

Sent to Mansfield Rd

STEVE FELTHAM

Last month Steve wrote to bring us up to date with his endeavours. He has been stranded on the beach at Doras since January. His van needed some work on it to pass the MOT test. He said it was not major work, but locating the necessary parts was a problem; it is rather elderly. His brother in Dorset came to the rescue, finding the bits and sending them up to him. Steve is hoping to be back on the move and re-establishing contact with other parts of the loch before too long. He said he had not seen Adrian since Christmas, and can hardly remember the last time he spent a night at Fort Augustus. On the positive side Doras has been a very nice place to be for the winter. On earlier trips in previous years he always found it to be a homely place. The locals have been very friendly, and it has been a joy spending a few months getting to know them. He is right on the shore with an excellent view of the loch, and during the winter months the loch traffic is down to almost zero. Large quantities of driftwood is washed up on the Doras shore, almost an endless supply. So his little stove in the van has had plenty of fuel, and he has kept warm. Although he says it has been a fairly mild winter. He has spent many, many days out on the beach, watching, and has been surprised by the large number of calm days! He said, 'In fact on January 12th I was, I think, the first person to swim in Loch Ness this year when I fell out of a canoe a couple of hundred yards from the shore (well easily 50 yards) and had to swim back fully dressed, a cold, and quite frightening experience!!' Unfortunately he lost his still camera that he had with him at the time, luckily it was not the video camera.

Steve has been compiling a video diary which is to be part of the BBC series 'Video Diary'. He has been doing a lot of filming and it is coming together nicely. Plenty of interviews with relevant people and many references to the established evidence. Steve also hopes to use some of the BBC archive footage. It will be wrapped up at the end of April. Then he will have to spend some six weeks in an editing suite at the BBC in London, putting it all together. He is not looking forward to leaving his tranquil life at the Loch Ness for that length of time. The 'Video Diaries' series is on BBC2 and will be broadcast sometime in mid-summer.

Steve went on to the Margaret MacLennan sighting, and her reaction to the stories appearing in the press. There has already been much written about the MacLennan Clan and her young son Ruiridh, who is Clan Chief. She was very upset when she saw the article that was in the Daily Record. Because she says that people just laugh at that sort of thing. She told Steve that even if something climbed out onto the beach in her back garden she would keep quiet about it. Steve hopes she is joking because he has been trying to get her to write a clearer report on what she saw last June. Nick Mitchell pointed out to Steve that the original report does not make it clear that it is a description of a single hump of quite a large size, rather than a neck sighting. Steve says he fears it may be categorized with other sightings of very small creatures, because it does not make it apparent that only the part that was visible was maybe six feet long. Not, as it could be read, the overall length of the animal. After seeing the newspaper article he found it easy to understand why local people who have genuine sightings of something unexplained, choose to keep quiet about it rather than leave themselves open to such ridicule. By being there and becoming accepted as part of the local community and winning their trust by showing he is a dedicated researcher and investigator, he has heard of six or seven sightings in the last year. Margaret's is so far the only one he has been able to get a report off. The others generally do not want to make it public. Even if he does manage to get those reports he may be restrained from passing them on to us, considering what happened with Margaret's.

I find Steve's mention of unreported sightings heartening. Over the past few years sightings seemed to be getting fewer. Some members have

suggested it seems to be in ratio with cruiser traffic, more boats less reports. I do not think there has ever been large numbers of sightings. The LNI collected, and accepted, into the teens for some years in the '60s. I think that number to be a little on the high side, with some boat wakes being accepted. However the LNI with it's Achnahannet H.Q. and camera vans spaced out along the lochside did at least provide a focal point that interested people, locals as well as visitors, could get in touch with. It looks as if Steve, by being active and there on the ground, could perhaps go some way to filling that gap. I know the Exhibition has been there a long time, but a proportion of the local people do not like the idea of 'them making a fortune along there' and would not report anything that was seen.

NIS AT THE LOCHSIDE

John Holmes enclosed a short note and some photographs with his subscription. He gave no details other than he had been on holiday at the loch with Sue, his wife, last October ('91). On the 3rd they had been watching the loch near one of the piers at Foyers. At about 2.30pm they noticed something on the surface about 200 yards away and took some video of it. At the time they both thought it was nothing more than driftwood. There was no movement, no indication of colour or details visible. After returning home they were watching the video and noticed that the object seemed to disappear. However this happened at the point where he zoomed out from the object and John thought that may explain the seeming disappearance of the object. Although the stills he took from the video and sent me are fuzzy. I would agree with him that the object is just driftwood or some other flotsam. The reduction in magnification causes it to become too small to really register on the tape. John has the experience to know what he saw and videoed but to some others this could have been put forward as a Nessie sighting.

