

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 140

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SILLY SEASON

Kevin Carylton, from Hastings, a high priest in the British Coven of White Witches, was reported in early March to be ready to go to Loch Ness to cast a spell to combat the efforts of the GUST team to capture a Nessie, albeit a little Nessie. He claimed that Swedish Cryptozoologist Sundberg was the greatest threat to the Monster's existence for 1500 years. Jan Sundberg and the GUST team were expected to be back at the loch, after their '00 expedition, towards the end of March '01, for some reason they did not arrive until April 25th. At one point it had been suggested that the Foot and Mouth restrictions on movements may prevent them getting to the loch at all. In the event they did arrive on April 25th. Obviously being kept informed of the GUST arrangements Carylton arrived for his first ever visit to the loch three days, before them. Staying at the Drumnadrochit Hotel, as did the GUST team when they arrived, he was able to have a quiet view of the loch, from Temple Pier, ahead of the expected media scrum. Five film crews were to be following the exploits of the Gust Team and the antics of the White Witch. Carylton said, "Most of the media seem to be interested in the quirky angle of a White Witch casting spells. We might ask for an interview fee, as many are putting the witchcraft angle at the front of their story". He was also quoted as saying he would tell a TV audience that he did not want some jumped up nutter from Sweden coming across and trying to make a Jurassic theme park on Loch Ness.

Carylton, and thirty other white witches, had cast a spell in Sussex, at 10.30pm under a full moon on the night of April 8th, that was to protect the monster until the casting of the full spell at the loch at 2pm on Tuesday the 24th April. That was done as planned on Tuesday, dressed in orange robes, blond hair tied in a pony tail, he blessed nature's elements using incense, candles and stones to ward off evil spirits he claimed could be in the area. His rituals included a 'binding' spell, and the putting of a talisman into the loch to ensure the creature's survival. It is reported that he leads a frugal life, managing to make enough out of his craft to support himself and his thirteen black cats, driven around by his partner Sandy in a car that was donated to him by a satisfied client. Mixing the old crafts, with the modern, by carrying five mobile phones and a pager, to keep in touch with the media.

While on the subject of witchcraft etc. It was reported late October '01 that a possible devil worship altar had been found on the Old Abriachan Pier. Members may recall, that is where I have camped for many years when visiting the loch. Neil Borland, who I know well, had been taken down to see it by his partner, Jeanette, after she had come across it while walking the dog. There was a large triangular construction of big stones, inside it standing stones had been set up at the corners. Bloodied feathers were discovered under one of the central stones. A large stone set outside the triangle, seemed to suggest a seat from which to contemplate the triangle's interior design. It was all meticulously done and must have taken a fair amount of work. One side of the triangle was aligned across, and down the loch, towards Boleskin House, former home of the notorious Satanist Aleister Crowley. It caused Neil and Jeanette some concern as they use the area, which is theirs and private, to walk the dogs and for their three children. They destroyed the triangle, scattering the stones around.

Over the years I have visited the Old Pier I have often found circles of stones, but they had always been used as a fireplace, containing ash and other debris. Obviously the above was more than that. But I thought that it was a pentangle that was associated with the occult, rather than a triangle. Also I think it was tenuous to link it with Boleskin, which while it is on the far shore, is a long way down the loch and the triangle could have just as easily been lined up with Inverfarigaig, Foyers, or even Fort Augustus. However, it was a strange, and disturbing, thing to come across on the loch shores, there are some strange folk about!!

Sundberg and team arrived on April 25th, saying that the Englishman was simply getting in the way of his second search for Nessie. There were threats of legal action and offers to throw each other in the loch. All in all a jolly party ensued, the accompanying media circus having something of a hay-day.

