

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

NESSLETTER 153

NOVEMBER 2007

C-QUESTER

Or should that be NIS 152 continued? I still have minor problems with this PC, it tries very hard to do things the way it wants rather than the way I would like, such as being unwilling to write to the bottom of an A4 page. While putting NIS 152 together I thought, "I know, I will tell it is writing on foolscap, then use A4, I get the layout I would like and the PC is happy doing it. There you are, not as clever as they think they are, these machines". So I did the required formatting, all seemed well. Then after printing 152 out and running them off the photocopier, I was busy folding them to place in the envelopes, there seemed to be more room at the end than usual. Strange I thought, my subterfuge has worked better I expected. Then I saw the anecdote about the 'mad cyclist' was missing, which had been one of the reasons for using the C-Quester story. Going back to the NIS152 file in the PC, there was the little paragraph, for some reason my dreaded machine had left it out. It seems the battle of wills continues.

(NIS 152 con.) With a limit of 50 metres, 150 feet, it would not be possible to explore the deeps of the loch but it would be possible to search round the edges, and into the bays. When I read about this submarine, I thought that is a nice silly bit to pop into a Nessletter, then it triggered a memory from the LNI days. In the 1960s, there was one strange character, among many, who used to visit the HQ at Acnahannet, from time to time. He was not with the LNI, but used to call in to tell us we were doing things all wrong. Nicknamed the 'mad-cyclist' by LNI personnel, he rode a moped, dressed in waterproof trench-coat, leather gauntlets, goggles and either a cap or flying helmet, not too sure about that now. Nice chap, but totally eccentric. His theory was that the animals in the loch laid eggs. He said we were wasting valuable time and man-power by watching the surface, when we should be out looking down into shallow water around the loch shores where the eggs were laid; 'Nessie Nests'? Now with the C-Quester, we have just the piece of kit to do that!

ERIK BECKJORD

I received a phone call on 5th April '07, shortly after the last Nessletter went out (NIS152), from Erik. This was a surprise, as it was a long time since I had any kind of contact with him. He was taking me to task, as usual, there is very little that we seem to agree about. He said that he did not know why he reads the Nessletters, could it be that it has been complimentary for a long time now. He expressed disappointment that I always seem to present a sceptical point of view, when writing about any sighting reports. We had a fairly long, and interesting, conversation. Touching on many subjects, pancake universes, ghosts, web site (my need of one) etc, along with Ted Holiday and his dabble with the occult and UFOs in his book 'The Dragon and the Disc', 1973. As well as Ted's earlier theory about invertebrates in his book 'The Great Orm of Loch Ness' 1968. In the mid-sixties Ted came across the finding of a number of fossil Tullimonstrum in the USA He thought these had many of the characteristics of reported Nessie sightings, long neck, humped body with flipper-paddy things at the front. One draw back was, the largest being only fourteen inches long; but it was invertebrate with no bones to leave lying around the loch, explaining why no skeletal remains had been found. Why let facts get in the way of a good theory?

What had solicited this response from Erik were the sightings reported in NIS152, which I had, I admit, been able to suggest fairly ordinary explanations for. As members, and readers of the Nessletters, perhaps remember, I do not claim to be able to give definitive answers to the problems that face us. What I do is to present the information I have, for you to make up your own minds. However in most cases this information is lacking in many crucial details, and I point that out. Such information usually reaches us via many hands, and in some instances it is questionable if the details can even be claimed to be 'facts'. So we, or I, are/am presented with a story which I am very happy to pass on, unfortunately without being able to verify it, or interview witnesses. One thing I can do is to use the experience I have gathered over the years of weather and surface conditions at the loch, as well as various things I have seen myself and suggest a possible, albeit fairly ordinary, solution. Then as I have just written, let you come to your own conclusions.

Despite our obvious differences it was good to hear from Erik. From what I had picked up, for some time now he seemed to have deserted the Ness mystery, in favour of doing more work in the Bigfoot field.

