

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 138

January 2001

NIS 137

As I commence Nessletter 138, perhaps I should return to NIS 137 and finish it, lack of space and time caused it to be cut off in full flow. Now where was I?

This is going back over a twelve month to August '99. On the evening of Thursday 5th Dick Raynor, with assistance from Stuart Leadbetter (NIS member) and myself, had deployed his camera rig on the bed of the loch off Abriachan Pier. I had the monitoring gear in my van and had noted the next morning that the camera was not lying correctly on the bottom. The surface being discernible, I was just able to make out wave patterns passing over. Indicating the camera rig was lying on it's back, and perhaps, not quite as deep as we would have liked. Dick called to pick me up from the pier, as we were going to see Adrian Shine along at the exhibition. He was able to see the camera situation on the monitor before we left. We had a good morning with Adrian, also meeting up with Alastair while there. He dropped me back at the pier on his way home. Early evening and Stuart dropped in again, he was to be away home the next morning.

Shortly after Stuart arrived, Dick re-appeared, along with Kate and their two boys, with a friend of Kate's. He had the little dingy on the roof rack, and all the makings for a Bar-b-Que. It was his birthday, 50th, and he had, some ago, promised himself to have his gear in situ and operating before he was 50. That left him about four hours to sort things out! Launching the little boat, he set out to reposition the camera rig. Stuart and I helped by paying out more cable, and keeping an eye on the monitor in the van, calling directions out to Dick. When things seemed satisfactory, and we had the camera looking at our nicely lit piece of loch bottom, Dick came ashore.

Satisfied that all was working well, we joined the others on the beach. Where a nice fire was going, the boys having gathered driftwood, and Kate had the pre-cooked meat and roast potatoes in the embers. It was very nice to sit on the shore in the 'gloaming', good food, good company, wine for some orange juice for others. To reminisce, to speculate on the future, to quietly talk and be close to that almost magical stretch of water as it lapped, well all right, as the waves rolled on to the shore at our feet. A quiet, memorable, evening, very different to another we were to attend a few days later.

Next morning, Saturday 7th, Stuart dropped for the final time as he was on the road home. I am not sure how long he had been at the loch. It must have been a fair while, as he had attended the 'Loch Ness 1999: an International Cryptozoology Symposium' held over the weekend of July 10th/11th '99, at the Drumnadrochit Hotel. Hosted by the 'Official Loch Ness Monster Fan Club', among the speakers had been Richard D. Smith, an American journalist, who contended that the 'Surgeon's Photograph' was still acceptable as being genuine, despite the findings of David Martin and Alastair Boyd. Professor Henry Bauer, Virginia State University, who spoke of the work that had to be done by amateurs, as scientist tended to ignore areas that people find most interesting, and the need for trial and error in such endeavours. Loren Coleman, a leading U.S. Bigfoot researcher, who launched his new book 'Cryptozoology A-Z', saying that although he had travelled to many world-wide locations reputedly having phenomena like Nessie, nowhere had the same atmosphere as Loch Ness. He considers it the epicentre of Cryptozoology. Mr Ian Cameron, a retired police detective superintendent, was there to recount his sighting of a very large, 30 feet, creature in the loch on 15th June 1965. At an hours duration this sighting is considered to be the longest on record. Stuart said he found the symposium very interesting. I did hear that it was not as well attended as possibly would have been expected, there being almost as many on the platform as in the audience. The following day, Sunday 11th, Dick had been the captain/tour guide when a group of the speakers had taken a trip on the loch, aboard 'Nessie Hunter'. They had an extremely good time, telling him so, I find it somewhat ironic that his passengers did not really know who he was, that in the field of Loch Ness research and investigation, he was, is, far better qualified than they.

Back to Saturday 7th August '99, after Stuart left, Doug and Margaret Macfarlane dropped in, they were up to the loch for the weekend. Living in Largs, Ayrshire, makes it possible for them to be able to visit

the loch for short periods and do some watching. We had a very nice couple of hours. I showed them Dick's gear, and had a good natter.