Local tourist board people being delighted, Castle Urquhart, reflected in a mirror calm Loch Ness, being beamed around the world, publicity like is very valuable. It was then all systems go for 'Operation Cleansweep', for the next ten days the GUST team used sonar and the net they brought in an attempt to trap a Nessie. Among the TV crews was one from the Discovery Channel, following Sundberg making a documentary of his efforts, for American and Canadian release. The advance publicity said they would be trying to trap a creature in a large eel-trap, but from accounts of their work it seems they brought a trawl net, which they dragged around behind a boat. This was described by Philip Bethge, science writer, reporting for the German paper, 'Der Spiegel', as "a ridiculous net for such a large body of water". They did not catch anything, having to leave at the end of the exercise, empty-handed!! As they packed up Sundberg said he was still convinced there was an unknown animal in the loch, and he was disappointed they had found no conclusive evidence. The closest they thought they came to anything was during the night of 29th April (Sun). Anchored off Temple Pier, in 5 to 10 metres of water, one of the party got out of his sleeping bag to put the heater on, he also switched on the sonar, and a creature 5.4 metres long zig-zagged across the screen. Before he could unzip his bag again, to switch on the recorder, the creature had vanished. They also reported finding a trail on the loch bottom similar to that made by a caterpillar track. Saying it may have a natural explanation. They, the Gust team, are currently investigating seven lakes in five countries that are reputedly the homes of monster. Sundberg will go to Norway in August, trailing a sea-serpent reported to have 'ten inch thorns' on it's back. He will show, to the world at a press conference, a video apparently shot in '99, in daylight, of the beast.

So once more Sundberg left the loch without the proof he expected to get. I suppose that should not surprise us, after all people, and groups, have been trying to do the same for decades. To come to the loch for ten days (a whole ten days!!), a day to set up, a day to pack up, eats into your time. I understand the sonar equipment they had was good quality, but not to have a system of shifts so it was manned for 24 hours, or as many hours as possible, was perhaps a mistake. Also to claim that the target which appeared, unrecorded on the night of 29th April, was a creature is pure speculation. The small trawl net, towed around behind the boat, was reported to be inadequate for the task. At the end of the day I can understand them being disappointed, after all we all hope our efforts, or those of others, will be successful, but it should have come as no surprise. Perhaps they are trying to hard, spreading their efforts over too many locations. Also why?. That is possibly answered by the TV and media coverage. All you need is to sell a fairly plausible idea to some gullible TV producer and a nice fee could be in the offing.

HOAX?

There was also the makings of a hoax while the above was going on. I received a letter from NIS member Dave Turner, who with his partner Tracy had been at the loch, for their annual two weeks, from April 28th. They found the area thronged with media, following Sundberg's activities. Late in the morning of May 2nd they pulled into the first large lay-by from the North end of the loch, can be identified by the Wellington Bomber plaque and memorial. Their intention to retrieve a bottle of water from the boot was forgotten, as a van pulled up suddenly in front of them. Out of it jumped none other than Adrian Shine, and another man, who then raced down the steps to the loch-side. Intrigued, he got out his zoom lens, Tracy had the mini-DV camcorder. The plague of many would-be monster hunters then struck, he tried to affix the lens to camera 180 degrees out in its bayonet fitting, leaving the camera inoperable and himself unable to detach the lens for a frantic 10 minutes. The reason for the activity was that two huge Conger Eels had been found on the shoreline, Adrian and helper struggling to get them into black bin-liners, and then into their van. Dave says that Adrian was extremely pleasant to them, explaining he suspected a hoax as the eels are sea creatures. The eels turned out to be 6 feet and 7 feet 5 inches long and subsequently found to have Mackerel in their stomachs. Andreas Trotimann sent me details of this which he got from Tony Harmsworth's Web Site. It would seem that it was Tony who first alerted Adrian to the eels. Doing his conducted mini-bus tour of the loch, he pulled into the lay-by at 11.15am, his group preceding him onto the shore, where he usually gives a presentation on the early development of the Loch Ness story. As he went down he could see the fish, first thinking they were Salmon, but getting nearer could see they were very large eels. He rang the Loch Ness Project, and Adrian had them collected and away within 30 minutes. Tony said he became suspicious by the time he left the shore.

