

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 128.

APRIL '95 (Jan' '97)

PHOTOGRAPHS

In the May '96 issue of the Fortean Times there was a picture of Loch Ness, with the caption 'New Nessie Photograph?' Taken by Lorna Taylor, a teacher from the Nottingham area, it had been used by a local paper in September '95. It was a holiday snap, one of those views taken and then, when processed, Oh what is that? Some time later Andreas Trottmann sent me a larger print of the same photograph, asking my opinion. Showing Castle Urquhart, in the far distance, taken from a point further south along the opposite loch shore. A good clear sunny day, fairly rough loch surface, looking blue, waves going left to right. In the foreground is a dark 'object'. The FT caption says it seems to be a head and shoulders emerging from the water. In my opinion it is only a shadow on the back of a wave, there are many more in the picture. The one we are to look at is accentuated by white marks. These are caused by the crest of the wave rolling back over the top. The shadow, at first look, does have a slight similarity to the 'head' in the 'Mansi Photograph'. However a closer examination, especially of the larger/better print provided by Andreas leaves no doubts, it is a shadow on the back of a wave.

The Inverness Courier, of Friday 5th Sept' '96, had an article about a million pound prize offered for the capture of The Loch Ness Monster. The film company that made the recent film 'Loch Ness' came up with the publicity gimmick to coincide with the release of the video for rent. They launched a 'rent it capture it' advertising campaign. Setting down some rules to deter pranksters, the Monster had to be more than fifteen feet long, not currently known to man and an animal believed to be extinct. The closing date for claims was 1st September '96, hence the Courier article. Incidentally I had received a number of the promotional brochures from NIS members all expressing their opposition to such stunts. They feel it could lead to unprincipled people trying to kill a specimen of whatever is in the loch. Possibly by the use of explosives. The Courier said it was ironic that in the same week the prize deadline was reached a local man produced photographs which he claimed showed Nessie.

Austin Hepburn, an art teacher at Millburn Academy, also teaches photograph as part of the course. He said his sighting had been made on Sunday 11th August '96, when he stopped to take a scenic snap by the lochside while travelling on the Doree to Foyers road. The Courier had a small picture, of usual poor newspaper quality, in which it is almost impossible to make anything out. A day or two later Austin was featured on GMTV, which gave a chance to have a better look at his photographs, there was a sequence of six. He was interviewed at the loch, with Castle Urquhart in the background. Alastair Boyd had been invited to take part and was in the London studio. Austin came over as a sincere person describing how he had stopped to take photographs and noticed a wake on the surface. He took a shot or two, then moved on a little and took the rest. In the last the disturbance had petered out. He indicated, in one of the pictures, what he thought was a dark object (hump?), seemingly ignoring the water disturbance stretching ahead and out of shot. To be fair he did say he had considered the disturbance could have been caused by the intersection of two boat wakes. Then spoiled it by pointing out the light reflections seemed to be in the wrong direction; so he discounted boat wakes. In fact that is just what he had photographed. Not two intersecting wakes, it always surprises me how many people think it necessary to have two wakes to obtain a misleading disturbance. All you need is a fairly calm surface and a nicely developed Kelvin Wave Pattern (NIS128). Austin had photographed a single boat wake just prior to it dissipating in mid-water, rather than washing ashore. I have very similar shots in my own collection. When he was given a chance Alastair said he was sure that Austin had seen and photographed a boat wake. Although the presenter did seem to treat the story in a lighthearted fashion.

In September Peter Davenport sent me a cutting from the Liverpool Daily Post. Joseph Mclean (19) and brother Alastair (14), with their

father, from Bournemouth, had been on a fishing trip to Loch Ness. They were quietly sitting on the shore sorting out their rods and tackle, when a whooshing sound drew their attention to the water. They reported seeing water splashing about and a large black 'thing' moving along the loch at speed. They said it was moving so fast there was a wave covering it. There were no humps or head, it was just like a gigantic black snake some 20 feet long. After about a minute it seemed to dive. Just before that they thought they saw a flipper come out of the water with a big splash. Apart from a reference to still water, there were no details of weather conditions, date or time of day, or where on the loch.