To sidetrack for a moment on a similar theme, Michael Holt, of Richmond, Virginia, wrote in April enclosing two photographs. That had been taken at his local Park lake, and show a nice little hump in the water. Michael said, of course, I do not believe there is a Nessie-type creature in the little lake. But I feel that these photos teach me that 'humps' can be found anywhere, and that it is easy to be tricked by debris. What I photographed is obviously a floating bough. But given only the photo, it would be tempting for a certain type of person to see Nessie.

He had written to comment on the passing on of the MacLennan report to the Press. Michael does not agree. He thinks all reported in the Nessletter should remain confidential. And that some sightings will only be reported if those involved are certain of their privacy; the Nessletter can provide that privacy. No reports should be passed to the Press.

In his home State, Virginia, personalized number plates are issued, but only seven letters or numbers are allowed. Michael has seen the following two, 'NESSIE' and 'LOC NESS'.

Andreas Trottmann, our Swiss member, wrote with details of his plans for his next trip to the loch. From July 18th to 25th he will be at the Ross Chalet, Strone, that is below the road. From July 25th to 31st '92 at the Ross Cottage, Strone, just above the Chalet and the A82. He could also be contacted on his boat 'The Witch of the Mist' or in the evenings try the Lewiston Arms (Please ask Nicky). He is planning to do sonar work and probable hydrophone work in the Foyers, Horseshoe and Urquhart Bay areas. He is always highly interested to meet other NIS & ISC members. He also hopes to undertake some research and hunting for the unknown Big Cat. A photographic trap with a photographic (should that be photo-electric? RIP) cell as a trigger will be set up somewhere in Glen Cannich/Strathglass.

He added a footnote about the Chaffin video available from Erik Beckjord, order form with NIS102. His registered order for a copy with the respective amount enclosed never received a reply. Andreas said, 'I knew of Mr Beckjord's reputation in ISC circles, nevertheless my attitude was positive. It is a great pity!'

In an earlier letter just after Project Urquhart was announced Andreas commented, 'Nessie seems more and more to be a prisoner in her own loch,

tortured by engine noises and sonar beams. Should we not try to return to a more natural and quieter way in the field (as Tim Dinsdale did)? And finally we are just visitors in the home ground of these animals and should therefore treat our host with respect.'

PETER BYRNE

Peter Passed on a cutting he received from his brother who lives at Lake Tahoe. It was from the Lake Tahoe Bonanza and headed 'Lake Monster Eats Dog'. It was the account of Donald Fein whose motor boat had been swamped by a 75 foot long creature, throwing him and his dog into the water. The creature, which was described as a lizard with a long neck and covered with green scales, returned and swallowed the dog in one bite. A shore fisherman, Joseph Kerr, saw what happened, and managed to get a few blurry pictures before alerting nearby Park rangers. They called the Coast Guard, where Chief Petty Officer John Hoaks..... Wait a minute, lets take a closer look at the cutting. There we are, on the back is the date, the 1st of April, Ah Well. The story went on and elaborated the incident, bringing in Dr Tae Kin of the University of Nevada and Reno. Finishing with a list of 4 people, 16 dogs, a cat, an unknown number of Canadian Geese and a horse, all supposedly eaten by the creature. A nice little giggle for April Fools Day, but it does annoy somewhat.

Peter's prime interest is Bigfoot, he used to edit and publish 'The Bigfoot News' a number of years ago. However he has a long standing interest in Loch Ness, having visited the area with Tim Dinsdale years ago, and he would dearly like to return sometime. In an earlier letter Peter said he was continuing Bigfoot research as time allowed and he had come across some interesting sighting reports which will be investigated. All are five to ten years old but nevertheless they will contribute to his patterns. In a letter with the cutting he says he had recently chatted with a solicitor who saw one in 1976. Peter wrote, 'Walked in front of his car at a distance of about twenty feet; evening, raining, an area of woods. He stopped and he and his companion heard it crashing through the brush above them. Sound clear, very credible and I add his sighting -time- and -place- to my long term Geo Time Pattern study'.

I have a book review from the February 1992 Smithsonian. It is of 'Tula Hattie: The last Great Elephant' by Peter Byrnes published by Faber and Faber, \$19.95/\$12.95 paper. I have not seen a copy of this book so cannot comment on literary content and it is not Loch Ness, but it should be interesting. It is Peter's story. He had been a professional white hunter in Nepal taking clients on safari. After an incident in 1967 he was convinced he needed to change his way of life. What could he do instead? As a hunter he was well qualified to protect the animals he had hunted and their environment. He convinced the Nepalese Government to set his former hunting area, the 100,000 acre White Grass Plains, aside as a game reserve. That gave it some protection, but Peter wanted some way of turning it into a National Park, which would give it much more. He devised the plan of filming the area's largest inhabitant. This was a male Asian elephant with footprints 22 inches across, and 11 feet tall at the shoulder, possibly the largest Asian elephant alive. He eventually succeeded in doing that and the book is the story of the hunt.