Driving slowly along the lay-by there were no further specimens, indicating that these two fish had chosen to come ashore by the only land access to the loch. If they had been almost anywhere else it may have been assumed they could have been thrown overboard by a trawler passing through the loch. He wondered who had been responsible. There was some media coverage, but perhaps not as much as there would have been if Adrian had not removed them so quickly. A disappointment to the perpetrator?

MORE SILLINESS

On 17th April '01 the Inverness Courier carried a story about a proposed expedition to Loch Ness. The Official Loch Ness Monster Fan Club received an E-mail from Tokyo based Yoji Nakamura, stating that he was intending to blast Nessie out of the loch. Saying, "It is time it is proved whether the monster exists or not. We will use a sound weapon that will send such a powerful wave down into the loch that any living thing present will either be rendered unconscious or dead". Going on to say that if the sound weapons fails he will use the latest and most powerful depth charges as used by their navy. The Japanese engineer would not reveal the date of his expedition. His sponsors and organisers were aware of the potential reaction from animal rights organisations world-wide, so it must be kept secret.

The Courier editorial column commented on this proposal. Saying it was a bit thick that at a time when the tourist industry needs all the help it can get, someone from the far side of the world was intending to destroy one of Scotland's biggest attractions. Carrying on in this vein at some length. Then suggesting it could taken as a joke, but to remember that inhabitants of the Land of the Rising Sun thrive on television game shows in which contestants are set the most bizarre and outrageous challenges. The Courier had been unable to contact Mr Nakamura. I believe that no one else had, either.

Goodness knows what to make of this. The NIS attracts some strange people from time to time. I think the Fan Club has an even greater attraction for this type. The E-mail date is a bit suspicious, 17th April, did the Fan Club take a while to get it into the paper? If so that could take the date back to April the first!! I have looked at the name, without being able to make a suitable anagram. I think there is very little to fear from this source, in any case the authorities would react very quickly, and severely, if attempts were made to get explosives of that nature into the country.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The Mail on Sunday newspaper, 27th May '01, published four intriguing pictures, from a sequence of five, showing something strange in, or sticking out of, Loch Ness, accompanying the account of the photographer. He is 54 year old James Gray, living in semi-retirement in Invermoriston. A respected newspaper cameraman, thirty years in the business, he took the first photographs of Prince Charles and the young Diana. A keen salmon fisherman he regularly took his 16 foot boat out with companion, local barman Peter Levings, liking to out early, 6am, to get the calmer conditions before the wind gets up. On the morning in question early May, no date given, they went out to one of their favourite areas, Invermoriston Bay off the river mouth. The conditions were absolutely peaceful, stopping the motor, they trawled with rod out, Peter was rowing with James in the stern looking forward. Arriving in the middle of the loch, James' attention was caught by a sudden bizarre movement 150 yards away, and he saw a something sticking out of the water. His initial thought was it may be a duck or something. He grabbed his camera from his fishing bag, as an ex-professional he rarely goes anywhere without a camera, in this case an old Nikon 801, motor drive, no telephoto lens. Whatever he was watching had raised itself a couple of feet out of the water, and continued rising as he watched. He estimated it was soon 6 feet out of the water. James had stood over Peter to get the pictures, as Peter turned round to see what it was, just catching sight of a sort of black blob as it disappeared. It had curled forward and gone down. James said it was certainly no seal, too far out of the water. Long black neck almost like Conger Eel, which is impossible in Loch Ness, head not apparent. It did not seem to bend very much, but as it went under it 'sort of arched' and disappeared. Starting the motor they went towards where it had submerged, circling around for twenty minutes without seeing anything else.

He did not develop the film immediately, thinking the image would be too small to have any impact, but when he saw them he got a bit more excited. A non-believer, he took little notice of the Nessie hunters around the loch. He is still not sure if he has captured the monster on film. He certainly

does not know what it was, and is not putting any name to what is in the pictures. But if so many people think it is Nessie it is a photographers dream.