What had been seen? The snake-like description, with a wave over it sounded very like the ever present boat wake. The flipper breaking surface seems to indicate otherwise. Thinking they could be seeing Nessie, were the boys then expecting to see flippers? I have photos of boat wakes that break a little and the resultant disturbance at the wave crest could be described as flipper-like. Did something like that further deceive? I contacted one of our members, Murray Barber who also lives in Bournemouth, to ask if he could provide more information for us. Murray is ex-LNI, and despite it being some years since he last visited the loch, he has much experience there. He sent the front page of the Bournemouth Advertiser for 19th Sept '96. Big headlines, picture of the brothers and father, but the same account. Murray said that he felt sure the description 'was exactly right for one of those trawler(?) wakes that rolls along the surface and breaks on the surface giving the appearance of something below. Lacking anything more substantial, like photographs, it must go down as one of those - just possible but probably not - sightings.'

HOLIDAYS '96

Or could it be classed, expedition, as there were six of us, but perhaps it should remain holidays. Our youngest, Heather, now 22, last visited the loch in 1989. She, and her fiance, Richard, had hinted for some time they may be at the loch at the same time as we were, then it became definite, in fact we all travelled up in convoy. Doris, her sister Audrey, and myself in our old Transit camper, and Heather, Richard and his eldest Richard, with car and trailer tent, they had booked into Dochgarroch campsite, while we were to use the Abriachan Old Pier as usual. We used the scenic route, Stirling then across to Glen Coe and up the Great Glen, finishing with the drive up the lochside from Fort Augustus. We pulled into the Clansman carpark, at about 3pm on Sunday 21st July, to arrange who was going where and when. There walking across was Adrian Shine, Loch Ness Project director. I had the chance of a quick word, as he was taking ice creams back to the Project hut. He said there were not as many groups with the Project this season, but still valuable work to be done. We then went and settled ourselves onto the Old Pier, nothing out of the ordinary, loch level average, no sign of high winter water levels. A little later Heather and Richards joined us after setting up at Dochgarroch. Then Doug and Margaret Macfarlane with young Alan dropped in, although Alan is now a 'big' lad. They were also staying at Dochgarroch, in their caravan. Doug said he had not had time to prepare and bring his boat, Topcat, to the loch. So they were spending most of their time watching from the shore, although Doug had been able to get together with Andreas Trottmann, with his boat 'Witch of the Mist'. So we had a very pleasant couple of hours watching a calming loch and talking 'monster'.

Monday morning was nice and calm, if a bit misty. I did an early watch before we drove into Inverness for groceries etc. We called into Dochgarroch to team up with the others. That set the pattern for our stay, if we were going North we called for them, if South, they called for us at Abriachan, all finishing up at the Pier for the evening. After Inverness we went along to Drumnadrochit and on to Donnie Cameron's to collect my canoe. By mid-afternoon we were all back at the pier. A little later we saw an Osprey fly by, low over the water 200 yards out. Later that evening Richard Carter and one of his boys, with Stuart Leadbetter called briefly as they were returning to the Invermoriston Campsite, where they were on expedition with the Loch Ness Society. It is always good to meet up with other hunters/researchers and have a chat.

After rain most of the night Tuesday started misty, rainy, with very calm loch. More watching. There was still light rain when we left the pier to go and have a look at the Floral Hall, by the canal going into Inverness, they now have a cacti section. Later we were back at Donnie's for lunch. Cameron's West End Garage is on the Cannich road half a mile off the main A82 tourist route, not too good for passing trade but they do get some. Donnie was always a great help to the LNI when it was operating, looking after and obtaining vehicles, storing boats etc. we always frequent Donnie's when at the loch, coffee, tea, food all available (not 5 star but good). Also, it is used by the locals, the people living in the Glen. It is good to catch up on local news, not really monster talk, these people live within minutes of the loch but rarely go there. Usually only seeing it if they need to drive to Inverness. Sceptics often ask why Nessie is not seen more often by the locals. Easy, they do not go looking for it.