NEW VIDEO

Late in May '07, news of some new video footage began to circulate. Reading one of the reports my heart gave a little leap, Adrian Shine, our arch sceptic, was quoted as saying it was some of the best footage he had seen, and he hoped to be able to analyse properly in the coming months. Dick Raynor was also reported as thinking the video was very interesting and worth further examination. Was this, at long last, going to be what I have waited half a lifetime for? Although looking at the small blurry images printed in the media, it did not look too promising to me. The video that caused the stir of excitement had been taken by Gordon Holmes, on the evening of 26th May '07. Mr Holmes, 55, from Shipley in Yorkshire, works as a media and IT technician at the Department of Archaeological Sciences at Bradford University. He has been interested in Loch Ness for some time and has been to the loch on a number of occasions in the last six years. He has been trying to pick up underwater sounds using hydrophones and was there using his latest equipment. That evening he had packed up ready to go home and was sitting in a lay-by, on the A82, about 70 feet above the water. It was 10pm, and he was enjoying the view as the setting sun lit up the hills on the far shore. Something moving on the surface of the loch caught his eye; he dashed to get his camera. The camcorder was set on black and white and it took him a while to find it again in the water. He shot two and a half minutes of footage. He said it was not a wave, as it was going in the opposite direction to the waves he could see. Estimating the jet-black object to be 4ft to 6ft long and moving at about 6mph, on a fairly straight course, at it's closest it was some 100yds away. His initial thought was that it could be a very big eel (NIS147), with serpent-like features that may explain all sightings in the loch over the years. In one account it was said that, the next day, Mr Holmes arranged for the footage to be played on a TV in a shop in Inverness, and he later showed it to Dick Raynor and then Adrian Shine. As already said, they both viewed it in a favourable manner as being worthy of further investigation, also that I was not too taken by the stills that accompanied some of the reports. However, could this at last be what we were hoping for?

Then the wheels started to come off! I came across some of the information about himself, which Mr Holmes has on the 'web'. Along with various archaeological studies, he self published 'the Complex Creation Of All Universes' in 2000, and has elaborate theories linking megalithic art to patterns in the sky. Also his latest book 'Trice Visualisation', which describes a sort of medical condition he has for visualising a 'frame from a dream' while being conscious. Rotating intricate patterns, or the inside of a room appearing to be within arms-length of him. These images only last about 40 seconds before fading and on average the experience happens every few months. Then an email posted on the Modern Antiquarian website by Mr Holmes says, "Hello you may interested in my self-published booklet/ video CD that is due out within a few days. It shows possible evidence of Fairies and strange Lady Figures I captured on my old camcorder whilst recording at Lode Saddle Well, Burley Moor (Ilkley Moor), near the Apostle Stone Circle. Also unusual Figures at, guess where, Cottingley Beck! Possibly the best evidence of Fairies outside Cottingley!! Booklet £3.00 + video CD £1.00". Mr Holmes said that he not the type of person to believe in Fairies, UFOs and the like, so his old camcorder must be lying. By now I was hoping against hope that whatever he had on video was extremely good. I know we are supposed to be unbiased, but when someone holds fringe views like these, their value as an eyewitness becomes weakened; especially through scientific eyes. Then I read that the Director of the American based National Cryptozoological Society said, of the Holmes' video, after presumably viewing it on the internet, "The object seems to be not a normal animal, and is flexible, able to alter it's shape, and moves like a long, large slug. It is not a seal, and not a wave". So there we are. a 4ft slug moving on the surface of the loch?

Meanwhile I had contacted Adrian Shine and Dick Raynor, asking for their impressions and if they had managed to have a better look at the video. As yet no reply from Adrian, but Dick sent me the following. "Gordon Holmes brought his camcorder along to the visitor centre the morning after he took his video, and looking at it through the viewfinder it did strike me as interesting, as I could not immediately think what it could be. He kindly sent me a version on CD a few days later after he had returned home, and viewing it that on my PC I came to the conclusion that it was a whirlwind – two of them actually – skipping along the

surface. The evening was right for it, with a clear spell of weather after heavy rain earlier in the day, and the loch had calmed down as the wind has swung round to the North, so it was coming right over the top of the hill behind him and creating vortices.

