

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE
 NESSLETTER 111
 JUNE 1992 (JAN'93)

SIGHTING REPORTS

I have news of sightings, including a Photograph and a Piece of video tape. I usually Present reports as I receive them and leave members to make their own conclusions, as in the majority of cases I have been unable to interview witnesses. I occasionally slip in a comment of MY own, based on MY experience of the loch.

On Wednesday 12th August '92, the Daily Mail published a Photograph purported to be of Nessie, but the heading did warn us to remember it was the silly season. I have only seen a Photocopy of the newspaper picture, so it left much to be desired for clarity. I am not sure it is even Loch Ness, although it is a stretch of water with the characteristic mountains beyond the far shore. On the left the foreground is water, there is a steep heavily wooded headland in the top right hand corner. About a quarter way between camera and headland is a head and neck. It looks somewhat like the top half of the Surgeon's Photograph, with the head facing the same way.

There is an account that accompanies the picture. A 45 Year old man, who wishes to keep his identity secret, had camped overnight about two miles from Fort Augustus. It said, 'he was armed only with a Boots 110EF Pocket camera'. I hope he also had a tent! About 6.30/7.20am he went to the loch to have a wash and brush his teeth, as he was doing this he saw the head and neck. He said it was about six feet long and dark brown/blackish, some 40 yards offshore. His camera was by the trees some little way off and he scrambled back to it and took four shots. It then tipped its head and slid under. About five minutes later it reappeared about 200 yards away, this time with four or five humps, it slowly swam 20 or 30 yards then submerged again. He said he was very nervous and gathered his stuff together and ran off.

What are we to make of it? We are told the negatives have been examined by Kodak and the RAF's Photographic laboratory. Both said they have not been tampered with and are genuine Photographs; of something! Remember that in NIS 109 Dick Raynor explained that it is fairly straightforward to produce fake Photographs. The paper headline warned it was the silly season. So I think the whole thing could be disregarded.

About a week later a piece of amateur video was shown on television. It had been taken in the region of Urquhart Bay, and showed something moving through the water, about 300 yards offshore. Peter Meadows, senior zoology lecturer at Glasgow University, said it was probably the best bit of film he had seen. He said the object, on a calm surface, looked alive and the film did not appear to be faked. However he also said that Nessie would need to be caught, hopefully alive, and examined to prove its existence!

I did not see it myself, but have received opinions about it from NIS members who did. They all thought it to be no more than a wake pattern, although a very good example. It is unusual that someone like Peter Meadows should be so quick to make a statement about a possible Nessie video, especially one that seems easily explained.

A group of children from Glenurquhart were returning from a school swimming lesson in Inverness on Friday the 18th September, at about 12.15pm the bus was between Abriachan and the Clansman. Teacher, Rhona More said that she and some of the children saw perhaps four humps in the water. They only glimpsed them for a short while through a gap in the trees. Two other pupils sitting at the front of the bus said they thought they had seen a head and neck moving through the water. The teacher said that they had been reluctant to talk about it at the time (it was reported in the Inverness Courier 29th Sept.) because 'we did not think anyone would believe us.' However, they had later heard that members of a coach party had also had a sighting on the same day.

I am not too sure about this one. I do not like multiple-hump

reports, it is too easy to mistake a boat wake for solid objects, and without careful investigation one cannot be sure.

A few days later a chef and some others from the Clansman Hotel reported seeing humps in the loch from the hotel. I have no details of this but feel the same remark fits the bill.

Steve Feltham sent me a short letter dated mid-September. With it was an account of a hump sighting he had just received. Stuart Ross Macdonald, a 10 year old from Foyers, had been taken to see Steve by his mother. He gave the time as 6pm on the 17th September '92. They had been driving into town (Inverness) when, as they passed one of the Forestry lay-bys the Youngster had shouted that he had seen a back go down in the water. By the time his mother stopped and reversed to the spot, there was nothing to be seen. He said it had been about 13 mts from the shore, the length of a car and brown in colour. Steve sent me the sketch made by Stuart at the time. The hump is shown as being fairly high, about a fifth of the length, a good upturned boat! There is also the suggestion of a smaller hump a little way in front, or behind, direction is not indicated. There were others, who know the Macdonalds, with Steve when they visited, and the opinion was 'aye he's no a bad laddie'. I know Stuart is young and there is a feeling that youngsters can be imaginative and easily misled, but the account seems alright. Steve had to open his letter to me to put the sighting report in. The letter finished, 'it's one of those Autumn days today, where the loch is calm, and shrouded in a kind of blue/grey haze - and so very silent.'