BIG BABY

The Weekly World News, April 14th 1992, carried a follow up story to the trapping of Nessie. It said that after it published the story of the capture and that Dr Michael Genet, who was in charge, was being pressurized to kill the animal to further research; it received thousands of letters and phonecalls of protest. These had been passed on and resulted in the beast being set free on March 21st. Within hours of being freed the 70 foot Nessie, which had been pregnant, gave birth to a seven feet long, 2000lb baby. The story is, as was the first one, accompanied by a picture, this time of mother and child. Once more the quality of the picture is very good and the content can only be described as cute. Huge bulk of mother in background, cute baby in front, stretching it's neck to sniff mother's nose! There is also a competition, choose a name for baby and win \$100. As with the April Fool's day jokes I do not think it can do serious researcher's case any good.

HENRY BAUER

In response to the World News Piece in NIS 107, and my comment on the 'impressive fake' Photos, Henry wrote to me reminding me that some time ago he sent me notice of a book, 'In Our Own Image' (1990 ISBN 0-89381-398-2 or 0-89381-399-0), by Fred Ritcher. It is about how computer technology has brought a revolution to Photography, and in particular that it is nowadays possible to produce photos that look entirely genuine, that cannot be shown not to be genuine, by creating pictures on a computer and then photographing them. Among the illustrations in the book is one of a Panorama of New York, but with a couple of buildings shifted. Henry says he does not know if that was the method used to produce the Nessie Pictures, but the point is that we must always remind ourselves that nowadays the camera CAN lie; and perhaps photographs are no more reliable than eyewitness accounts, even less if the report comes from trustworthy people.

A little while ago Henry sent me a cutting from Science Frontiers No 72. The relevant passage was about leatherback turtles, which I found most intriguing. These are the largest of the sea turtles weighing up to 1600lbs. They are also the fastest capable of 9 miles an hour. They are the only ones without a rigid shell. Having a thick leathery carapace, with five to seven lengthwise keels. Perhaps the flexible shell is necessary for it's ability to dive as deep as 3000feet. This is thought to be strange and unnecessary, as they seem to feed almost exclusively on jellyfish, most of which are surface feeders. This diet also causes biologists to wonder how such a large, far-ranging animal can find enough jellyfish to sustain itself, as jellyfish are 97% water. Like all turtles they can stay submerged for up to 48 hours, this is also unexplained. Their bones are more like those of marine mammals (dolphins and whales) than the reptiles. The evolutionary implications of this are not understood. They are warm-blooded and able to maintain their temperature as much as 10 degrees F. above the ambient water, just as some dinosaurs apparently could.

While I do not think we have turtles in Loch Ness, I find the fact that leatherbacks, and others, can remain submerged for such extended periods engrossing. A similar ability in the Loch Ness animals could perhaps explain why they are not seen at the surface more. The ability to maintain temperature above the cold surrounding water would also permit a more active hunting life-style. Such adaptations would extend possible candidates for the Loch Ness animals into the realms of the reptile.

RESEARCH REQUEST

One of our American members, Sheila O.Barrera, is an artist who is currently working on a series of artworks featuring the locations worldwide that are reputedly the homes of strange unidentified water animals, and has completed over fifty works on the subject to date. She would be grateful if anyone having data, postcards or photos (even snapshots) of any areas where creatures have been witnessed would contact her at :- Scenes of Beauty, P.O.Box 1674, Rahway, NJ 0765, U.S.A. She would also be interested in any eye-witness account that you may have come across.

ENIGMAS

This may be of interest to members. 'Enigmas' is published five times a year by Strange Phenomena Investigations. This magazine regularly features articles on all aspects of the Paranormal including UFOs, poltergeists, hauntings, spiritualism, life after death, etc. Subscription details from:- SPI Researcher, Malcolm Robinson, 41 The Braes, Tullibody, Clackmannanshire, Scotland, FK10 2TT, please send large SAE.

As I close this Newsletter I have just received a note from Steve Feltham, his van has passed it's MOT and he is mobile again. Thank you for your continued support, your news and views are important and always welcome, my address as usual is:- R.R.Hipple, 7 Huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL19 1RQ. Tel (0388)537359. Subs U.K. £2.75. N.America \$9.00.