At the time of the first viewing, I told Gordon he had the choice of going for scientific opinion or media attention, but probably not both. This seems to have turned out to be true, as when I contacted several meteorological orgs., like the Met Office and torro.org.uk for their opinions I got no reply. There was some discussion about it on the Internet at www.crytozoology.com – but I did not tell them what I thought. I did tell GH within a few days, but he was already enjoying the limelight and is still referring to them as ‘creatures’. It is his call!”

My thanks to Dick; I am very grateful to have his opinion on the Holmes’ video. As members may recall I have the highest regard for Dick. As a researcher his integrity really cannot be questioned, and his experience of the loch and its various moods could be said to be second to none. His interpretation of the video as ‘whirlwinds’ or ‘vortices’, is a very probable explanation. Sitting on the Old Pier at Abriachan I have seen this phenomena many times over the years, possibly making reference to it in a Nessletter. The wind coming from the North, or there abouts, swirls over the mountains, behind, and gusts come straight down onto a calm loch surface causing eddies and disturbed water to shoot off in all directions.

We have a two and a half-minute video, taken by Mr Holmes. Whose first reaction upon seeing something a bit unusual, was to rush for his camera, not to grab his binoculars and have a quick look to see if he could identify it. I presume he would have binoculars, even if you were dangling microphones in the loch to listen for something, you would have binoculars, wouldn’t you? Mr Holmes, who whilst saying he is not the type to believe in Fairies, UFOs and the like, is content, it seems, to sell anyone a booklet and video CD with evidence of them. Who is relishing his five minutes of fame, having taken a video of Nessie. Stills from this video being blurred and indistinct. We also have a very experienced Loch Ness researcher who, after being able to examine a copy of the video, is able to suggest a normal, if a little unusual, explanation for the image on the tape. As they say, ‘you pays your money and takes your choice’. Myself, I am quite sure that my heart giving a little leap was in vain. Sorry about that Erik, but we all have to make what we can from the available information.

DICK RAYNOR

In his letter Dick also gave some news of his ongoing work at the loch. He has a webcam working at Temple Pier – <http://www.dickraynor.co.uk/900.htm> – is the first one – the camera pans slowly around the bay. He is pretty close to having an underwater one working, and one that the user can drive themselves, with over the Internet control of pan, tilt and zoom. It will be a virtual expedition! He has had it working at home, and is now just waiting for a new router to arrive so he can install it in Gordon Menzies office at Temple Pier. (That is a bit technical for me, Rip.) He says he is short of bandwidth for the webcams, Bob Rines has a perfectly functional broadband connection at the Coastguard end of the premises, Dick can get on to it to collect emails! It would be great if Bob would offer Dick some of the bandwidth, if it is not being used. Then he could add a hydrophone to the underwater camera, and set up a fixed station sonar on the end of the pier, with the sonar screen being uploaded, as yet another webcam image.

He met Marty Klein, Academy of Applied Sciences, briefly, when he was at the loch in June’07, and Marty seemed interested in offering advice on the project, but people usually need to see something up and running before going too far out of their way to help. Dick cannot set the equipment up without the bandwidth! At present he is gobbling up about 80% of Gordon M’s upload capacity with just one camera. Although he has had a nice offer from a submarine company in Barrow in Furnace, and they are currently putting together an infrared underwater TV unit for him.

This is all interesting and exciting work, which could move the investigation forward. I have to say that I have my reservations about webcams, and such things. Over recent years there have been instances of people becoming over excited by blurry, out of focus, images of objects distant from the camera. Objects that the experienced eye can easily identify as normal things. One that comes to mind was the holiday barge that plies the canal and loch. Dick needed to illustrate, at some length, using mathematics and geometry that it was indeed the barge and not a Nessie hump. Another I received, was a shot of Adrian’s craft ‘Deepscan’, halfway across Urquhart Bay, identifiable by the squared off stern, giving an angular silhouette. Although to be fair,

the sender was a bit half-hearted about it being anything unusual. Technology moves on and, hopefully, present day equipment will produce better quality, useful, images. I do hope so, because Dick has always put a great deal of thought, effort, and time, into his research at the loch. It would be only right if he was able to get some good, worthwhile, usable results.