I have not seen the original prints. I was contacted by the newspaper a couple of days before publication, for a comment. I told them I had not seen the photographs, but had recently had them described to me by a friend at the loch, Dick Raynor. He said they bore a resemblance to a bumper of an old Morris Minor. When I saw the pictures in the paper I could see exactly what he meant, the fairly straight section and the curve at the end, round the bottom of the front wing. He did not say it was a bumper, I do not think it was, but the resemblance is there.

What do we have? Using my expertise let us look at them. I have said 'expertise', that implies I am an expert, I am not. Let me use my experience, from nearly forty years involvement, to look at them further. There is a black slightly curved object, in silhouette, protruding from the water, with a lean to the left of some 10 to 15 degrees, the top is bent a little more, it has a length to width ratio of 6:1, it is all the same width, apart from a slight indentation by the top bend and two small bumps one third up it. As you would expect of someone with James' history, the photographs are good. The object is in focus, it is centre frame in all the shots, the horizon is level. Are they too good? He was standing in a boat. Boats wobble and rock, it was moving, not quickly but moving, even if Peter stopped rowing at once, boats yaw and drift. Even with his professional background, would he have achieved those results from an unexpected encounter? From the position of the object in relation to the horizon I would think it was much nearer than the 150 yards suggested in the account. The weather and surface agree with his description of peaceful, there is a slight haze which partially obscures the South shore of the loch. The North shore is clearly visible, showing two headlands, a quarter across the frame. This would indicate that they are nearer the North shore, rather than being in the middle of the loch. Checking an Ordnance Survey map of the loch, I think I can identify the headlands, the position of which in the photos could put the boat fairly close to the headland on the Fort Augustus side of Invermoriston Bay. Where the water could be shallower. The object does not appear to flex at all, in all four shots. This was determined by tracing the outline, and it fits on all of them. The paper used four shots, I believe there were five taken, and the fifth shows the object beginning to stand up again. The third and fourth shots show the object lying in the water, there seems to be no downward movement, it has just fallen over!

Richard Carter and Adrian Shine have done experiments with fence posts controlled by lines, through pulleys, from the shore, and have obtained some good results. You can get 'pole-like' objects rising from the water and then going down again, very impressive. But if you try too hard and let your pole, fence post, come too far out of the water, it falls over!! Could it be that James and Peter have been the victims of a hoax by someone using such a set-up? If they had been where I think they may have been, the water could be shallow enough to make such a ruse possible. Interestingly James, at no time in the newspaper, says he has photographed Nessie. That could be his integrity, not knowing what he has pictured and unwilling to claim it as Nessie, or does he know what he pictured and that it is not Nessie?

Another intriguing episode in the Nessie story. From the pictures and the accompanying account in the paper, I am sure the strange object photographed was not Nessie, and possibly not even alive.

VIDEO?

Robert Pollock, from Glasgow, is a newer NIS, but has been visiting the loch for twelve years. He wrote about his two week visit last July/Augustus, accompanied by his wife and son. He said he had met up with Steve Feltham on a few occasions, and purchased Andy Owen's book. Also that he had been there the previous year, October, and had a fright. Watching from the Foyers side, opposite Urquhart Castle, he had been there all afternoon, the loch was very choppy and it had been raining on and off most of the time. When suddenly he got the fright of his life as a grey head rose straight from the surface!! At last he thought, I have seen Nessie. Sadly, checking with his 8x30 binoculars it was apparent that it was a Grey Seal. What he really remembers was the feeling when he first saw the head, the excitement, the thrill and the fright, which he now laughs about.