That evening Dick returned bringing the rest of the equipment. We set about sorting out the recorder and other gear in the van. The inverter the VCR was running off produced some interference, Dick thought perhaps a better, thus more expensive, unit would overcome that. The motion sensor would not co-operate, so was left out of the set-up. I do not know how these things work, but seemingly they detect a change in the signal coming from the camera, and switch on the recorder. The result being that only movement is recorded, so a tape, and batteries, will last many times longer. The set-up we had achieved was continuous recording, even so a video tape would give eight hours coverage.

For the most of the rest of my stay at the loch the equipment was operational. Dick keeping it going with freshly charged batteries and tapes. Those times I was away from the pier it was a simple task to unplug it and leave the cable ends, coiled in their basket, safely under a bush on the shore. Making the other items safe in the van. Then in a few minutes after arriving back on site, I could have the rig up and running again. Apart from once blowing the fuse on the inverter, when I connected wires the wrong way round, and Dick giving it little fine tuning tweaks, all ran well.

Monday was a poor morning to start, lumpy loch surface and drizzly rain, so it was off to Inverness to stock up at the shops. Then on to Doros to see Steve again, the weather had improved by the time I arrived. It is always nice to spend time with him, talking 'monster', and life in general. Steve had an interesting observation to make about the new 'Loch Ness 2000' exhibition opened in June. He had been told by more than one of the tourists that visit him on the shore at Doros, that he was wasting his time looking for 'Nessie'. When asked why the answer was, "Well we've been round the new exhibition and it says there is nothing there, except perhaps a big fish". He felt that although the exhibition was very well done, and very well presented, it did seem to project a somewhat negative approach. It was surprising that just two months after opening this approach seemed to be being accepted by the public. This was not an isolated case. I was to be told a similar story the next day, when in the Abriachan Nurseries. I usually go up to have a look round and perhaps purchase a plant to take home for the garden. After all the years Mr Davidson knows me, also why I am at the loch. While we were chatting he referred to the new exhibition. Some of his customers, visitors, had asked him, "Don't you want us to believe in the Monster now?". When asked why they said that he had been told, "we have been round the new exhibition and the scientist there reckon there is nothing but a big fish in the loch". I did voice my doubts to Adrian a couple of years ago when he was telling me of the plans for the new exhibition. I suggested he should be careful and not 'kill the goose that lays the golden egg'. At that time he told me that they had been carrying out surveys of visitors leaving the old exhibition, and figures indicated that a large majority would have been happy to visit the exhibition to be told about the loch and it's environment, with nothing, or very little about the monster. I did wonder about that, as I feel that the average exhibition visitor wants to be told all about the monsters, especially if they are plesiosaurs!! I realise that Adrian is in a delicate position, and like most of us, he wishes the truth to be paramount. His expectations of the truth are a little different from mine, but it is the truth we need. However his position at the Loch Ness 2000 could put him a little at odds with that, if the average punter wants to be told about the plesiosaurs in Loch Ness. Perhaps this is the place to add a note to a few NIS members. I occasionally receive letters from members who have visited the loch and the exhibition, who seem to be under the impression that Adrian owns the exhibition and the shops. He does not, he is the designer, content and layout, of the exhibition, and ongoing Curator. The Bremner family are owners of the exhibition and were owners of the first shop after the exhibition, but for some time now that, along with the other sales outlets, have been leased to other firms. It was early evening before I returned to the pier.

