wondering how, without any details to be seen, he is in the position to state that what was videoed was not any known animal? As for Alastair feeling 'miffed' at two people on a brief visit getting the video. Having spent time with Alastair, and Sue, I know they would be disappointed it was not themselves, they have tried for so long to obtain film of what they saw in July 1979. However I also know they would be delighted for, and very supportive to, anyone who got good film, or video. Their prime interest is to see the mystery solved. Along with the rest of us, what they do not want is for dubious material, film or video of such poor, questionable, quality to be promoted as proof of the existence of Nessie. Such action would only damage the case for serious investigation. I am pleased that Erik has joined me in suggesting the use of movie film as a weapon in the monster hunter's arsenal. I have always preached it since my days with the LNI, the larger the format the better, they used 35 mm with 16 mm as backup. Time has proved that surface watching is not efficient as a method of hunting the animals. However film would maximise any results that may be obtained. I have since received another letter from Erik with comment on NIS 99, and on our brief meetings at the loch in 1990. He took me to task over the fact I was unable to meet up with him for longer, or spent so little time with him when he was videoing his experiments. He was also scathing about the Nessletter, but enough of that. He corrected me on one point, for which I am grateful. I had been told that Alex Crosbie was with them, Erik says he was not. Although he did not say who was. He also said that of the dozen people who have seen the two videos, I was the only one to pick the decoy duck and it's disturbance as being most similar to the disturbance in the Chaffin video. According to Erik everyone else liked the 12 inch ball or the drum. As I said in NIS 99 the semi-submerged oil drum made a tremendous wash, far greater than the disturbance in the Chaffin video. The 12 inch ball was just riding on the surface, as were the other spheres, and I cannot understand anyone being able to see the same wave and wash pattern as that in the Chaffin video. But of course these are personal opinions.

William Hills.

Their weekend went fairly well, and received some media coverage. Four teams took part although there were no positive results. Some more details next time.

Strange Magazine.

Mark Chorvinsky, editor, wrote to ask if anyone would be able and willing to assist him in investigating the Doc Shiels' photographs. It seems he is trying to establish the truth about them, and I suppose to eventually publish his findings in the magazine. His address is P.O. Box 2246, Rockville, Maryland 20847, U.S.A., for anyone who wishes to offer help.

Well that is it for now. Please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed. My address is still:- R. R. Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel. (0388) 537359. Subscriptions, North America: \$9.00. U.K. £2.75.

Rip.