

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 129.

June '95 (April '97)

ANDREAS TROTTMANN

As established members will know Andreas has been interested in Loch Ness for many years. Reports of his work and findings have appeared in past Nessletters. His Loch Ness Clipping Service is into it's third year. Over recent months he has been looking into the Internet and he has kept me informed about the more interesting pieces he finds. In a recent letter he says by using a search programme he has found more than 33,000 references to Loch Ness Monster, or combinations of those three words (Loch/Ness/Monster). While these include many sites using the subject and term Loch Ness Monster for advertisements, toys, etc. Andreas says he finds the number really astonishing. As yet I have not ventured into the Net. However one of our sons, Colin, not only works programming computers, he has a first class set up of his own, and he has tried to explain such things to me. Which I think I partially understand. One of my reactions is borne out by Andreas' findings. The Net will/has become a morass of information with that much dross around it will become difficult or very time taking to find real useful information, on any subject.

Last September Andreas wrote about their holidays (his and Angela his wife). He, too, had been disappointed we did not manage to get together at the loch. Their trip was not very successful, Nessie wise. They did have several cosy and interesting meetings with Doug Macfarlane, and family, as well as Alastair and Sue Boyd. They also had a short meeting with Adrian Shine. Alastair had shown them, as he had myself, the black and white photographs of the Nessie model, used in the documentary 'Encounters-Secrets of Loch Ness'. Andreas said, 'these pictures with the swimming object look so similar to the famous 'Surgeon's Photograph', that it was for me the last proof, that unfortunately it was indeed elaborately faked.' They only managed a few hours of sonar search, in their boat 'Witch of the Mist'. The owner of the boatyard, at Dochgarroch, who usually look after it, was to retire. Andreas is unable to service the engine etc, also the question of where it could be kept over-winter was thought about. It may have even been necessary to sell their beloved boat. Very luckily he found the engineer of the Loch Ness Yatch Charters, who offered to look after it and do necessary maintainance. The boat will be kept on his land, over the winter. As that is in Fort Augustus, Andreas thinks he will be doing more work in that area from now.

They had left the loch a little earlier than originally planned, as Andreas had been able to arrange to visit Peter Macnab on the way south. They did indeed have a highly interesting meeting with him at home, as well as lunch at his club house. Andreas found him a fascinating person, 92 years of age, very well read and with an enormous memory. He said, 'As far as I am able to judge by his integrity and character, his replies to some critical questions, as well as his written statement on his sighting to me and the comparison with the relevant literature, I am convinced that his sighting and his most impressive 1955 photograph are genuine.'

I think Andreas' present interest has been rekindled by a move by some Ness researchers to further investigate the Macnab photograph. I have heard some are fairly convinced the photograph was created by the superimposition of 'humps' over the image of a 14ft loch boat, leaving a wake, motoring past the Castle.

Andreas is also a member of the Society for Psychical Research, and always in search of interesting paranormal cases to try to gain more insight into their elusive pattern. He usually goes house hunting while over here. Haunted house that is. He said they had the opportunity to visit and even sometimes sleep in many haunted houses.

With his interest in such things Andreas keeps up with the relevant literature. He came across the following in 'Ghost Stations IV' by Bruce Barrymore Halpenny. Which gets us back to Loch Ness. An article titled the Loch Ness Ghost starts by outlining the history of the Monster, and goes on; 'I was at the loch early one morning 'said Pete Smithson,' at the crack of dawn, camera at the ready. Suddenly I saw this figure coming, weaving

like, towards me. I thought he had been in some sort of an accident. I then saw he was dressed in wartime flying clothes, complete with parachute and harness. As he sort of staggered towards me I suddenly felt cold. By now he was no more than ten to fifteen feet away and I could clearly see his RAF uniform. I shouted, are you all right. At that point he arched his right hand and pointed towards the loch. I instinctively turned and looked out over Loch Ness in the direction in which he was pointing. I fully expected to see the monster. I then had a funny feeling, the coldness had gone and, quickly turning to the stranger shouted 'What is it?' But he had vanished. I then realized it had been a ghost airman. But he looked so real, the only thing about him was he looked injured and his face was greyish. What a damn fool I felt, confronted by a ghost, my camera around my neck, yet I never had an inkling to take a photo.'

That report comes from September 1978. Since then two other people have also informed him, Halpenny, they had seen a figure of an airman near Loch Ness which, had vanished when near the loch. Both reported parachute and harness. He asks what is the connection between loch and phantom airman? Then tells, briefly, the story of a Wellington bomber on a training flight on News Years Eve 1940, which suffered engine failure. The pilot and co-pilot stayed with the stricken aircraft and successfully ditched it in Loch Ness. Gaining the shore by rubber dingy, barely getting their feet wet. The six other crew members had been ordered to bail out, five did safely. The rear gunner had been killed when his parachute failed. Could this be the phantom? Why did reports of it begin only in 1978? That was a year after a team from the Herriot Watt University, Edinburgh, located the bomber. Later investigation of the airplane identified it as R-Robert, Mk1 Wellington N2980, the only known example remaining. It had taken part in the first British air attack of Germany in 1939.