On a later visit to Donnie's we met up with Heather Cary, it had been a number of years since we last met, and had a good chat. Heather's mother, Freddie (Winifred) has lived at Strone Point most of her life, and has had numerous sightings and is said to be able to douse the monster's whereabouts. She is now housebound, due to age and infirmity, but still spirited. Heather now lives near her mother at Strone and has been very involved in the fight against proposals for commercial development of Castle Urquhart and grounds by Historic Scotland. Historic Scotland, a QUANGO, are custodians of the castle and propose a visitor centre, shop and restaurant complex, along with parking for over 100 vehicles. Earlier in the year ('96) they shocked locals and planning authorities by air-lifting two porta-cabins into the grounds, to act as temporary sales points. This they did without any consultation what so ever, although present legislation states that are not required to obtain planning permission. A spokesman for the Highland Council planning department said it would have shown courtesy at least, to inform them before taking the action. Adding that if that was the way Historic Scotland are treating such a sensitive area as Castle Urquhart, can they be trusted on the bigger issue of car park and other developments. Heather said that the vast majority of the locals are against the commercial development of the site. They accept the need for car parking, at some location, to ease the seasonal congestion and improve the safty of the A82, but feel further commercial developments would take valuable trade from the Drumnadrochit area. She had offered to lease some of her land to Historic Scotland to enable them to build car parking in an optional scheme. The offer had been refused and a number of reason given. Heather said she was sure the main reason was that by only leasing, rather than selling, she would keep control of any commercial development. Historic Scotland were not happy about that. Also they had already paid £100,000 to an absentee landlord for adjoining land needs to carry out their preferred option. Heather let me have copies of some of the correspondence, as well as a plan of their proposed developments. This would involve cutting a large -half into the hillside about half way down towards the castle. A single store building housing shop, restaurant, visitor centre and all other facilities. Or some 680 sqm would stand there. On top of this and graded into the hillside either side would be the car park and access roads, all nicely landscaped in. Even allowing time for the scars and disturbance of constructing such a complex to heal, it would be very visible, especially across the bay and from the other side of the loch. If such a project went ahead it is certain that many visitors to the area would stop there and have all their needs filled and leave the area without further spending. This of course adversely affecting Drumnadrochit. From sketches with the plans it is obvious Historic Scotland is intent on a heavily wooded area between the road and castle. So it looks as if after hi-jacking the existing car park and the view, they are trying to hi-jack the trade from Drumnadrochit. Almost unbelievable was the comment by one spokesman for Historic Scotland that he did not think Loch Ness and the monster had any relation to the number of visitors to the castle. After all it is just a collection of old stones, historic - yes: but if they were sited anywhere else in the country I am sure visitor figures would be drastically reduced.

As I said Heather has been very active, working to focus local opinion. There have been many meetings over the past months, along with petitions. Of those local people I've spoken to I did find one who was in favour of the development. Pointing out that in his opinion the only places in Drumnadrochit to be affected would be the two exhibitions, and they were not really run in the best interest of the local economy, he suggested that if tourists were encouraged to spend longer at the castle they would possibly need to find B&B in the area and that would be beneficial to more of the local residents.

It would seem the above scheme will now need to be re-thought. A report in September '96 stated that the Highland Councils planning director was recommending the councillors object to the government agency's (Historic Scotland) proposal for Castle Urquhart. The ultimate decision lies with the Scottish Secretary. Pat Patterson, Highland Councillor for the Fort Augustus ward, which takes in the castle, welcomed the recommendation, and hoped that Historic Scotland would join a working group of interested parties in an effort to reach an acceptable compromise.

The Highland Council planning committees have kept a firm hand on all types of loch side development over the decades. Allowing no new building between the road and loch. A few years ago they even complained about the number of flagpoles on the roadside outside the Official Loch Ness Monster Exhibition. This has kept the loch side and loch in a very good undeveloped natural state. It seems so wrong that Historic Scotland could come along and ride roughshod over local wishes. I feel this situation will need careful monitoring by the local residents and planning authorities. Bodies similar to Historic Scotland seem to have the ability to have plans turned down, then come back later with slightly re-worked schemes, finishing up getting more or less what they wanted in the first place.

Now where were we? Donnies for lunch. We then drove round to Strone to see Alastair and Sue Boyd. They had arrived at the weekend. Alastair was quite well, the long journey up had not taken as much out of him as some trips in recent years. This was as well, because Sue had developed a very bad eye infection, needing immediate attention at Raigmore Hospital. Which involved a late night drive to Inverness by Alastair. Treatment was given and when we saw them things were returning to normal. They had had a hectic time since the last Ness trip ('95). They arrived back in Southend-on-Sea, to a flooded home. A water pipe in the attic had fractured, resulting in water pouring down through the property. The person keeping an eye on the place had eventually seen water running out of the basement window. That was a couple of days before they were due home. There was a great deal of damage to the structure, plaster and electrics etc, as well as contents. So for most of the year they stayed with relatives and friends, while over-seeing extensive repairs. Alastair has a Nessie room (study) where he keeps his large and comprehensive collection of Nessie literature and memorabilia. This is in the basement and filled to the windowsill with water. He told us he had been fortunate that the water ran down the walls behind the bookcases and had not damaged his books. A few of his collection of postcards, stored in drawers underneath, had been damaged. All this upset meant that Alastair was unable to spend the necessary time, with David Martin, to produce their intended publication about their investigation of the Surgeon's Photograph. A day or two later I met David in the Exhibition car park and had a brief chat. He was at the loch for a few days, with the Loch Ness Project. He told me when the booklet is published it will include much hereto unpublished information and details. I am sure we all look forward to it appearing.

To continue the Surgeon's Photograph theme. Alastair had with him one of the two model monsters that had been commissioned by different TV companies when the story was developing. He had borrowed it because they were to have a German TV company visit them at Strone. I was able to examine it closely, it was impressive. An elongated egg-shape, some 19 inches long, the head/neck, 22 inches high, nicely moulded on top. With a small battery powered propulsion unit underneath. I was a bit surprised how heavy it felt. It was also interesting to note the piece of scrap

metal pipe taped to the bottom. It had been picked up off the shore and taped on to correct the bouncancy when the model was first tried in Urquhart Bay in '95. At that time Alastair had shot off a roll of black and white film and let me see the results. There it was, a nice head and neck image bobbing about on the water. These pictures had all been in water no more than two feet deep very close to the shore, although it was not in shot. Then about the fourth photo down. There was the Surgeon's Photograph!! Not the whole print, but the postcard enlargement we are all used to. Not an exact copy but very very similar, and really obtained without trying very much. A thought as I write. Weren't the hoaxers fortunate to take the original photograph and find they had, by chance, a photogenic postcard enlargement as produced by Ogstons, the chemist who processed the original plates.

On Wednesday we went to Fort George, doing the touristy thing, as we did on Friday when it was Hainn. Some of Thursday was spent around Drumnadrochit, trying to catch Adrian Shine and Andreas Trottmann, without luck. Saturday was Inverness and round to Dores to see Steve Feltham, we had been able to see his van across the loch. He was well and continues to enjoy the monster hunting life, although still lacking success. His model monsters are selling very well, now available in a number of outlets around the district. He had fitted a small workbench in the passenger side of the van cab, so in inclement weather he can produce them while still keeping an eye on the water.

Steve had been contacted by a film company making a series of adverts for Vodaphone. They were to make one featuring Loch Ness and wanted to use his van. When the film crew arrived, the director decided he would like the van further along the shore towards Tor Point. Steve was not too happy about taking it onto the deep gravel banks but gave it a try. It very quickly became bogged down. One of his friends, with tractor, was called in, and the van was pulled further along the shore. When the van started to act like a bulldozer, Steve called a halt. He had visions of his home being pulled to pieces. He told the director to either use it where it had reached, or not at all. After the filming the director made arrangements for a heavy recovery vehicle from an Inverness garage to come and retrieve Steve's van, it was taken straight into Inverness for checking. In the end brake pipes, exhaust and (I think) clutch were replaced, so Steve was fairly pleased by the outcome. He had also been away to do an interview or two, very entertaining.

Among other things, we talked about the fish farm. Steve told me they had replaced the original cages, as well as increasing the number. To be fair I must admit the fish farm is not as intrusive as I had feared when it was first proposed. At Abriachan, we are opposite it and it takes binoculars to really make it out. However Steve expressed growing concern. He said that when the loch surface is calm with light wind towards Dores, there is a widening 'slick' from the fish farm right into Dores Bay. He said there appears to be a very thin film on the surface, but it cannot be felt on your hand and it does not seem to leave a coating on the shore stones. He does not know what it is, waste matter, excessive feed, medication used on the salmon, or whatever, but it is there.

Steve has been at the loch since July 1991. He is still enthusiastic and optimistic about obtaining the proof we all want. He said that when he talks to Adrian Shine these days, Adrian sometimes questions his efforts, suggesting perhaps there is nothing in the loch to be found. I know Steve has been at the loch for a long period, but we must remember that one person can only watch a fraction of the loch at any time. Also he has provided a valuable focal point at the lochside and continues to do so.