One of our newer members, Andrew Williams from North Wales, mentioned a brief sighting he had in 1988. He and his girlfriend have been holidaying at the loch for the past five years. In July '88 as they drove between Invermoriston and Fort Augustus he noticed a movement not far from the shore, but was unable to have a good look. It is the old story, in the time it took to stop and return to the place they could see the loch from, it had gone. His girlfriend said she had seen a neck and little body.

Another new member, Michael Lazzari, sent word of something strange he and his wife saw on Saturday 3rd October '92. He has been interested in the mystery since the 1960s but this was his first visit to the loch. They were on the shore of Dones Bay at around 10.30am, the water was flat calm, when there was a large turbulence some 200/300 yards from the shore, they did not note anything above the surface. Steve Feltham was nearby and they went and told him what they had witnessed, although Michael did not say what Steve's reaction was.

Such reports are unsatisfactory from the 'Proof' point of view, they are very real to the participants, however. I maintain that as researchers and reporters of the mystery we have a duty to study sighting reports and try to explain them. But just because a particular report fits into a slot i.e. boat wake, water fowl, etc. does not mean we discard it. We do put a question mark after it and if at all possible very carefully interview the witnesses.

Helen Cross wrote after I reported her sighting in NIS 107. She said I questioned the 'shadow' which remained after the object submerged. She has further considered this and suggests: if there was a large object not too far below the surface, it could affect the appearance of the water, in much the same way as a rock does in a stream, causing the surface to ripple up above it thus cresting the appearance of a 'shadow' by breaking up the reflection of sunlight from the water. I had also suggested the hump itself could have been an unrippled patch of dark water. Helen said she obviously had not stressed enough in her account her feeling that the object was 'hump shaped', that is flat at the bottom and rounded on top. While from such a distance it could be by no means certain, the impression she had was very strong. As said in NIS 107, she did not immediately reach the conclusion that it was Nessie, she had been waiting for it to turn into something familiar.

Helen was in touch again later, to say she had spent two weeks at the loch with the Loch Ness Project at the beginning of September. She had a

very enjoyable time, although the weather was not co-operative and they did not manage to do all that had been planned. She had time to ask Adrian Shine for his opinion about the 'hump' she had seen but he could not find an explanation for it. She also met up with Brian Herring on the Project, he has been a NIS member for many years.

One of our long standing members Tim Denesha, from Buffalo, N.Y., wrote a nice letter earlier in 1992. He had been a member of the Loch Ness Investigation, and with a friend Andy Rzepkowski had hitched to Scotland in May '69 for a summer of monster watching. They had each had one brief sighting, Andy's from the camera site on the Pier-end at Fort Augustus, a sudden surfacing and then a disappearance of a curved hump shape; curved in the sense of turned, as if the body part was twisted. Much too sudden to be filmed. His own was from the camera site opposite Foyers. He saw a shallow hump in the centre of the loch, it was circling lazily for about two minutes. Very odd behaviour but too far away to film meaningfully. Both these occurred in early August. In late August he had a much more interesting experience.

In the late '60s the LNI had devised the idea of night drifting, the premise being that the creatures came to the surface more at night when the loch was quieter. The method was that two or three volunteers would take the Expedition's 12 foot loch boat out when there was promise of a calm night, they had with them a crossbow with biopsy dart, (these darts had been developed by Prof. Roy Mackal), this was tethered to the bow by fishing line on a reel. This device had a limited range, I do not recall it at the moment, but I do remember testing it on the hillside below Achnahannet. Perhaps 60/70 yards seems correct. Upon sighting yourself within range of a nice hump out on the loch, you shot the bolt, which was hollow with hooks on the inside, this lodged in the thick skin and when retrieved brought with it a tissue sample! In retrospect it was perhaps not the wisest thing to bob about in a small boat hoping to find yourself close to a large animal and then shoot at it with barbed darts, but at the time it was all part of the eager LNI Expedition atmosphere.