Long standing NIS members may remember I carried reports about 'The Loch Ness Wellington', as it became known, in Nessletters 72 and 98. It was first located by Marty Klein, using his side-scan sonar, as part of the Academy of Applied Sciences work in 1976. It was retrieved from the loch in September '85. The article says it was '88. The airman killed was Sgt Fenshame, a trainee wireless operator on the flight, not a rear gunner. R-Robert is now exhibited at Brooklands Museum after being restored by apprentices and others from the original company, Vickers.

Another letter from Andreas I have had for a long time, is more important from the Loch Ness point of view. He said he had finally managed to get his hands on the famous first issue of the US magazine 'Secrets of Loch Ness'. It contained an article on the sighting by a Moray holiday party, Sunday June 18th 1934, near Fort Augustus, and their good photograph of a hump. Andreas sent me a copy of the article and photograph, which I had not seen before. The sighting was published in Nick Mitchell's 'Loch Ness Story', 1st edition pp77/78, among other books. All relevant information is there.

The heading on the article is 'Nessie, Queen of The Scottish Monsters', and is by-lined London Daily Express correspondent. The report is of a group from Moray on holiday at Fort Augustus. One lady told the reporter, 'I happened to gaze across the loch, and I was amazed to see an object slowly come to the surface. It made very little motion (in Mitchell this is 'commotion'). I cried 'Look It's the Monster'. Immediately I got my small camera and took a snap, which shows beyond all doubt that something does exist in the loch. I had just finished when the monster gradually swam for a few yards and gracefully disappeared. It made no splashing, and although we waited, it did not reappear.' Another said there was no doubt about the matter. The monster appeared like a black shining object, or an upturned boat. He judged it to be between fifteen to eighteen feet in length, and it was 200 yards away from them. He said there were two distinct humps about two feet out of the water.

As I said earlier I have not seen this photograph before. The copy I have is a poor quality photocopy, but it is still impressive. There is a single hump/back with a slight dip in it, in the centre, in the background are mountains, similar to those along Loch Ness. An interesting point is that the skyline, where one hill dips behind another is there, so it should be possible to ascertain where it was taken from. Loch

surface lightly choppy. I would suggest that what is printed is only a section of the original negative. It would be nice to see the whole uncropped shot, but after 63 years I doubt there is any chance of that. In fact Andreas is to be congratulated that he has managed to find what he has. I do not know what to make of it, it certainly looks good. One off-putting facet is the remark by one witness, that he saw two humps, while the photograph is definitely of one object. Could that indicate it was a boat wake that had been seen and snapped, as they do sometimes change shape.

SIGHTINGS

The Inverness Courier, Tuesday 18th February '97, carried an account of what was headlined 'First Appearance of The Year'. On Sunday 16th, a family visiting the area from Cheshire were returning to Craigdarroch House Hotel, at Foyers, from Inverness. As they, Mr Dave Shields, his wife and 15 year old son Michael, were pulling into the hotel drive, Michael spotted an object travelling quickly through the water. They watched the disturbance, saying it was like a jet-ski with a white bow wave, for two minutes. Then it disappeared and the water was clear again. No binoculars or camera were used. The proprietor, David Munro, said the day before Mr Shields had been saying he was very sceptical about the monster, but was now certain there was something large in the loch. Mr Munroe also pointed out that the sighting was very similar to one witnessed by 16 guests, on Thursday 13th June '96 (NIS 126). There were no other details given. Once again I am not able to suggest what was seen. As I said in NIS 126, I know the monster is reported, from time to time, to move very quickly, but as fast as a jet-ski? A very exciting episode for those involved but giving us nothing more.

Val Smith sent subscription in February, enclosing a short letter. He and his son Jonathan had a very enjoyable and interesting visit to the loch last year. Val's first return for 18 years. They met the Boyds, Steve Feltham, Adrian Shine as well as ourselves. He said, 'While at the Clansman, I happened to look through the window and saw a round object, of a russet colour. I had my binoculars and estimate that it was about half a mile away and about four feet across. After about a minute it sank vertically. I kept the binoculars on the same spot and about a minute and a half later it appeared again in exactly the same position. I watched for another four minutes when it suddenly shot across the water from a standing start to the speed of a motor boat, finally leaving my view by being obscured by some trees.' He mentioned it to Adrian, who said he thought it was probably a water bird. Val says he bows to Adrian's superior knowledge, but is mystified by the fact the object reappeared in exactly the same spot. Not characteristic of a diving bird's behaviour. They usually travel some distance with each dive. He is also pretty sure about size, as he was well used to looking for mines on look-out duty when in the Royal Navy. The loch was flat calm and when the object moved off it left quite a wake behind.

