

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE
 NESSLETTER 119
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NIS AT THE LOCHSIDE

I have received letters from some of our members who visited the loch this season. First was Mr C. Mitchell, from Jarrow, Tyne & Wear, he was there for a week from 5th May. On his last evening, after an enjoyable but unsuccessful week looking for the creatures, he was in the beer garden of the Foyers Hotel. It was about 6.30 pm and a beautiful sunny evening which was unfortunately causing a very bright reflection across the surface, when he saw what looked like a small black head (it looked rather like a seal's head but was held at a rather curious angle) in the loch below him. He says that from the hotel the loch is about 1500 yards away and 400ft below. During his stay he had spent a great deal of time studying the loch from there using 10 x 50 binoculars and was sure the object had not been there previously (such as a marker bouy). After watching it for about thirty seconds he concluded it was some two feet high and one foot wide and held at a strange sloping angle. He tried to pick it out with naked eye but was unable to. When he was able to find it again with the binoculars it had moved about thirty yards to the right. He watched it for about another half minute, being frustrated that no one else was around to confirm what he was seeing. He decided to race down to the loch in his car in an attempt to get closer to the object and identify what he was looking at. Jumping into his car he drove like a maniac down the hill, he has read Tim Dinsdale's book and the account of his dash into Lower Foyers and says he now knows how Tim felt. Arriving at the lochside by the pier at Lower Foyers it was apparent that his journey had been in vain. The loch was seemingly calm with no disturbance of any note. There was a marker buoy he thought was somewhere in the vicinity of where he had seen the object and decided that it must have been what he saw. Rather sheepishly he returned to the hotel. However when he re-examined the water he realised that the buoy he had noted from the lochside was much closer to the shore than the object he had seen out in the loch. Had it been the monster after all? He did not know, but just the thought that he may have seen it cheered him up considerably as he was leaving the following morning to return home.

I do not know what to make of this one, there being no obvious explanation. The reference to the seal's head is interesting, as I know there was a seal in the loch late in July and into August. This was early in May. Had the seal remained in the loch for above three months?

Andreas and Angela Trottmann, from Switzerland, were also at the loch in May, the 7th to 21st, staying at the Ross chalet, Strone. Weather conditions were good with no daytime rain at all, although the second week was cool and a fresh south-easterly wind resulted in choppy surface conditions. Andreas has his own boat up there (mentioned in previous Nessletters) and they managed quite a few hours of sonar searching. They limited it to the northern areas of the loch, Dores-Abriachan-Urquhart Bay-Foyers. They did not make contact with any large substantial objects, but did get some good fish targets in the upper water layers. Andreas now has a night vision device, which he says works perfectly. Most night he used this, but he says it tires the eyes quickly. So he suggests that an hour of continuous use by a single person is about maximum. On May 12th their long awaited dive in the submarine took place. They transferred from a small boat to the submarine about 100 yards off the Clansman Hotel. Angela, Andreas and three fellow passengers, after receiving a safety briefing from the pilot, down they went. They were told that although the space seemed cramped, the submarine had been built as a rescue vessel and in an emergency could carry up to 26 persons. With two viewports and powerful underwater lights there should be good underwater views, but in Loch Ness due to the peat particles the view is very, very limited, as soon as the submarine started to dive they were surrounded by total blackness. The various types of fish in the loch do not seem to be attracted by the lights, so the only views are of the silt bottom, when

you get there, and the steep rock walls usually on the way back up. Andreas took some photographs as well as a video. He says, 'The dive in the submarine is for Nessie believers and unbelievers, an unique opportunity to travel down to the bottom of one of the most enigmatic lakes in the world. A very peaceful and serene voyage in a small time capsul. Highly recommende.'

Andreas had heard a rumour that the monks at the Fort Augustus Abbey kept a log book of sightings. He visited the Abbey and had a talk with one of the older monks. Who was in a bit of a rush but did give Andreas some information, but Andreas did not get his name in the hurry. He was very interested in the subject having taken part in a BBC TV documentary about it in the 1950's(?), but had never heard of such an official log book. He did not exclude the chance that one of the monks may have kept such a record as a personal log or diary. In 1967 he had himself seen something in Borlum Bay. He also mentioned to Andreas two interesting sightings from the Abbey in 1911 and 1926 (no further information from Andreas).

Andreas is also interested in the mystery of out of place Big Cats, and following up a report in the Inverness Courier (Dec'93) he contacted Mrs Valery Ann Moffat of Lundie Cottage, up on the hillside overlooking Castle Urquhart and the loch. She told him that shortly after midnight on October 23rd, 1993, she had taken her two dogs for a short walk, the larger one had to be called to heel as it started after something up the hill. Then she saw clearly illuminated by the security lights behind her a large black cat crouched near the the upper fence some thirty yards away. The cat then turned and loped silently into the darkness further up the hill. Next morning others in the vicinity reported being disturbed by bumps and noises the previous night. The local police showed no surprise when she reported to them what she had seen and told her of other reports from the same area.

She also told him about two possible Nessie sightings she had. Her first happened in mid-September 1992 as she was driving home from Drumnadrochit. It was around 12.15 pm on a beautiful sunny day and she was glancing into the bay as she drove up the hill towards Strone. There lying in the water between the two headlands of the bay was a huge dark hump. She compared it to a large upturned boat. As the road was busy she could not stop for a better look but managed about five looks at it before it was gone. It submerged without leaving waves. She suggests it was about 8 feet above the water and about the length of the Jacobite Chieftain. (I'm not sure of the size of Chieftain but hazard a guess at 35/40 feet. Which would make a tremendous hump which I must admit I am not really comfortable with, Rip.)

Her second sighting took place a year later (1993) on a sunny evening. She was looking out of a window at her home, when she observed a small dark object, she told Andreas it definitely was not a boat, moving very fast from the open loch into Urquhart Bay. The loch was quite calm and no waves/wake was noted. The object looked taller than wide. She thought she was looking at the head (and neck?) of one of the creatures.

On May 20th Doug Macfarlane travelled up from Largs to spend the day with them. Andreas says they had a good exchange of views as they are both experienced in the use of sonar and think the creatures could be sensitive to sonar beams of certain wavelengths. The main question is what direction could/should research take. Doug, who had assisted in getting the floating dock for the submarine into the Clansman harbour told Andreas of two possible sonar contacts concerning the submarine. One contact was of a large target in front of the submarine at depth, which moved quickly out of range. The other was made by the 'Jacobite Queen' which has sonar. One day as it passed over the area where the submarine was operating they radiod asking what depth the submarine was. Replying that they were at 600 feet the pilot asked why? To be told that the 'Queen' had two sonar contacts one at 600feet and another at 400 feet. It could of course been an air bubble from the submarine or a reflected sonar signal from the thermocline. Doug then helped Andreas to take 'Witch of the Mist' back to Dochgarroch, in a wind force 7 a bit choppy, but getting some more sonar search done.

On May 22nd on their way south to London Andreas and Angela called in

to visit us at home for an hour or two. Which gave us time to see the video he had taken while on the submarine as well as an interesting exchange of news. On May 27th they also visited Sue and Alastair Boyd down in Southend-on-Sea, with a similar exchange of news. After leaving us they had gone to York where, among other things, they went to the Yorkshire Museum and saw an exhibition of prehistoric sea-monsters. There were a number of full size animated models. Andreas says that to see a full size Plesiosaurus, one of the suggested candidates for Nessie, is really astounding. They also visited a few haunted sites, another of his interests, as they travelled around.

Martien 't Marnetje, from the Netherlands spent two weeks at the loch in June and clocked up 70 hours of watching. He saw nothing unusual but did note that it was very quiet around the loch. He has spent many vacations there at that time of year but it had never been as quiet, with little traffic on the water as well as roads. Manns did not mind, it makes watching better, but he says the shopkeepers were not happy. They were blaming it on the D-Day events as well as the recession. He made the dive in the submarine and enjoyed the experience, recommending it to anyone. Although he says one sees very little. They went away from the shore and dived to the bottom at 425 feet, then returned slowly up the steep shore-wall. The pilot was very professional not making fun of the monster and giving a lot of information about the submarine and a fair bit of general information about the loch. Telling them he had been taking bottom samples for the Rosetta project. Also that he had seen little fish at a great depth as well as an eel at 420 feet. A couple on the same dive told Manns that they made sonar contact with a large target when they had hired the New Atlantis for a holiday. He is awaiting further news from them, and will pass on anything interesting. He has bought a new auto-focus camera especially for watching. It is a Minolta Dynax 3x1. Light in weight and easy to use even when fitted with a 300mm lens, not needing a tripod. Most important it is quick in finding its target. He says you have to keep in mind that the camera has difficulties with small objects at large distances and very occasionally does not work when it cannot handle the light conditions. So Manns also has a manual camera as backup.

Manns also said that he had visited a new exhibition set up in the Benedictine Abbey at Fort Augustus. It has been set up by Tony Harmsworth, more of that later.

Henry Bauer, from Virginia and author of 'The Enigma of Loch Ness (1986)', and his wife Barbara spent the last two weeks of June and the first in July at the Ross chalet at Strone. He had nothing of Nessie-note worth reporting, but it occurred to him that there is a lot of history about the hunt for Nessie that's known to and by Nessletter subscribers and former LNI members, that will be lost if it is not written down somewhere. Quite in general through his contacts with historians he knows that there now attempts being made to preserve personal reminiscences in many fields. He suggests inviting everyone with such reminiscences to offer them for possible publication in the Nessletter. Henry has always had a great interest in the literature concerning the loch and his idea has merit, so I am extending the invitation.

Brian Herring, from London, was at the loch in mid-August for his usual stint with the Loch Ness Project. He has worked with them as a volunteer during his holidays for many years. He finds it a great pleasure to work alongside such enthusiastic students and picks up much useful knowledge. From this you may gather Brian is not really a monster hunter but has a great affection for, and interest in, the area. He was able to have a free trip in the submarine as Adrian had arranged that if there were any unfilled places aboard just prior to a dive Project personnel would be given the opportunity to go. He also visited the new exhibition at the Abbey, which he found very good. He heard there were two film/TV crews due to arrive just as he was leaving, one to record something for the BBC childrens programme The Really Wild Show. The other from ITN who were interested in making two programmes.

Robert Caprini-Wood wrote to say he had just returned from the loch, late September. He had stayed at the Foyers Hotel, although for the first few days he had been in Inverness, where he took the chance to do some

research in the library. He was a little disappointed by the amount of material available, although they do have all the back issues of the Inverness Courier. He does not drive so it is fairly difficult for him to move around as much as he would like. However he did manage to see a fair bit and discover a few interesting facts. His main news concerns a film in production around the loch. The romantic comedy, simply entitled Loch Ness, has the same director as Four Weddings and a Funeral and features Ted Danston. He plays a cynical American scientist who goes to the loch to disprove the legend of the monster. His ideas are changed when he meets a local hotelier, played by Joely Richardson. The relationship is encouraged by her daughter who has a mysterious affinity with animals, including the monster. The writer, an American, John Fusco was captivated by the mystery as a youngster, when his Glasgow-born grandmother told him tales of the beastie and water kelpies. His fascination with the monster and the folklore surrounding it grew in 1985 when he spent two months at Foyers where he met eye-witnesses and some of those engaged in the search. When he started writing seriously he turned to these stories. He did not want to write a monster movie but one that told the story of those who have devoted their lives to the quest. Robert said the special effects people were staying at the Foyers Hotel but were a little reluctant to talk about the film.

BIGFOOT

Earlier this year I received news from Peter Byrne about a new initiative he is taking in the Bigfoot mystery. Many years ago Peter was an active hunter and produced the Bigfoot News newsletter. He then withdrew from the forefront of the research. However he was still keenly interested and followed developments closely, just keeping a low profile. He made a number of trips to Nepal researching into the Yeti phenomena and Nepalese elephants. All the while he was trying to devise the best methods of continuing the Bigfoot research. After eighteen months of preparation the Bigfoot research Project was launched. It is a benign investigation into the phenomena, hoping to find one or more of the hominids, with the preservation of the species as a prime commitment of the research. Peter has a small number of volunteers who have access to night-vision scopes, satellite navigation equipment, motion and sound sensors, radios, infra-red equipment also Hillsboro Helicopters are sponsoring the use of Bell 206 Jet Ranger aircraft. However the problem remains, where to deploy the personnel and equipment? Peter hopes that this will be achieved by the use of a computer. All known data is programmed in and Peter hopes to be able to unravel migrational movements, which, he thinks, are related to food availability and seasons. There is a toll free telephone number to enable people to contact them with any new information.

This is a most ambitious project and we can only wish them success. I think that those of us who have not experienced the vastness and wildness of the terrain do not realize how difficult such a hunt is. Just to illustrate, in the last 50 years 73 aircraft have crashed in the area and remain undiscovered! In a recent letter Peter says that moving into the area of electronic instruments seems the logical answer to something that has defeated physical searching, to date, 80% computer technology 20% fieldwork. He had just received a good sighting (rating 9 on the 1 to 10 scale he uses) from September '93, making six sightings for last year. Two this to date, one in N.Washington, one in N. California. If you wish to help or obtain more information the address, The Bigfoot Research Project, P.O.Box 126, Mount Hood, Oregon, U.S.A. 97041.

Another Newsletter, another one late, I am sorry. I know all you require is an interesting Newsletter on time. I have a reason but it is not really an excuse. I was asked to go back to the mine to stand in for a chap off due to injury. I worked for four weeks, some 10 hour shifts plus weekends. Anyway here it is, thank you for your indulgence. Please remember you are the NIS, your news and views are always welcome and needed, address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, tel. 0388 537359. Subs, UK £2.75 U.S.A. \$10.