The whole enterprise appealed to Tim, as well as another American, Michael Raffanello. So one night they rowed out into Urquhart Bay, kitted out with lifejackets with crossbow in hand. The night was very calm with nearly a full moon, which would be a great asset for night visibility. Shortly after taking up station an extraordinary heavy fog descends. It was so dense that they had trouble seeing each from opposite ends of the 12 foot boat. The water was very still, the boat rocked gently, there was a regular slap of ripples against the sides. They were both starting to doze off, when they were suddenly wide awake! There was a substantial disturbance in the water fairly close to the boat: it began to rock quite strongly, and much larger waves were striking the boat sides. There was no breeze or any sudden wind; if it had been a boat wake it would have to be a large boat, too large for them to have failed to hear as it went by. Also there was very little after dark traffic on the loch in those years, especially in very thick fog. The agitation lasted for less than a minute. Then they both heard a sound like water being expelled forcibly with air, as from a whale's blow hole. It was repeated maybe four or five times, with the rhythm that reminded them of breathing, a sort of in/out in/out, the 'in' being shorter and softer, the 'out' being longer and louder. With the very poor visibility there was nothing to be seen and distance was difficult to judge. It seemed to be coming from some 3 or 4 metres from the bow of the boat, also it seemed to originate from above the water by at least a metre. It was easy enough to think that the creature was expelling water in some fashion -- from nostrils? Because of the fog Tim cannot give any indication of where in the bay all this took place or how they were orientated, relative to the sound. They were both terrified and began rowing roughly in the direction from which they had come, they hoped. They stopped after a while, when they found the water quiet again, and drifted for the rest of the night. As the sun burned off the fog (a beautiful shimmering vision of pearly haze, he says), they heard water lapping on rocks, rowed toward it and ended up ashore a few miles south of Achnahannet. They got to the road and hitched back to HQ, where all were

thrilled with their tale, but agreed it was too anecdotal to be meaningful evidence. Just another curious Loch Ness experience, not so much a sighting more of a hearing.

Tim finished by saying that Mike also had a sighting that summer, similar to Andy's. A rapid appearance and disappearance of a hump, with a considerable disturbance of water, as if the creature was chasing or being chased. This was observed from an elevated site near the Youth Hostel. Tim said he cannot recall the site's name. I think it could have been the camera site used by the LNI set on the hillside above the road midway between Invermoriston and the Alltisaigh YH.

Doug Macfarlane sent word that he has his boat Topcat ashore at Larags, his hometown, ready for next seasons refurbishment. He also enclosed a cutting of a reported sighting from the Aberdeen Press & Journal of Wednesday December 2nd '92. Mr. Jockie Thomson, newly retired after 34 years with the Forestry Commission, was cleaning out a water tank behind his cottage at Primrose Bay, south of Invermoriston, at lunchtime on November 30th '92. He turned to see a big dark shape some 200 metres out in the loch. He was about a quarter of a mile from it, and watched it for three minutes as it headed slowly towards Fort Augustus. He said, 'It had a big, black round head which was visible all the time and every 10 metres or so it would raise itself about 4ft out of the water. Under the head was a thick, dark neck. It is difficult to say exactly how big it was, but this was definitely something of great size.' He then ran to get his binoculars from the cottage but when he returned Nessie had gone. He is sure it was not a deer, a large bird or a loch. Ten years ago his young son ran into the cottage to say he had seen something in the loch, when Jockie went out he was in time to see a shape disappearing at high speed across the loch. He has always thought there was something in the monster stories, but is now convinced there is.

SEA LIFE CENTRE

In April '92 the Dorset based company applied for Planning Permission to site an exhibition centre and aquarium by Loch Ness, in the Borlum corner of Urquhart Bay. Highlight of the proposed facility was to an artificial island linked to the shore by 40 yards of underwater transparent walkway. After meetings with the Invernes Divisional Planning Department in October '92 it was decided to drop the 'island' feature because of fears of adverse effects on the environment of the loch brought about by it's construction, and to move the whole complex back from the shore. In early January '93 the residents and business people of the Drumnadrochit area held a public meeting to discuss the proposals. There were a number of aspects which they did not approve of, the building of the Centre in the middle of one of the most picturesque and famous bays in Scotland. The problems from increased traffic and congestion, on the already dangerous A82. Then there were worries about possible pollution from waste water and the introduction of alien species of fish into the loch. At the end 136 voted against the proposal and 14 for. At this point I was going to suggest that if you had any strong thoughts on the matter you may like to write to the planners setting them out. However I have just read that the company has withdrawn its plans in the face of such strong local opposition. It is now looking at a site by Lake Windermere, in the English Lake District, but it was stated that if, in future, it was thought that the local feeling had changed it may try again at Loch Ness. This will need to be watched as time passes.

LATE...AGAIN!

I had intended to get this Nessletter to you before Christmas. I was putting it together when I was offered a job, back down the fluorspar mine. It was to be for three weeks, to do a special job, but I have been there since November 30th, and it looks as if it could continue. So I found instead of having untouched tomorrows stretching to the horizon, I have to fit in an eight hour shift and all the preparation etc. Fatigue is a factor as well. After a 22 month lay-off, it came as a shock to the system

to return to heavy work underground. That is the reason for this hiccup in the production of the Nessletters. I am sorry and hope you will understand. Your news and views are important and always welcome, my address remains:- R.R.Heppe, 7 Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop