

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE
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BOOK etc.

For too long I have had a book about Loch Ness without a chance to mention it. Written in Danish by Palle Vibe it is titled 'Pa sporet af Loch Ness-uhyret'. I do not speak/read Danish so cannot really review the book but I can make a comment or two, hoping I do not misrepresent Palle in my ignorance. He has written other books on Fortean type subjects, and has put twenty years of research into this one. It is hard back, 174 pages and produced in good clear print. From the illustrations it would seem to cover all aspects of the mystery. Some chapters are split into sections dealing with individual years. Yellow Submarine, Loch Ness Investigation, Loch Ness Project, Project Urquhart, Sherlock Holmes and James Bond are some of the headings that catch the eye. Holmes will refer to the full scale monster that was built for a film and sank in Urquhart Bay. I think the Bond reference will concern the Wallis Autogiro that was one of the more imaginative attempts by the Loch Ness Investigation to take the hunt to the monster. There is an index and a bibliography as well as a video, film reference. Printed in Denmark, publisher Lademann, ISBN 87-15-08893-6. For anyone with Danish this book looks worthwhile.

Caledonian, The monster Canal by Gutherie Hutton published by Richard Stenlake at £5.95 could be one for the collection. It is a collection of old postcards with the compilers words of explanation beneath. It makes a valuable contribution to the local history. Illustrations of the old paddle steamers show them to have great character. There are a few humorous cards about the Loch Ness Monster, but the collection title does not really refer to the monster, more to the Caley Canal itself. With Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, dominating the western end the canal runs through the Great Glen up to and through Loch Ness, Britian's largest volume of fresh water, it is big in its own right. Being built by men who thought big, cutting basins out of rock, dredging twenty feet deep channels through hillsides, raising the level of lochs, diverting great rivers, building their own peninsular before digging the channel along it. Their vision knowing no bounds. It has been overtaken by time but remains one of the most magnificent pieces of 19th century engineering.

I have now had three issues of The Crypto Chronicle which is a new publication dedicated to Cryptozoology. It is editor, Craig Harris's first attempt at a magazine. Having articles on Bigfoot, Big Cats and Moas, he is hoping issue four will cover Lake Monsters. Craig is doing his best to find new material that has not been used by other journals. He said he is finding that difficult but hopes that as the magazine becomes a little more established he will be in a better position to receive such items. £1 per issue/£5 per year, his address is 5 Willow Court, Droitwich, Worcs., WR9 9HL. Drop him a line if interested.

Another new magazine which has arrived is Animals & Men, the Journal of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. It is published by Spanish Train Publications and is said to be predominantly about unknown animals but not purely about Cryptozoology or the study of completely new species. It also aims to cover out of place animals, animals that have been declared extinct and suddenly prove their existance and, to a certain extent Fortean phenomena that involve animals. It is intended for it to appear four times a year and a four issue subscription is six pounds sterling (UK/Eire) other areas more. Address, The Centre for Fortean Zoology STP(UK), 15 Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter, Devonshire, EX4 2NA. Of A5 size (A4 doubled and stapled), the issue I have is full of interesting items covering varied subjects.

That brings me back to the established magazines. Strange magazine continues to be a good read, covering all manner of Fortean issues. Early issues had always reminded of publications such as Popular Mechanics but the latest has a heavier paper and a different type face, which in my opinion has improved it. It also has more pages and is carrying more advertising. In his editorial Mark Chorvinsky points out that they have

not, and do not intend to, pander to the tabloid mentality to garner huge readership, preferring intelligent readers to quantity. So it is hoped the increased advertising revenue will help fund essential research and investigations. Strange Magazine, PO Box 2246, Rockville, MD 20847, U.S.A.

The May issue of Fate to hand, with stories about giant Sloths in Brazil, haunted houses, soviet UFO scientists and others. Fate has been going for many years in digest format, I believe that is the American term. From the next issue it will appear in A4 format. Contact: Fate, PO Box 64383, St Paul, MN55164, U.S.A.

Some time ago Fortean Times took the step from all subscription to newstand. it seems to have made the transition alright. Style has perhaps changed a little, but not that much. Although I did hear it referred to as being somewhat like the Sunday Sport, a little unkind I think. Fortean Times has been going for 21 years and to celebrate they are hosting a two day conference in London. UnConvention will be held at The University of London Union, Malet Street, over the weekend of 18th/19th June '94. Main topic on the first day will be Spontaneous Human Combustion, that on the second Alien Abductions. there will be various other lectures, UFOs, Cryptozoology including Loch Ness, Lake Monster Traditions as well as Charles Fort, whose work really started it all. For full information contact: UnConvention 94, PO Box 146, Glasgow G15RN.

