

Ness Information Service
 Nessletter 102
 October 1991 (June '91)

Erik Beckjord

I have a fair amount of correspondence from Erik, much of it going back some time, and going over ground already covered. In an earlier letter Erik tells that he is working on the Chaffin Video and is of the opinion that the focus is alright, and the blur is due to the fact that it is video, not film. There is no answer to that, as they say. He hopes that more people will use video as backup and in the future, ideally, would work together monitoring the loch from a number of positions. The old Mountain Expedition idea, they did get something, he says. I would say that apart from one of photographs taken by the Mountain team are generally accepted to be of boat wakes. The organized watching of the surface was the reason behind the setting up of the old Loch Ness Investigation. Also the investigation, and correlation, of reported sightings. They were equipped with 35mm movie cameras and produced some good results. One of the ideas discussed by the old LNI, in pre-video camcorder days, was the setting up of a closed-circuit television network, such as was then seen at some road junctions and traffic lights. It was suggested that remote control cameras could be set up at about half mile intervals to cover most of the loch surface, or at least a large proportion of it. These would have been wired to a central HQ, where a bank of screens would have been monitored by shifts of the LNI volunteers. The question of recording anything seen on screen would have been done by a 16mm movie camera, not really satisfactory, but that was the technology of the day. The cost would have been prohibitive, so the scheme did not proceed beyond being discussed over the dinner table.

Erik goes on to theorize about what is in the loch. He has been doing this for a few years. He says that whatever it is does not always appear in the same shape each time it is seen. Different films, videos and sightings produce different sizes and shapes. Erik says that if you accept that is true, as a logical consequence you must reject the idea that the LNM is an 'animal' in the usual sense of the word. Yet it moves, swims and seems alive. He again suggests that this is a creature outside of known zoological principals, a 'lifeform'. He referred back to the Chaffin Video pointing out that it bears a strong resemblance to the Crosbie photographs. Both had a rounded blob of a head at the front, the video and the first three of Crosbies had a strong V-wake from the head. Both had a length of body behind the head that seemed to be straight and somewhat tubular, log-like, indistinct. Both are somewhat hard to make out, good shots of a basically inherently unclear object. I have stated my opinions on the video and the Crosbie photos in earlier Nessletters. However Erik could be right, but it is probable that the resemblance is a result of poor images of the same type of water birds. Crosbie's being at extreme range with his 35mm camera and the overall poor quality of the video.

Earlier this year I received a letter from Erik with a change of title and address. The Cryptozoology Museum, PO Box 6534, Malibu, Ca. 90264, has now become the Crypto-Phenomens Museum, PO Box 2534, Ca. 90265. Listed interests are: Bigfoot, Loch Ness, UFOs, Crop Circles, Newest Faces on Mars and more, lectures, tours, expeditions. The strangest things in the world under one roof. I trust Erik has improved the exhibition or visitors could be disappointed. Jim Thompson, of Montgomery, Alabama, wrote to say he had a surprise when visiting friends in Los Angeles in 1989. They were taking a trip to Malibu and decided to stop at a restaurant, at random, for lunch. By incredible coincidence Jim found that the Trancos Beach restaurant was the one mentioned in the Nessletter, with the Museum of Cryptozoology. He felt it was somewhat lacking in information with only two bulletin boards on Bigfoot and one about Loch Ness. It seems that Erik is extending his interests. Part of the letter was the latest decoding of some crop circles, 'glyphs' as he termed it. It is a complex pattern found at Hazeley Farm near Winchester in August 1990. Three circles in a row, outer ones with two horns pointing outwards, middle one with a series of bars inside. Erik used an old Norse/Tuareg-Berber pictographic language of Tifina (2000 BC), which he

said was discussed in the book 'Bronze Age America' (Little, Brown 1982), and by a complicated rismarole arrives at the message: 'This is a dangerous place to camp'. Yeees! He comments, 'This, like the former decoding, gives a warning about a place. Is this a warning given to Past Vikings who once lived there, or is it meant for People today? If for today, what would happen to people who might camp there? Who will test this? I would suggest anyone camping there would be in danger from irate farmers and combine-harvesters. I have a passing interest in the mystery of crop circles, and while I have not seriously studied the cases, my initial reaction is that the local young farmers could be laughing their socks off.

Erik makes a point about the L.McP. Fordyce report as sent in by Andreas Trottmann (NIS 100). He thinks the big lumpy body and small head on long neck as described, fit exactly the Mary F. photos taken in 1976 near Falmouth. They can be seen in Bob Rickard's 'Photographs of the Unknown'. He says he has always felt that was the best description, over all, of Nessie. Erik says there are those who are trying to prove that Tony Shields faked the Mary F. photos. He asks, if he did who fooled Fordyce? It seems more likely that Fordyce saw what he saw, and Tony had nothing to do with Mary F.