He asked for my thoughts. The colour could be explained by sunlight. Val did not give time of day but the Clansman is on the North West of the loch, so almost anytime pm the light is coming from an angle somewhere behind. Anything on the water will reflect the sun. Val's naval experience was a long time ago, but skills usually stay with you. So even if four feet across is over estimation, would he mistake a water bird, 12/15 inches long, to be that size? Surfacing in the same place. If the diving object travels in a line straight towards/away from an observer, it is very difficult to judge distance on that plane. So it could appear 'to be in the same place' when in fact it could be many yards different. There are many reports that say something was seen, then submerged and even though the witness waited and watched, nothing more was seen. Also Val watched it for four minutes. This is an unusual length of time for Nessie sightings. A seal? I did not hear of one being in the loch while we were there. Also seals usually travel underwater, diving and making distance, coming up for air or to survey the scene, but rarely swimming far or fast on the surface. Once more I cannot say what was seen. But if Val was correct about size it was not a bird.

CAVE

In February '97 a story about a cave being found in Loch Ness hit the headlines and TV news. Nessie's lair found and all that. Auxillary Coastguard, George Edwards, was said to have found a cave in the bottom of Loch Ness. I thought whatever it was it probably was not a proper cave, but an overhang or something like that. I contacted Dicky Raynor, he is also an AC and last season was helping at weekends with a trip boat in Urquhart Bay. Perhaps he would be able to supply the real story. I was correct, Dicky has known George for years and sent me all of the information.

George operates the boat Ness-hunter out of Urquhart Bay, although trips start and end in his shop/booking office at the Loch Ness Lodge Hotel. Dicky had been relief skipper last season and expects to be again this season. George first became aware of the hole/depression around 1990, and told Dicky about it then. It was mentioned in one of the Nemo articles in the Inverness Courier, '92. Dicky says the depression in the bottom shows up virtually every trip on the Furuno colour sonar, once he gets his 'eye in' lining up the boat's track out of the Bay. George is hoping to have a GPS installed on the boat, then it would be possible to give a precise grid reference. In simple terms the area can be described as a continuation of the slope to an indicated depth about eight metres deeper than the bottom further out, on either side of it along the base of the slope. If you accurately trace the line where the slope out of Urquhart bay joins the flat bottom of the loch proper, you pass over the area of interest. It is suggested this could be a relatively recent feature caused by something like an underwater silt avalanche. The silt builds up over the centuries at the edge of the Bay, there is a seismic event which triggers the 'avalanche', and a quantity of material slumps down into the main part of the loch floor. It does not stop at the base of the slope, any more than a snow avalanche does, but instead scours away some material in that area leaving a depression - 'Edwards Deep'.

The Hole itself. Dicky says the sonar gives a depth read out, almost anywhere away from the loch walls between off Tychat to off Lenie, of about 230/1mts (about 755ft). This shows it is not correctly calibrated for fresh water, but that does not really matter as the same equipment is used all the time, and it is the depth differential that is interesting at the moment. As the boat heads out of the bay, the depth gradually increases until it normally, suddenly, levels out at that reading. However when correctly over the hole, the slope continues down without a pause to 238mts, occasionally 240mts, (798/87ft) before rising to the flat bottom at 230/31mts. The time elapsed between exceeding 231mts to returning to it is only about 10 or 15 seconds. The boat travels at 6 knots, which is 3mts per second, so it seems a broadly East-West dimension of the area is only 30/40mts. Dicky's attempts to estimate the North-South dimension by running parallel with the base of the slope have not been very successful. From what he has gathered he feels it is also around 30mts. This suggests a roughly circular depression.

He posed a question or three. Where is the material from the avalanche? It does not seem to be piled round the edges. Were the deep points found by the Murray and Fuller Bathymetrical Survey 1897/1909, and that by the Vicker's Pisces Submarine in 1969, caused by similar action? Why are there not other deeps also caused by similar events, or have they all filled in? Where are all those amazing maps promised by Project Urquhart? Some answers may be found this year. An Aberdeen based firm, Offshore Survey and Engineering UK, have been in touch with George, saying they could be interested in bringing some of their equipment to the loch to have a detailed look at sites indicated by him.

That's it for now. The Post Office returned a Nessletter 128, found in the system without an envelope. Anyone not receive theirs? Please let me know. Another Please, remember your news and views are always welcome and needed. My address remains:- R.R.Happle, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, tel 01388 537359, Subs UK £2.75, N.America \$10.00.

Rip.