

In search of the Loch Ness Monster

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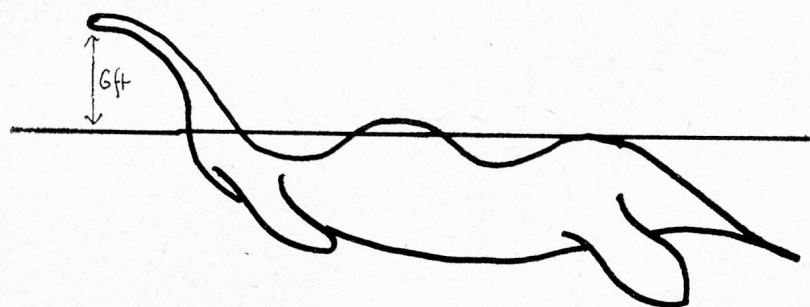
colleagues are now convinced that the Loch Ness Monster is an animal which well deserves its popular designation, since its length has been reported to vary from 25 feet to over 60 feet. There is not one Loch Ness Monster, but many. Perhaps a herd of as many as 20 monsters, since it could not be possible otherwise for a race of such animals to outlast for centuries in a confined Loch. The shape of these animals is similar to that of a gigantic newt. They have a long neck with a tiny head, variably described as reminding of the head of a horse or the head of a camel.

Needless to say, the scientific establishment has been extraordinarily reticent to credit the Loch Ness Monster with existence and have tended to brush off the innumerable eye witness reports as mere illusions or hoaxes. True, ever since the legend of the Monster outreached the Highlands, almost every kind of disturbance upon the Loch have been misrepresented by amateurs as appearances of the Monster. Drifting logs, stags crossing the Loch in the mating season, retarded wash by boats steaming in from the Caledonian Canal have all been re-

fish—a gigantic eel (ten-foot eels are well known, but the way the Monster propels itself is definitely not eel-like) or possibly a *coleacanth*, a fish thought to be extinct for the past 500 million years but of which a number of specimens have been discovered recently. The most romantic possibility is that the Monster is an evolved type of *plesiosaure*, a giant reptile whose fossil bears a remarkable resemblance to the present image of the Monster. It is however difficult to understand how it could have outlived the reptilian period by 70 million years. The theory which is said to afford the least theoretical difficulties is the giant slug theory mentioned above.

Why, of all places, should the Monster have chosen the Loch Ness for its abode? The answer is that the Monster hasn't chosen the Loch Ness, but that the choice was made for him some seven thousand years ago, when the level of Scotland began to rise, thus cutting off the Loch from the sea. The Monster has therefore not always lived in the Loch, but came into it from the sea, gradually found himself "trapped" as the geology of the region changed, and in the course of time adapted himself to live in fresh water. The Loch level now lies 53 feet above the sea, which means that it cannot be linked to the sea by an underground marine tunnel through which the Monsters (as some would have it) could weave their way to the sea. Indeed, there would be a very strong and noticeable draining current from the Loch to the sea, and besides, the tunnel would have to be over 20 miles long. Neither is there any possibility of the Monster passing through the 19 locks of the Caledonian Canal unnoticed or swimming along the shallow River Ness as it passes under the busy road bridge at Inverness unseen. The Monster must therefore be confined to the Loch, but it is important to recall that many other landlocked expanses of water with similar geological history have the reputation of containing strange and gigantic creatures. The best known examples are the Irish loughs (this case is treated in detail in the 1968 report of Loch Ness Investigation), the Icelandic lakes and their mysterious *skrimsl*, and Lake Okanagan in Canada and its mysterious indweller, the *Ogapogo*. A whole chapter of Dimsdale's book is devoted to the story of this 80-mile long lake in British Columbia, which has for centuries pointed to the existence of a monster which has in fact been seen in modern times by many Canadians, whose accounts resemble those coming from the shores of Loch Ness.

The Monsters allegedly living in various lakes and land lochs of the world must therefore have been cut off from the sea at one time and adapted themselves to fresh water conditions. In the same way, there are fresh water seals in Russia and Canada, inland sharks in Nicaragua and Dolphins in



what the beast is expected to look like

The base of the neck suddenly widens, leading to an enormous but usually submerged body, which in turn tapers off with a long tail. The animal has been sighted with a varying number of humps and its back has actually been seen to change shape. This is in fact one of the greatest zoological puzzles about the Monster. One theory is that it carries air in its inflatable humps (as do some other reptiles) and this would explain other known aspects of its behaviour as well. The Monster can achieve considerable bursts of speed (over 25 knots) and leave behind it a considerable wash thanks to a pair of powerful hind paddles. It is believed to have two smaller flippers in front as well. It is exceedingly timid and remarkably sensitive to noise. It has never been known to attack man (apart from the chronicle of Adamman, who describes how St. Columba saved a man from its grips) but must be a carnivorous animal, since there are practically no weeds or algae in Loch Ness but an abundance of very large salmon and eels.

There are still many characteristics on which nobody is yet quite clear. The colour of the skin has been reported both as copper red and grey (one explanation could be that colour is a male-female distinction), no one is sure whether the beast has nostrils or gills, neither having been observed. There is also some contradiction as to the shape of the eyes and the possible existence of a kind of mane on the back of its neck. It seems fairly certain however that the Monster has skin and not a scale, and that it is an amphibian.

ported as Monster sightings and the Loch Ness investigators have learned to be extremely wary of the testimony brought before them.