WILSON PHOTO HOAX

The Sunday Telegraph of 13th March '94 had a front page story and inside article about the Surgeon's photograph being a hoax. For over two years Alastair Boyd and David Martin had been piecing the story together, and now it was certain that the most well known Nessie photo was in fact, a fake. Members may recognize Alastair's name. He has a very comprehensive collection of Loch Ness literature and has done much in depth research into the subject. He is a valuable NIS member and has contributed to the Nessletters many times. He and his wife, Sue, had a very good hump sighting near Temple Pier in July 1979. David is a school teacher and as a zoologist has worked with the Loch Ness Project for twelve years.

I think most of us have seen the photograph and read accounts in the books as to how it was supposedly taken. However, briefly, some of the history. In the spring of 1933, with the opening of the motor road, stories began to circulate of a monster in Loch Ness. National newspapers, saw the chance of some exciting headlines and became interested. The Daily Mail hired Marmaduke Wetherall, who was an actor, a director and self-styled big game hunter. He had shot some animals while making a film in Africa. Duke, as he was known, and party arrived at the loch on December 18th '33. Hiring a motor boat they went exploring on the loch and almost immediately spotted 'strange white marks' on the foreshore. Although the locals did point out that such marks were allround the shore and not at all unusual. Within 48 hours Duke had found footprints in soft mud near Fort Augustus. Casts were made and dispatched for examination by the Natural History Museum. The Daily Mail admitted being surprised at the speed with which the evidence was accumulating, but used it for sensational headlines. Duke said it was the triumph of experience. After waiting with mounting excitement over the Christmas and New Year the media was let down as the bubble burst. On January 4th '34 the Museum announced that the footprints had been made by a small hippopotamus. All the prints were identical and the soft pads of the foot were dried and hard, similar to those found in big game trophies. The Daily Mail pulled the plug and brought the expedition to an abrupt end. Wetherall returned quietly to London on January 18th '34, with suggestions that the footprints had been the work of pranksters. For the time being the Loch Ness Monster was no more.

Back to 1991 and Alastair and David. A friend drew their attention to a clipping from the Sunday Telegraph, 7th December '75. The piece in the Mandrake column said very clearly that the most famous Loch Ness Monster photograph was a fake. It did not actually name the photo, as the Surgeon's or Wilson's, but it did give a good discription. It went on to tell how Mandrake had tracked down Ian Wetherall (then 63) to the Cross

Keys pub in Chelsea where he had been landlord since the '50s. He told the story of his father Duke Wetherall being commissioned by the Mail to look for the Loch Ness Monster in the '30s, using Radic equipment and so on. He said 'When he reported, as he expected, there were no signs of life, they seemed rather peeved.' So Duke said right we'll give them their monster. Wetherall explained how they made a model only a few inches high from rubber tubing, what-have-you and a toy submarine. Later they drove up to Scotland again, his father and one of his father's friends and himself. The friend was called Chambers and had a shoot on one side of the loch. They found an inlet where the tiny ripples would look like full size waves out on the loch, and with the actual scenery in the background, Ian had a 35mm Leica camera, which was still rather a novelty in those days, and when the submarine was wound up and let go, he took five shots. Then a water bailiff was seen approaching, drawn by the voices no doubt, and Duke put his foot on the model and pushed it to the bottom. Ian Wetherall said, 'Chambers was the one who sent off the pictures, saying he had seen the creature while out shooting and tried to snap it'.

Reading the clipping David Martin realized that the Chambers referred to could be the Maurice Chambers who had been with R.K. Wilson when he took his photographs. If so there was a link between 'The Surgeon' and Duke Wetherall, one that had gone unrecognized for 60 years. So David and Alastair began investigating. They quickly found the pub mentioned by Mandrake, finding Ian Wetherall had been dead for some years. They were told of a son, and eventually contacted him. He referred them to Christian Spurling, Ian's step-brother, who was then in his eighties. When they visited him in his home, he was in bed (with a broken hip I believe) but it was by no means a death-bed confession as some papers have intimated. He was happy to tell his story, to give straight answers to straight questions.

Shortly after the Mail wound up the Nessie expedition leaving Duke Wetherall feeling aggrieved at his treatment, he had an idea for revenge. He asked his two boys Ian and Christian, both in their twenties, to make him a monster. Christian said, 'Ian bought the submarine from Woolworths and we went to work. It took us about eight days because we had to make the neck (on the conning tower) from plastic wood and you can't just make that in a day. It's got to harden.' He said the neck was about 12 inches and the body 14 inches, the whole sanded down and painted grey. It was driven by clockwork and designed to float low in the water, they added a strip of lead as a keel and to give stability. They tested the result in a local pond before taking it north. The negatives from the shots at the loch were transferred onto quarter plates using an enlarger, and R.K. Wilson enters the story for the first time. The conspirators needed a front man and he seemed the perfect choice. As a friend of a friend there was no direct link with Duke, he was a surgeon, so had credibility, but was a great lover of the practical joke. So versed in his story, he took the plates to be developed by an Inverness chemist (Mr Morrison) and then they were sold to the Daily Mail. Suddenly, spectacularly the monster was alive and well and living in Loch Ness.

There we have it, many questions are posed by this disclosure. Motive, I think revenge is most probable. Duke Wetherall took exception to what he obviously considered his off hand treatment by the Mail. Why didn't they, after a suitable lapse of time, say 'Yah fooled you'? More difficult to explain. It seems they were taken aback by the tremendous reaction to their joke. Wilson was warned by the British Medical Association that his involvement and account were in danger of bringing his profession into disrepute. He would have been further jeopardized had it come out that it was all a practical joke. Perhaps it was thought prudent to keep quiet and console themselves that at least they knew it was a hoax. Imagine Wilson's surprise 21 years later when he was approached for his account by Constance Whyte, when she was researching her book. He concocted the story about the married woman who had been with him at the lochside to try to keep his name out of it. So it became the 'Surgeon's photograph. In correspondence with Whyte he stated that he did not claim to have seen the monster, just something in the loch. He also suggested that the plates

could have been tampered with, possibly with the collusion of the chemist. It seems that short of telling Whyte that he had been part of a hoax, he did what he could to stop her using the photograph and story. There are differences in the stories of Ian and Christian, but I think that could be expected, after time takes it's toll and as someone with a bad memory I know how things can become clouded. One aspect that Christian was uncertain about was the second photograph. When Alastair asked about it he was vague, thought it may have been a piece of wood they were trying out as a monster, but not sure. Questions I cannot answer. How did Mandrake get on to the story and why when it was published in 1975 was it not seized upon by the media? Unfortunately all the main participants are now dead. Christian dying last November at 90. There seems to be some evidence that Wilson's son at one time openly told people that his father had been involved in a Loch Ness hoax. He now lives in Australia and Alastair is trying to get in touch to see if he can throw any further light on the case.

Alastair rang me the evening before the story appeared, my reaction was a practical one. I had used plastic wood at school, it was heavy. I am also old enough to have owned one of the toy submarines as a child, it did not have much spare bouancy. Build a model monster out of plastic wood, even with a length of rubber hose down the centre, on a toy submarine with a lead keel to stabilize it; conclusion, it would sink like a stone! Also I do not know if plastic wood was available in 1933, but as I have pointed out, over the years details may have become confused. It now looks certain that a model was built even if the details are hazy.

These revelations came as a surprise. However Alastair said that although the best known Nessie photograph was a fake it does not mean that the whole case for something unusual in the loch is demolished. He pointed out that there are a number of eye witness reports that mention a long neck before the Wilson Photograph was published, so were not influenced by it. There are also hundreds of good eye witness reports over the years. Alastair's own sighting has left him in no doubt that there is something out of the ordinary in the loch. By the way they found the mounted hippo foot. It is still in the Wetherall household, it is a silver astray, only two or three inches high making it much easier to carry around than the suggested umbrella stand.

NIS AT THE LOCHSIDE

The last days of March saw the submarine safely into the loch, with the first tourist dives on April 1st '94. NIS member Theresa Lavelle, from Strathclyde, was booked to dive at 14.00hrs that day. She was to be in the Inverness/Drumnadrochit area from the Friday to Sunday evening and would have been happy to have met up with others. Sorry I could not get the details to you sooner

Andreas and Angela Trottmann, from Switzerland, will be at the Strone Chalet from May 7th to the 21st, with a submarine dive on May 12th, 11am. Glad to welcome other loch watchers.

Martien 't Marnetje (Mans), Holland, will be at the loch, the Ross Chalet at Strone between 4th and 18th June. Anyone in neighbourhood is welcome to drop in. He has a dive booked for 16th June.

Richard Phelps, Sidcup Kent, will be staying at the Invermoriston camp site from the 24th to 29th May. He is driving a C reg silver Ford Orion. He would be happy to meet other members.

Stuart Leadbetter, Fleetwood Lancs, will be at the loch from Tue 9th Aug to Fri 12th. With submarine dive on the 10th at 10am. Would like to meet up with others, phone number 0253 770965.

Steve Ravenhall, Birmingham, will be at Invermoriston from 28th July for two or three weeks. Contact welcome. Says he won't be 'going down in that submarine'!

That is it for now, please remember you are the NIS, your news and views are always welcome and needed, also word of your visits/expeditions to the loch. My address remains:- R.R.Hipple, 7 huntshieldsford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1PQ, tel 0380 537359. Subscriptions U.K.£2.75. I have alternative mailing plans for America so subs now \$10.00

R.H.