Tuesday I spent on and around the pier. I took the walk to the Gardens (above). I also visited the small cemetery above the road where Alastair and Isa Berland are buried. That evening Dick picked me up and took me along to the Project's hut by the Clansman marina. We were to attend another 50th birthday party, this one being Adrian's. It is frightening how time has flown, where have the years gone? All the young people from the LNI days are now middle aged and those of us who were not young then, well!! I became eligible for my 'bus pass' in September. So another party, a much bigger one. A great crowd there, both in numbers and nice to be with. Jim Hogan (cruisers), Tony Harmsworth, Alastair and Sue. Dick and Kate, long standing Project members, personnel from the '87 'Deepscan' sonar expedition, to name a few;

too many to spend that much time with each. Marilyn had laid on a very good spread. We sat on the shore by a large bonfire and had a good time. It finished with an impressive fire-work display. The way the bangs and explosions reverberated and echoed from the cliffs behind, the sound rolling out over the water, made some of us recall the stories of old. When the black powder explosives used in the building of General Wade's road, in the 1740s, were reported to have disturbed the monsters, leading to sightings being chronicled. Also similar disturbance and reports from the 1930s when the new 'motor road' was being constructed along the Northern loch shore.

The theory that the creatures may be attracted to the flickering nature of the light from a fire, led one or two of us to think we had missed a chance to play a prank on Adrian. All we needed was someone with 'scuba' experience, a model head and neck, and a 'monster' could have been seen coming ashore to join the party!! Another memorable evening.

Wednesday (11th Aug '99) very calm morning, hoped to have good view of solar eclipse reflected from the surface, off the pier. However the loch roughed up just before the shadow started to cross the sun. Dick called in after lunch with a new inverter, to try to eliminate the interference with the recorder. It did reduce it a little, but not as much as he would have liked. I now had only one full day left at the loch and was to spend it going round saying goodbyes, and visiting the other cemeteries. It may seem odd, but over the years we have been visiting the area we have lost five dear friends, we always pop in to visit their graves. Dick returned late that evening and we retrieved the rig. We found water in both the lights, but only one had failed, apart from that everything else was working. All in all a very successful first field trial. The initial idea is sound, improvements will be made to the rig itself. Perhaps further thinking on the ease of deployment is needed. There is no doubt Dick is developing a very valuable tool for further investigation of the loch.

Apart from the day doing last visits and the next morning packing up, that was my 1999 trip to the loch over. As usual a very good time, more so because of being able to assist and work with Dick on his project. No sign of my primary quarry!! An uneventful journey home, the cat travels surprisingly well.

That was nearly eighteen months ago, showing how far behind Nessletters are. I feel that the work Dick started then could prove very valuable and that you should be kept informed about it.

BOOKS

'The Complete Visitor's Guide to Loch Ness, Inverness and the Loch Ness Monster' by Andy Owens. Mainstream Publishing ISBN 1-84018-307-1, £9.99. This could be a useful book for newcomers to the mystery, Loch Ness and surrounding area. It combines comprehensive sections on all amenities, where to stay, transport, activities, not only Inverness but round the loch village by village. With a section about the Loch Ness Monster, 'The History of a Mystery', and a short list of sightings. For already dedicated followers of the story, this does not reveal anything new. A relative newcomer to the area and the mystery, Andy seems to have done efficient research on the subject, although some of the sightings listed, have been given good normal explanations in Nessletters. The hardback format of this book seems a little unusual, as guide books, needing updating from time to time, are usually paperback.

Next a book not entirely about Loch Ness, although the loch is featured. 'Cryptozoology, A to Z.' Loren Coleman & Jerome Clark, Fireside Books published by Simon & Schuster New York; ISBN 0-684-85602-6, \$13.00. Sub-titled, The Encyclopaedia of Lake Monster, Sasquatch Chupacabras & other Authentic Mysteries of Nature. This book contains nearly 200 entries on Beasts, Animals, Locations, as well as researchers authors biologists and other pioneers of the subject. It also has a Cryptozoology Timeline, highlighting milestones and animal discoveries from 1800 to 2000. Volumes like this cover so much ground that they generally only have space for a thumbnail sketch of entries. Loch Ness has five pages, although it does get the odd word in other places. Tim Dinsdale has one page, Professor Roy Mackal has half a page. The value of this type of book is that it can set you on the road for further research. How good it is can only be judged by using one's own knowledge of specifics. In the 'Timeline' it has; 1933 'Loch Ness Monster' sightings begin, no mention of the 'Surgeon's Photo, or of the Tim Dinsdale film in 1960. Although it does have; 1967 'Patterson Film', that is Bigfoot. The Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau has no entry, one of the important steps in the foundations of Cryptozoology, even before the word was coined There is no mention of Bob Rines although as a 'researcher' some of his work is referred to in the Loch Ness entry