Returning to his 2000 visit. He said they stayed in Drumnadrochit, and did some hill walking around the loch. On Wednesday, 2nd Augustus, they set off to do a walk over-looking Invermoriston, the Stone Seat. When they finally reached the top, they were having their packed lunch and admiring the

great view of the bay, not far from the caravan park that sits round the corner. He suddenly spotted some grey, or black, object moving about a fair distance out from the old pier! The weather was good. Checking through the binoculars, he could make out it seemed to be a pole-like object, and it was moving about. Using his Cannon uc9Hi 40x digital zoom he started to film the object, continuing for a good few minutes. His wife thought it was a swimmer, but he thought it was too far out.

Back home in Glasgow, he watched the tape, through VHS recorder, on the television. It shows a pole-like object moving about very slowly in the bay. Robert says that like so many other films he has seen over the years it still does not show him anything to make him say he has filmed the creature. The film is in colour, the object is there, but what is it?

This video would be taken at extreme range, even with x40, so it is understandable that the object is difficult, or impossible, to identify. Interestingly it was in the same general area as that which gave James Gray his photographs.

HOLIDAYS 2000

I was back at the loch side, tea-time on Saturday 29th July '00. Sitting on the Old Abriachan Pier, I was alone, not even the cat with me. However I was not alone at the loch, I had just taken Doris, my wife, and her sister Audrey, to Lewiston where they had a two person flat for the holidays. After missing the trip to the loch for two years, Doris was determined to get back up. Her health is not very good. Audrey's is little better, very short of breath as well as aches and pains, so living in a Transit van for 10 days is not feasible. So we shopped around and found the little flat for them. more space and comfort. proper bed, electricity for charging the Trike, and for the Nebulisers (atomised medication for the chest). The plan was for me to camp at Abriachan, to have my evenings and early mornings, by the water, and to collect them and do the touristy things during the day. This worked very well, one small fault was I sometimes spent more time at Lewiston, with no view of the loch, than I should. Returning to the flat at tea time, it was easy to stay and have a cup of tea and sandwich, whereas in past years such things have been prepared in the van, on the pier, by the water. Our youngest daughter, Heather, and her husband, Richard, along with two friends were to be around, camping at Dochgarroch, for some of the time as well. Knowing what the set-up was to be, I had nothing arranged with Dick Raynor, which was a shame, although I did spend some time with him.

Sunday morning and there was a very calm surface, good for watching. As planned I then went for the ladies, and we took a slow drive round the loch. Stopping at various lay-byes down to Fort Augustus, then round to and down onto the loch side at Foyers. I have said before, but this is a very under used area of the loch, peace and tranquillity, good for the soul. We then made our way to Dores hoping to see Steve Feltham, we did see him just to say hello, he had researchers from The Lonely Planet TV with him, so was very busy. Round through Inverness, a look into the camp site at Dochgarroch, where we had a few minutes with Doug and Margaret Macfarlane (NIS members), up from Ayr for the weekend. The ladies back to Lewiston and myself back onto the pier.

Monday another good surface for watching. Visiting Christine at the West End Garage, Drumnadrochit, we found her well but the snack bar/shop had been closed, George still going strong in the garage. Inverness for some shopping and a look around.

Tuesday morning, good watching, as was the evening after I got back. We went to Fort George, out on the firth, always nice to look round. Even better when there is a battle re-enactment group doing it's stuff. After dropping the ladies at Lewiston, I went round to Strone, where I spent the evening with Sue and Alastair Boyd (NIS). It is always good to spend time with Alastair, and Sue, his knowledge of the creatures and the literature about them makes it very rewarding. Alastair had not been too well, the journey up from Southend had taken a lot out of him. We were able to spend more time with them a couple of times later during our stay.

