

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE  
 NESSLETTER 132.  
 NOVEMBER '95 (Jan '98)

ANDREAS TROTTMANN

In mid-July '97 I received a letter from Andreas. He said a few weeks before as he switched to 'Sky News' he saw impressive, at first sight, video footage being shown. From Lake Van (Turkey), it seemed to show a large swimming object. Unfortunately he did not have time to record it on video, and it was not broadcast again. He did not find articles about it in British or Swiss newspapers. He later heard that the footage was available to download on the Internet. He found it fascinating footage, but various aspects of it raised serious doubts. Such as the rather professional recording, with an amateurish touch, changing from sharp to out of focus, stable to unstable movements of the camera, the sounds and kind of water bubbles coming from the presumed head area, a possible huge eye and so on. Andreas said that to him the visible objects look rather like the parts of a dinosaur out of an adventure movie. He wondered if perhaps there was a connection with a project he had heard Steven Spielberg was to conduct and the release of the movie 'The Lost World'?

He said he had heard that Spielberg intended to use a huge steel cage (similar to the Vladivar Vodka project of 1984?) with meat or fish baits to attract Nessie. Once inside the cage, an electronic tracking device would be attached to the body. Andreas had asked around without unearthing any other information about it, and asked if I had any further details or news. As it happens I do.

The story begins in September '96, one of our members, Malcolm Robinson from Alloa, sent a note with change of address. He also asked if I knew anything about an old Inverness by-law, which states that it is against the law for any one to harm Nessie. I know researchers have looked for evidence of such a by-law without success, but have still heard it referred to on a number of occasions. It seems the situation is similar to that surrounding the bill supposedly put through Parliament in the late 1930s, said to be to protect the well-being of the animals. They have become part of the legend and many people have a vague idea that they exist, but no one has been able to find the documentary proof. Malcolm, who is founder of Strange Phenomena Investigations, also said he had an ambitious programme which could 'prove' Nessie exists, and wondered if I had suggestions as to who to approach on the matter of sponsorship.

I rang Malcolm and we had a good natter about his plans. I was unable to offer much help about sponsorship. He then sent me copies of his original drawings. His idea was to build a structure, rather like a boxing ring, in the loch. No sizes were given but about 50 or 60 feet square seems to be suggested, with tensioned upright cables at the corners, with 5 or 6 side ropes stretched between. The tricky bit is a series of spheres mounted on these horizontal side ropes. These spheres were to bristle with 'radio biopsy darts'. In the centre of the enclosed space would be a container of some type, this would contain some form of bait or attractant. The idea being, a Nessie is attracted to the enclosure, tries to reach the bait in the centre by passing through the side ropes, collecting one or more radio beacons as it does so. This would enable it's future movements to be monitored!! At that time Malcolm had many details to be finalized. A list of questions on one of the drawings asked; what thickness and how many cables? Compound of spheres? Anchoring of corner uprights? Who could produce such a device?

It was an interesting idea but like so many others, I thought, had very many problems. Starting with attractants. We do not have any real knowledge as to what the animals feed on. All very well if it is fish, but even that has problems. Would they take dead fish or do they only take live prey? Over the past years there has been an increase in people keeping reptiles as pets. I know one problem that can occur is that some of these animals will not take their prey dead and need feeding live food. So all is not as straightforward as it may appear. Over the years there have been a few experiments with various baits and attractants. None of which has produced any noticeable, successful, repeatable results. In the

late '50s early '60s, independent monster hunter, Torquil Macleod (the late) used to attach linen bags, filled with his own recipe of bait, beneath bushes which he set adrift in the loch. He used small uprooted bushes or tree branches, with twigs and leaves still on, as a form of unobtrusive buoy, so as not to bring unwanted attention to what he was doing. Which was to follow the progress of the bushes from the shore to see if anything happened. Heresy has it that, on a few occasions, Torquil witnessed them being pulled under. No one has the recipe Torquil used, but dried blood figured in it, and attempts to repeat his successful experiments met with failure. (I feel I have recently written this in a previous Nessletter. Just checked it was NIS128). However it illustrates the major problem of attracting one of the creatures into a passive trap, of any sort. Now here was Malcolm proposing to do just that and his trap was still a sketch on paper. I thought that would be that. He had his pet idea, as I believe most of us have our own, I expected it would remain his dream.