He rounded off with a serious idea! Saying 'Nessletter has reached 100 with no Nessie being found, why? I suggest that if we go to Mars, as we will, we will by 2099 set up space colonies under glass domes, and we will have our cats and dogs there. Now if some escape, and learn to breath Mars air (or anywhere else on any other planet) and breed, then they become 'Alien Animals' to the real Mars people, if they exist. Why then could not some space travellers come by Earth, and Loch Ness, long, long ago, before St Columba, and lost some of their pets? This is not too outrageous an idea. Such a lost pet could be a wee Nessie. Bred down the years, from several lost parents, thus being alien, they would be hard to catch, and strange to look at. So, let us study alien zoology and understand why someday there will be NIS200 and no caught Nessie. I mean this quite seriously - it is a responsible explanation.'

In his latest letter Erik responded to Alastair's comments on the remarks made by Judy and John Chaffin on the video. Erik says that he stands by his statement that whatever they said has no effect whatever on the videotape itself. It is up to each individual on seeing the tape, to decide for themselves what is there. He also says Alastair is quite wrong in saying that John Chaffin, using bare eyes, had a better view than Judy, who was using a zoom lens on the camcorder. Obviously, the magnification is greater using a zoom lens. She was using an 8 Power zoom, at its maximum setting, this would give her a five times greater view than her husband could have. She also saw it with the naked eye. I would just comment, that while a zoom lens provides magnification to the camera, a viewfinder is relatively small. Also unlike binoculars, which are built to provide the ability to closely examine things, usually from a distance, a viewfinder is a basic instrument to aid the user in pointing the camera in the right direction. Erik then arrived at the real point of his letter. He had included a flyer which he asked me to send to members. This I am doing. He has made arrangements with the Chaffins and has videos for sale. I have not seen one of them, and the future tense of some of the flyer does put me off a little.

Cousins

I have had some cuttings about Ogopogo for some time, three from American/Canadian papers, one from the Mail on Sunday magazine. Ogopogo is the name given to the creatures reported from Lake Okanagan, in British Columbia, Canada, close to the American border. The reason for this latest flush of interest is a video taken late 1989 by Mr Ken Chaplin. His father, Clem, had been camping in the area, and when walking by the lake he saw something in the water, not too far away. He said, 'I've been here all my life and worked in the bush and I'd never seen anything like it. It was green with brown spots - a reptile sort of thing.' Ken a car salesman (one report says just retired, another that he lost his job owing to subsequent publicity), said his father did not have a camera so they hired one and returned to the area some ten days later. At first there was nothing unusual to be seen, but on the second evening they saw it swimming

towards a nearby sawmill's log holding Pen, and took some video. The next day they went out in a boat and encountered the creature again. It was again swimming towards the log Pen and they maneuvered into its Path. Its head was out of the water, body undulating behind it and it came within 75 feet of them. it seemed exasperated they were in its Path and lifted six to eight feet of its long lizard-like tail and smacked it on the surface very hard. Ken said he saw the creature on five evenings and videoed it on four, when all the tape is edited together there is 3 minutes 43 seconds of it. Ken says it looked somewhat like a water-snake swimming but was at least 15 feet long and had flippers on feet. He has been offered \$25,000 for the tape and has been approached by the Disney Studios and TV companies. The National Geographic Society in Washington examined the tape and said it was not a forgery, it had not been interfered with. However, at the time of the articles they had not identified what the animal was. To my mind there are some facets of this report that do not ring true, for a monster sighting anyway. Returning to the area of a sighting and getting another within a short time, also seeing the animal on a number of successive days is not the usual pattern. Mainly because over the years no pattern has shown up. The tail slapping does not seem correct either, more like a beaver.

I then received a Press release from Erik Beckjord. As director of the National Cryptozoological Society he had been accorded a viewing of the Chaplin video in the offices of NBC-TV, Burbank. It read. 'After several viewings, it soon became clear that the primary object shown in the video is a common BEAVER, genus Castoridae, and very likely could be the same beaver that was shown earlier in the film as a comparison object, but in close-up. Mr Jon Erik Beckjord, the director of the NCS, has seen many beavers for years in Minnesota lakes and also in lakes in northern and N.E. Washington State, close to BC. Due to the side view of the beaver's tail in the air, the appearance is given of slenderness, but this is merely a deceptive profile. Thus some observers have suggested an otter. However, due to the proximity of log booms, and other beavers in the inlet area, and some experience in identifying beavers, Mr Beckjord is of the opinion the object is not Ogoogo, but is a beaver.'

He goes on to say he hopes further sightings will be recorded on film, rather than video, because of the better quality. He finished by saying in his identification he was indebted to Dr Tim Parsons of UBC, Zoology, who identified the creature as a beaver in September (89). Along with this Erik enclosed a page with some stills from the video, and sketched under the objects showing above the water are outlines of a beaver and they fit very well.