On Sunday we went down to Fort Augustus and had a look around the Abbey Heritage Centre, recommended to anyone visiting the area. One of our members recently wrote to say he had used the B&B there and had been very satisfied. I made arrangements to meet up with the others at the Clansman and made my way to the Invermoriston Campsite to try to catch Richard Carter and the rest of the Loch Ness Society expedition. Four of them were on site, while the other three could be seen. Richard Carter, Stuart Leadbetter and Cameron Turner were out in Richard's boat. I was told they were fishing for eels or possibly a Wels. A type of catfish, not

previously recorded in Loch Ness. Ian Kelloway told me they had been talking to Dicky Raynor and he had suggested they try, especially for the Wels. I was there for some time enjoying talking about Nessie and the loch. They are very keen and interested in the old Loch Ness Investigation and how they operated. I fell into the trap of happily reminiscing about those days, rather than finding out how they envisaged the road forward and the future. They were doing some baiting/attractant experiments. Do not know their recipe. Over the years a number of such experiments have been carried out by various people/groups, without detectable success. Perhaps the earliest was Torquil MacLeod (now deceased) who had been sponsored to investigate the mystery in the late '50s, early '60s. It is said he used to make up rubby-dubby bags and hang them under small uprooted bushes, which he set to drift in the loch. Keeping observation from the shore. The bags made of muslin where filled with a gooey mixture, part of which was dried ox-blood. Heresay has it that once or twice he witnessed his floating bushes dragged under-water. The LNI carried out similar work, from time to time. They used ox-blood and anchovy paste among other things. Very strong unpleasant smell. Bob Rines, with the Academy of Applied Science, did some work in 1970, using salmon oil, animal hormones and substances developed in America for use as fishing lures. I tried lures myself some years ago. Using fish oils and fish attractants mixed with oatmeal to make tennis ball size lumps. Which were hung in a mesh bag under my canoe as I paddled about. In a way I was pleased nothing decided to grab one of these and make off with it.

I waited till Richard and the others came ashore, that gave me the chance for a bit of a chat. I had intended to get back to Invermoriston to spend more time with the Loch Ness Society. Unfortunately I did not manage. I had been pleased to see them all there. I had heard there had been a falling out, a differing of opinion, but all seemed well. However I did find out later in the year, that Richard Carter had broken up with Ian Kelloway. They differed on how the Society should be run. Seemingly Ian wanted it to be more like a business, while Richard saw it more as a loosely knit group. He has reverted to his independent status, planning a trip or two to the loch this year. The Society is still operating under Ian Kelloway and Ian Martin. I had questioned the Society's subscription of £12.50 in Nessletters. One of the reason I heard given for that, was to be able to purchase equipment. I wondered about that. A second hand telephoto lens of 800mm or 1000mm costs around £3000, that takes a lot of subscriptions, without the camera gear to hang it on. The old Loch Ness Investigation accumulated a number of 35mm movie cameras and long lenses, mostly ex-military, as well as vehicles etc. A very expensive operation to run. It should be remembered that in the begining the LNI was financed by people like David James. Who put a lot of their own money into it. Invested or gambled, take your choice, if film proof had been obtained it could have been repaid handsomely. As it was David continued to stand surity over the years. Sponsorship was received as the seasons went on, from bodies like ITV and World Books. Membership subscriptions helped to keep the show on the road, as did takings from the PR hut in later years.

Must finish, running out of space. I usually let you have our holiday report before now, but it has been nice to remember it among the snow and ice of winter.

PROPOSED TRIPS

Short note from James Kitwood, of Leeds, he has two trips planned for this year. First, a week 15th to 22nd March '97, ussing Strone Chalet. Then another week from 24th to 31st May '97, staying at the Borlum Farm self-catering cottages. He would be pleased to meet any member around at the same time. No details of vehicle.

Richard Carter hopes to visit the loch in May '97. He is interested in trying to reproduce Tim Dinsdale's 1960 film, using a 16mm Bolex movie camera. Hopefully, work permitting he will be back in July '97, camping at Invermoriston

Thank you all for being members, please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed. My address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshieldford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel. 01388 537359. Subs. U.K. £2.75. N.America. \$10.00.

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