Then it re-surfaced. 'The Sun' of Saturday July 19th '97 Had an article headlined 'Spielberg Wants To Help Capture Nessie', along with a sketch of Malcolm's trap, with Nessie. It said movie mogul Steven Spielberg was set to team up with fellow dino-buff Malcolm Robinson, in a bold bid to capture a real dinosaur, Robinson a Scot's Nessie Hunter, was said to have sent blueprints of his elaborate Nessie booby trap to Spielberg, at his Los Angeles Dreamworks Company H.Q., Promising 'Give me a tenth of the cash you spent on 'The Lost World' and I will give you Nessie on a plate. Spielberg was reported as saying he had been fascinated by dinosaurs since he was a kid and to always believing Scotland had the living article. The Loch Ness Monster had been a hobby of his for years, and he had been considering ways of proving it's existence to the world and to his own personal gratification. But that it would have to be a method that would not injure the creature in any way. It looked as though Malcolm had devised such a method. The article went on to describe Malcolm's trap and scheme. Also saying that the plesiosaur was the most popular candidate to explain the Loch Ness mystery and how Loch Ness had been an arm of the sea millions of years ago. Before becoming cut off and trapping the animals then gradually becoming fresh water. The article closed, supposedly quoting Malcolm, 'The most successful attempt to prove something was down there was operation DeepScan three years ago. Boats swept the loch with ultrasound scans and tracked a 30 foot long moving object. It dived to the bottom of the loch and disappeared. But with radio transmitters attached to Nessie's body then we would not lose track of her. It may sound ridiculous but it is probably the most fail-safe idea to be created over all these years. And he grinned; if it falls flat on it's face then I am sure with all his money Spielberg could afford to drain Loch Ness to find this Monster'.

Reading the article I felt it was not just right, apart from the obvious discrepancies, e.g. DeepScan date, and the tracking of a 30 foot target. It had also mentioned the fact that Spielberg's new film, 'Jurassic Park. The Lost World', went on general release the day before the article! It had all the hallmarks of a publicity try on. Within a couple of days this was confirmed. Malcolm wrote, enclosing a copy of The Sun article, saying it was not factually correct. He said 'I did not contact or send any drawing over to Spielberg. It was the Sun Glasgow office who contacted them. I did not jokingly say Spielberg should drain the loch. Operation DeepScan, as we know, was in '87, not three years ago as stated'. In late August '97 he sent me the following statement.

#### STATEMENT ON THE SPI/SPIELBERG NESSIE HUNT

Please also find enclosed, a newspaper cutting from The Scottish Sun which may be of interest to your readers. However being the Sun, they have of course embellished the story somewhat and gave it 'arms & legs', let me explain.

It was the Scottish Sun that rang me and asked what I would do if I had one million pounds with which to prove the existence of the Loch Ness Monster? I told the Sun, that funnily enough, I've had an idea in my head for a few years on this very issue, and that

I had plans of a cage in which I felt could be in the capture of 'Nessie'. The chap from the Sun asked to see my drawings, and I sent them off to the Sun, AND NOT DIRECTLY TO SPIELBERG AS THE SUN WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE.

I also never said: Give me 10% of the takings of the Lost World and I'll give you Nessie on a platter. And I also never said: With Spielberg's money, he could afford to drain the loch. Typical added on journalism.

Anyway, I hope that Spielberg does become interested in the project, it would be good business for him, added publicity for him in the days of The Lost World, but ultimately, all eyes would be on him in his search for a 'Real Life Dinosaur'!!

It remains to be seen if this project gets off the ground, but I would ask that you 'stay tuned' as they say, I don't think we have heard the last of this story.

I get the impression that Malcolm is perhaps hoping that, even though the article is just publicity hype to help launch the film, Spielberg may become interested in his idea. It would be nice to have that happen, but I have severe reservations about that ever occurring

#### KARL SHUKER

I will edit this in here as it is a similar case to Malcolm's. Had a telephone call from NIS member Karl Shuker early January. Karl, a fully qualified zoologist, is a prolific writer in many branches of Cryptozoology. His articles appear in many publications, including Fortean Times. His book 'In Search of Prehistoric Survivors' is one of the best on the subject. He said he wanted to alert me to a story that may appear in the press. He had given an interview, to a freelance journalist, about out of place Big Cats, the Beast of Bodmin etc. After the interview, or so Karl thought, they had spent time just chatting and the subject of Loch Ness cropped up. The question was posed, if you had unlimited finance and technology available, how would you go about, looking for, proving, Nessie's existance? Karl said he thought a productive method worth trying, could be a comprehensive programme of dredging the loch bed. Hoping to come up with remains of some sort. Basically the remarks were just idle thoughts, off the cuff and record, so to speak. Between then and ringing me Karl began to have misgivings. As last year he had been wrongly reported as going to work with Bob Rines at Loch Ness, and now was worried it may happen again. Telling me this, he said if I heard such a tale to ignore it. A short time later he rang again, his fears had proved correct. On 14th January '98, the Scottish Daily Express had an article based on those remarks. To further aggravate, the reporter had solicited comments from others, such as Adrian Shine, presumably telling them that Karl was definately going to dredge the loch. He is not! There were some very 'anti' opinions expressed. Extensive disturbance of the loch bottom being thought to be veru undesirable. I said I would try to put his side of the story in with the piece about Malcolm Robinson, to inform our members. They are both instances of journalistic licence, facts not being allowed to stand in the way of a good story!! Karl said he is to hang a notice in his office to remind himself to be careful what he says, to anyone, with reference to Loch Ness. The old wartime poster, Careless Talk Costs Lives!! comes to mind.