I am grateful to Erik for the additional information, and for clarifying the reports surrounding the Chaplin video. It is good to see him analyzing material and producing a simple ordinary explanation. Accepting Dr Parsons view that it was a beaver. While it is easy to see the beaver explanation, the stills from the video seem to show it was good quality and at fairly close range. I do wonder why Erik still remains adamant that the Chaffin video is of something unusual, when the quality is such that no positive identification can be made, and the wake is similar to that of a waterfowl. Perhaps percentages have something to do with it!

Memphre

I have recently recieved an old newspaper report from the Boston Globe which has news from Lake Memphremagog, which cuts the boarder between the US and Canada, about some old sightings and a photograph which was taken in 1986. Two of the local people formed the International Dracontology Society, and set out to promote Memphre as they have called the reported creature. The article says that 120 people have reported seeing some kind of big, dark-coloured creature, swimming in the lake since 1892. The collected sightings are fairly consistant, when more than a hump was visible above the water, witnesses described a long thick neck, a large head like a snake's or horse's, and a steady movement through the water as if fins or flippers were driving it. Estimates of length vary but average seems 20/25 feet. The un-named couple who took the photograph in 1986 were said to be going to submit it to a magazine. This magazine was said

to be offering a \$1,000 reward for a verifiable picture of the alleged monster. There was no follow up to the Photograph item so, Perhaps it was not acceptable. One could have had an ordinary explanation upon examination. I also have recently received a letter and some photocopies from Kenji Chono, of Osaka, Japan. He sent information of a Japanese lake monster, which has been called Issie. The reports come from Lake Ikeda, which is in Kyushu island, the southern-most island of the Japanese archipelago. Kenji writes, "Lake Ikeda is a caldera lake which was formed 4,500 years before by the eruption of a volcano nearby. This lake is about 15 kilometers in circumference and 233 metres at deepest point. This lake harbours various kinds of fish, including the giant eels which are more than two metres long, and being appointed as natural monument of Japan. On 3rd September (1990 I think, RIP) about 20 people have observed a 20 to 30 metre long black object with two humps moving fast on the surface of the lake. On 16th December of the same year, Issie was photographed by a man. That picture - which showed at least three hump-like objects - was later evaluated at the American UFO research group, OSW (Ground Saucer Watch), which had concluded that what was shown in that picture was some kind of reptile swimming in the lake, although without firm belief. Since then, Issie was not observed so frequently - maybe because most of us had lost our interest quickly and did not pay much attention to this phenomena - but then... On 4th January, 1991, Issie was at last videotaped. About 4.30pm, Mr Hideaki Tomiyasu and his family noticed a big black object in the centre of the lake while driving beside the lake. It had soon disappeared, however, when those five people reached the lakeside five minutes later, it had reappeared 200 metres from them. This time it was four metres long (their eldest son described that it was more than ten metres long), and moved sideways, submerging and surfacing (the splashed wave could be recognized). It submerged when a motorboat passed nearby. However to their surprise, after that two black objects (one was shorter than the other) reappeared, closing to each other until they were united. Then they (it?) disappeared. This whole sequence took place for about twenty minutes. After the tape was shown on TV, Mr Kazuo Kawano came forward with a tape which showed a strange disturbance on the surface of the lake. He said he had been watching the lake with his mother on 21st October, 1990, when at 1.00pm, suddenly, the strange disturbance had occurred. He reported a creature 5 to 10 metres long, which he had videotaped until it disappeared a minute later. Kenji says that what was shown on both tapes was so vague that it was difficult to make a positive identification. As a result a number of explanations were put forward, loss, standing wave, school of fish and giant eels. Professor Yuichi Ono, of the Physical Science Department at Kyushu University, commented that the Tomiyasu video seemed to be some kind of live creature, but he could not be sure whether it was just school of fish or something else.

Photocopies are not much help when trying to analyse video/photographic evidence, those Kenji sent are no exception, but they are an indicator of sorts. The Tomiyasu one seems to show two long low humps moving across the frame, very much the boat wake pattern as seen at Loch Ness, that along with the account of the sighting, humps merging together, reappearing after boat passing, the length of time of the observation, all suggest to me that here we are dealing with a boat wake. The Kawano still is different, being a small group of humps/dark marks! There are three or four with another two nearer the camera and one slightly to the left, allowing for angles and such, they could occupy an oval space. It is difficult to suggest what they are. Kenji says he is going to investigate further and try to collect more information. That will be very interesting.

Another Nessletter finished. I hope I am on line to get the following issues out somewhat sooner. Please remember your news and views are needed and always welcome. My address is still:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham. Tel. 0338.537359. Subs. U.K. £2.75. North America, \$9.00

RIP...

The unnamed couple who took the photograph... This was said to be a... This was said to be a...