as being sponsored by the Academy of Applied Sciences, with no further information about the Academy, Peter Byrne who did much research and investigation into the Bigfoot mystery, as well as work on the ground he, for many years, published the 'Bigfoot News'; does not get a mention. In the periodicals section Nessletter does not feature, after twenty-six years of chronicling the Loch Ness scene, perhaps it should. Makes one wonder what other, possibly useful, little publications from other areas of Cryptozoology have been missed? Perhaps not as comprehensive a volume as one would wish.

Next a book with nothing at all to with Loch Ness, but it could be of interest. 'Out of the Shadows, Mystery Animals of Australia', Tony Healy and Paul Cropper. Published by Pan Macmillan Australia, ISBN 0-330-27499-6, A\$19.95. this is the first book to document Australia's mystery animals. The authors have over fifty years of research between them, undertaking expeditions to search for many types of Cryptids in numerous places world-wide. They met up when on the trail of the Kangaroo Valley Panther (NSW), in 1981. Since then they have combined their files and shared all information. The book looks at extinct animals, last Tasmanian Tiger (Thylacine) shot in 1936, mainland Thylacines died out 3000 years ago, yet reports keep coming in of these creatures being seen, and other evidence being found. It also looks at the case for the Queensland Marsupial Tiger, and Alien Bigcats. Also analysed is the evidence for the 'Yowie' and the 'Bunyip'. Forensic evidence, sketches, photographs, paw prints, eye-witness accounts, for all these cases, presented in this book. As I said nothing to do with Loch Ness, but very interesting and well researched. Tony Healy has visited Loch Ness, twice breaking his journey to stay with us. He is very down to earth and I feel that whatever evidence he presents about various aspects of Cryptozoology can be accepted as very well thought through.

SIGHTINGS

Sighting reports, or rather lack of them is becoming a cause for concern. For many months we have had almost a total lack of reports, even misinterpretations. Although one dubious source does give a figure of twelve reports for 2000. These must be questionable as my contacts at the loch have not sent me any details, nor have they featured in the local Inverness press. When at the loch in August 2000 I saw Steve Feltham and was able to see the photographs taken by the family from Dorset in June 2000 (NIS137). I had no trouble in agreeing with him that what had been pictured was a water bird of some kind. Very disappointing, the photographs did not tally at all with the verbal account he had been given by the people involved. Once more illustrating how easily visitors, or even locals, without much experience of watching the loch surface can be misled.

I had a brief note from Steve at Christmas, he said there had been news of two photographs being taken this Autumn. One by Alex Crosby, from Edinburgh, Alex was a companion of Eric Beckford when he was at the loch in the late '80s. At that time Alex told Doris and Audrey, in all seriousness, that when he wanted to see Nessie he had a word with the crows and they flew off over the loch and told Nessie, who then popped up for him. I thought that perhaps Alex had managed to capture such a moment on film. However, Steve is sure this one is of a Seagull, sitting on the loch's surface. The other, he is certain, is a shot of one of the Hotel Barges that now ply the loch and canal, taken at extreme distance. Knowing Steve and the wealth of experience he has of the water and things upon, and in, it I am sure there can be no question about his conclusions in these cases.

TAIL ENDS

The Abbey at Fort Augustus has been bought. If reports are correct there could be a bright future in store. Jan Sundberg and a GUST team are to return to the loch, with a trip, in March. More on these items in next Nessletter.

At last another Nessletter put together, they seem to take longer. Thank you again for your forbearance. Please remember your news and views are always welcome, and needed. My address remains:- 7 Hunishfieldford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel. 01388 537359. Subscription UK £2.75, N. America \$10.00, yearly, or six issues.

Rip.