Wednesday dawned sunny, but a rougher loch. It was to be a little different, as after popping into Lewiston, I left the ladies, Heather and Richard were to take them out later. I went to the Loch Ness 2000 exhibition where I had arranged to meet Adrian Shine, we had a good old chat. He had some material on tape, which he had wanted me to see for some time. He, and Richard Carter, helped by Dick Raynor have tried in recent years to duplicate the Tim Dinsdale film, using a boat, without success in my

opinion. He has also done work on the original and concludes, that Tim inadvertently filmed a boat in April 1960. In the sequence of Tim's film where the object travels parallel to the far shore Adrian is sure it is a boat and the helmsman is visible. Knowing the value I place on that footage, he has wanted me to see what he has, hoping I would be able to see what has led him to his conclusions. I watched it a number of times on the TV, that is one of the advantages of video, you can rewind and watch again as many times as you want. I could see what he bases his argument on. There are brief glimpses of a slightly lighter patch above the wake, perhaps where you would expect the boatman to be. But I am still not convinced. He has taken 16mm film and transposed it onto video tape, that in itself may adversely affect the quality. Also, (I am not an expert remember) with digital TV doesn't interference or lack of signal show as blank, or pale pixels? I believe that is what Adrian has, a spot or two of interference, giving pale patches where you could expect the boatman. Also if the helmsman is visible, albeit briefly, at 1800yards, why is he not apparent at 1500yards, the range when Tim commenced filming? Adrian and I still differ over this one.

I enjoy such exchanges with Adrian. As members may have gathered I have great respect for him, and the work he has done. I believe that the vast majority of reports are misinterpretations, boat wakes, water fowl and so on, leaving the one or two percent that do not have a 'normal' explanation, which are our unidentified animals. Adrian thinks the same, to a point. Where we differ is that the unexplained small percentage, to him, is the result of us not knowing all the natural phenomena that affect the loch. He is working his way through the 'unexplained' and finding explanations. He told me about his latest work, analysing data collected on the water currents at, or near to, the surface. At times there are 'Langmuir Circulation's' in the loch, these are a number of corkscrewing, or spiralling, currents along the loch, at the surface. These currents run side by side, where they meet is defined by the lines of foam we see in rough conditions. They are driven by the seiche effect, which we have known about for many years now, as a result they can, and often do, run contrary to the wind and wave direction. Adrian says that there are some reports where witnesses say, what they saw reminded them of a tree trunk in the water, but it was moving against the wind and waves, so must have been alive and probably the monster. Adrian has now, as a result of his studies, a natural phenomena to account for such movements.

I was also able to see some video Dick Raynor had taken, with his underwater camera, of surprising behaviour by eels. As the camera moves along close to the bottom, he has now improved stability with fins, there appear to be sticks poking up out of the mud. Looking closer you can see they are eels, standing up on their tails, as the camera gets closer they disappear, seemingly withdrawing into holes in the bottom. It is an amazing sight, and I believe the first time anyone has seen such behaviour. A very rewarding and enjoyable morning spent with Adrian.

Running out of space. I did see Steve a couple of times, good chat. He is well, and is now owner of double deck bus, secreted away in Dores somewhere. He is planning to turn it into living quarters, upstairs, and exhibition down. The Micro-light pilot Peter Millar (remembered his name) is back in the air. Briefly met Richard Carter, in a car park, he was to be away home the next morning. He is continuing his work on various pieces of evidence, trying to establish their validity. Met up with Dick Raynor a couple of times, as I said we had nothing arranged for me to help with, having other commitments this year. He had recently, late July '00, had one of his cameras down to 230 metres, suitable strengthened with Perspex cemented directly onto the casing. The camera operated perfectly, putting the whole of the loch floor within his reach, that could lead to some interesting investigation and results. There were two researcher from LWTV around when we were there. They were interviewing people for possible inclusion in a programme to be made later in the year ('00). They spoke to me on the pier at Abriachan, but I heard nothing more. We saw Doug and Margaret again, had a good chat. Apart from not connecting with Nessie, again, it was a good trip, the flat working well for the ladies.

Another Nessletter completed. We will be at the loch almost as you receive it, the same arrangements as last year hopefully. As usual thank you for your support, your news, and views, are always welcome and needed. Address remains:- R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshfieldford, St Johns Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, tel 01338 537359. Subscriptions:- U.K £2.75 N. America \$10.00.

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