HOLIDAYS 2006

This piece is now over a year old, dealing as it does with our trip to the loch in '06. Although thinking about it, it could have almost any year in the date, as year after year has been pretty much the same. The one event that has eluded me, and which would have been the marker of a very different visit, of course would have been the sighting of our quarry.

Saturday July 29th '06, loch-side on to the Old Abriachan Pier for 5pm, the ladies, wife Doris and her sister Audrey, already settled into Kath Foster's caravan up at Abriachan. Loch surface calm, later turned choppy with some rain. Sitting in the van that evening it came to me that this was my 40th consecutive year visiting the loch, and 32nd using the old Pier. Our visit took on its usual pattern, with me having in the mornings and evenings watching the water and then doing our usual touristy things during the day. We had the usual mix of weather, a couple of days were quite wet, but I had some good watching conditions. The family of Mergansers was past on a number of occasions and there were two Black Throated Divers I saw a couple of times, the Osprey was also about. As well as trips into Inverness shopping, we have to help the local economy; we also visited Fort Augustus and Glen Affric. Our first Thursday we spent at the Black Isle Agricultural Show. We got round to see Steve Feltham, he was in good form. I also managed to get an hour with Adrian Shine, which as usual was very nice. On our middle Saturday I went along to Drum on my own, where I met Doug and Margaret Macfarlane. Doug had rung the previous day saying they would be up, from Lairgs, for the day. We all went back to the caravan where we had a very good couple of hours just putting the world to rights, when they left they were going round to Dores to see Steve Feltham.

Wednesday 9th August, a fateful day, loch surface very rough and with sports of rain, early morning. We had decided to visit Dunrobin Castle. It was a grey drive up, but we were disappointed because as well known as the castle is, as a tourist attraction, it is definitely not wheelchair friendly. Steps everywhere and no ramps or lifts, we could not get in with the wheels. We were offered free access to the gardens, as compensation. On the road back the old van knocked a hole in the crankcase, and lost oil pressure and most of the oil. I managed to limp into Dornoch, and arrange rescue to West End garage at Lewiston. I had arranged to meet Dick Raynor that evening, I contacted him to let him know what had happened, he popped in briefly, before George took us back to the caravan. That evening and much of the Thursday this was spent organising getting us home. Kath loaned me her car, so I was able to get many of our belongings from the van ready for Saturday. Our two sons, Michael and Colin in their own cars, arrived on Friday night, with grandson Neil, along for the ride. The caravan was bursting at the seams. Everyone and most of belongings, loaded into the cars on Saturday morning. We were on the road before 10am and safely home about 6pm. The journey took a lot out of Doris and Audrey, used to our more sedate style of travelling, but we were home and safe.

This was the first time we have suffered complete breakdown, needing rescuing. I had the van, along with Doris' trike and the rest of our things recovered to our local garage, during the next week. A pity our last trip to the loch ended like that. It was 'our' last trip, as both Doris and Audrey's health is worsening, Audrey now on oxygen for most of the time, so neither up to the trip North, or to doing the touristy things while there. Circumstances at home mean I cannot go away on my own, leaving Doris, so without a house and wife sitter, lone visits to the loch are also on hold.

Once again this Nessletter has taken me far too long to write, again I apologise and thank you for your tolerance. Incidentally, the Director of the National Cryptozoological Society is, Mr Erik Beckjord. Thank you for being NIS members. If you have a change of address please let me know. Also please remember your news and views are always welcome and needed, subscriptions are UK£3.00, the USA remains \$10.00. The address is still R.R.Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Tel.01388 537359. Mobile 07989813963 (not always on).

Rip.