#### BOOKS ETC.

In late October '97, I received a short letter from Steuart Campbell, from Edinburgh, with his subscription. He said he to had been involved with Nova TV and had gone to Drumnadrochit, 20th June '97, for an interview with Kirk Wolfinger. He expressed his usual strong sceptical view, as we would expect he said, had lunch in the hotel and saw Adrian. He understands the programme will be broadcast this Spring in the US, and perhaps later in the UK.

He also informed me that a revised edition of his book 'The Loch Ness Monster—the Evidence' has been published by Birlinn Ltd and Prometheus

Books are producing a US edition. I do not know the extent of the revision, so cannot comment. Nessletters in '86/'87 extensively covered various points from the original edition. Now as then, I can recommend the book to anyone with an interest in Loch Ness and the mystery. I still make the proviso to keep in mind that it is written from the sceptic, anti, point of view. Although I suppose it could be said that most of the others are written from the 'pro' point of view. Stuart says about 10,000 copies of various editions have been sold. He believes his book is the only one about the Monster still in print. I am not sure about that but have not been able to check. I think Nick Witchell's 'Loch Ness Story' is still available, as are various editions of Tim Dinsdale's 'Loch Ness Monster', and 'Project Water Horse'.

With this Nessletter is included a flyer, with offer, for a new book, 'One Man in His Time'. I have not seen a copy so cannot comment on literary content or merit. From the flyer it will be seen it is not a 'monster' book, as such. However I feel that to those of us who collect Nessie memorabilia, it could make an interesting addition, dealing as it does, with the life and work of David James. The Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau was instrumental in putting the mystery of Nessie into some order, by collecting and investigating sighting reports. It was also responsible for bringing science to bear by supporting various early expeditions, using sonar etc.. Their work in the 1960s and early '70s established the investigation of Loch Ness as an acceptable worthwhile and serious undertaking. As I have written before in Nessletters I believe that without David's work and financial support the LNI would not have got off the ground. He led a most extraordinary life and now we have the opportunity to read all about it.

The latest issue of Fortean Times has word of UnConvention '98, a weekend of the wonderous. It is to be held over the weekend of 25th/26th April '98, at the University of London Union, featuring lectures on cults, conspiracies and Cryptozoology among other topics. Details from:- UnConvention '98, PO Box 444, Woking, Surrey, GU24 0BZ.

#### SIGHTING(?) REPORT

A rather unusual report comes from August '97. At 3am on Saturday the 9th, a lady camping at the Invermoriston site, had her sleep disturbed. The resident flock of ducks were agitated, splashing about and quacking at the water's edge, becoming more so in the following minutes. She reported hearing next a strange humming noise coming from the loch. She said she had not heard a boat or machinery making a noise like it before. She decided it was safer not to go out to investigate the cause.

I do not know just what to make of this strange report. There have been a number of 'hearings' rather than sightings over the years. Most of those have reported a 'whooshing' sound, likened to heavy breathing. I've included it because it has appeared in other places. Ducks becoming disturbed, not too unusual. They roost on the shore or in the very shallow margins. One duck can set them all off. A camper returning late to bed, a local cat or dog, even a fox or badger. The 'strange humming' noise, most probably a boat. Not necessarily close by, across the loch along the far shore could reduce the usual engine sound to a quiet hum, in the stillness of the night. How about an electric outboard, there are such motors. Useful for getting around quietly, as poachers like to. There are a number of other possibilities. I have not met or interviewed the witness, so cannot say what kind of person she is. Would it be unkind to say she could be somewhat imaginative, and open to suggestion? She did decide it was 'safer' not to investigate. Safer? We know she thought she could have been dealing with the Loch Ness 'Monster', but accounts of 'The Monster' rampaging around chomping campers are a bit thin on the ground. I think this unusual report is the result of a combination of fairly ordinary events being put together and misinterpreted.

At last another Nessletter put together. Thank you all for putting up with me. Please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed. My address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel 01388 537359. Subs, U.K.£2.75. N.America, \$10.

*R.H.*