The fact that the Monster has not received the blessing of science is one reason why it has only been sought by private expeditions and to a lesser extent, by limited university enterprises. But there are other reasons. The Loch for example, is so deep (up to 850 feet), so dark and peaty below its surface that it is virtually impossible to net and capture the Monster, and to make full use of sonar and echo-sounding devices. Another reason is that the Monster is legally-protected since 1934 and it is forbidden to set poisoned baits or to shoot it when it appears. This would at any rate be scientifically disastrous, since too little is known about the Monster's ecology as to not endanger the very existence of the herd by destroying one of its members. Loch Ness investigators are then still using the same methods as those with which they started: surface photography and visual sightings. Only the equipment has improved and extensive use is now made of colour.

Various theories have been put forward to explain the Loch Ness Monster. Some authorities believe that it may be a mammal—either a long-necked seal (a theory however disproved by the timidity of the Monster) or a giant water cow. Others believe that, just as there are giant squids, there can be giant newts and that the Loch Ness Monster is a possible example. Another possibility put forward is that of a colossal salamander. Some claim that the Monster could also be a

India and Brazil. The question is then whether these creatures, whose existence can fairly be said to have been proved in such areas as Loch Ness and possibly Lake Okanagan, still exist in the sea from which they come from. Tim Dimsdale believes they do and that they are none other than the famed *Great Sea Serpents*, whose reputation has long been established but who still need to find a proper place in textbooks on zoology.

Just as in the case of the Loch Ness Monster, there are innumerable reports of the Sea Serpent coming from various parts of the world (over 50 sightings are listed since the Second World War alone) but unfortunately, no film and no photograph appear to be available. One old witness from the Orkneys records the incredible sight, in 1910, of a herd of whales racing and actually *leaping out of the water* and followed (pursued or not he could not tell) by a long necked creature whose description tallies with reports from Loch Ness. Another man recalls that a lurid leviathan got entangled in anti-submarine nets guarding a western Scottish loch during the war, which was dead when it got hauled and broke through the cables under its own

weight but looked like nothing on earth. One of the most important monster-sightings was a giant carcass discovered by children on the shore near Deepdale, in the Orkneys, in December 1941. According to the testimony of the witnesses interviewed by the author, the carcass could have belonged to a cousin of the Loch Ness Monster because it had a ten-foot neck and flippers. Experts came to examine the carcass when it had already rotted for almost two months and ruled that it was nothing more than the remains of a basking shark.

To conclude, we can say that the existence of a Loch Ness "Monster" has been established and that the prime purpose of Loch Ness investigators is now to identify its species. The admitted theory is that this creature was trapped in the Loch and other lakes that were raised and separated from the sea some 7,000 years ago and adapted to fresh water conditions. The corollary to this belief is that there should be animals akin to the Loch Ness Monster in the oceans. The legend of the "Great Sea Serpent" and the number of strange sea-sightings experienced by people from all over the world tend to show that this too is a possibility.

his place before he has finished. There is naturally no provision for a referendum in the *Landsgemeinde* cantons, as it is replaced by the legislative authority of the *Landsgemeinde* itself. On the other hand, before the beginning of a *Landsgemeinde*, the constitutional or legislative initiative can be put into action, and the *Landsgemeinde* then decides upon the petition.

As a rule, the visitor to the *Landsgemeinde*, provided he is a good democrat, is delighted and moved by it. It is a great experience both to watch and to listen. There is a deep and justified solemnity in the proceedings. Even the setting in some beautiful village square or in a field at the foot of some towering mountain contributes to the whole atmosphere. In Appenzell Outer Rhodes, the *Landsgemeinde* is opened by a hymn of worship sung by the whole people with profound fervour. The voices of ten thousand singers thunder up to heaven. Every one wears the dagger which is the sign of his status as a free man with the right to bear arms. At Glarus there is in form stands an inner ring where the older boys of the canton can stand, in order to prepare themselves for their future civic duties and follow in detail the deliberations of their fathers and elder brothers. The newly elected members of all governing bodies have to take their oath before the *Landsgemeinde* that they will conscientiously fulfil the task they have undertaken. But at the end the whole people must take the oath so that its responsibility too may be fixed and visible.

A parliament, i.e. a Great Council on the unicameral system, also exists in the *Landsgemeinde* cantons, but, on account of the *Landsgemeinde*, has not the importance it has in the other cantons. Unfortunately, the *Landsgemeinde* is only suited to the smallest cantons. There are, on the other hand, cantons, e.g. in the Grisons, in which the electorate of the districts unites in a district assembly which is hardly less impressive than a *Landsgemeinde*. It is of inestimable advantage to a working democracy if the people is not dissolved into individuals at elections and ballots, but forms a single body, a living community.

Englishmen and Americans have always been among the many admirers of the *Landsgemeinde*. Sir Francis Ottiwell Adams, sometime English Minister at Berne, and C. D. Cunningham wrote glowing descriptions of it based on accurate observation. One, however, William Hepworth Dixon, served up sheer fables in his book, *The Switzers*, among others the statement that the *Landsgemeinde* lynches evil-doers, a custom rather suited to cannibals than to the highly civilised citizens of Glarus or Appenzell.

(*"Switzerland Today"*)

POTTED HISTORY OF THE LANDSGEMEINDE

There are five *Landsgemeinde* cantons, Glarus, Appenzell Outer Rhodes, Appenzell Inner Rhodes, Obwalden and Nidwalden. The *Landsgemeinde* cantons stand for the purest and most direct democracy. The origin of the *Landsgemeinden* dates from far back in the middle ages. They grew out of the Germanic folk-moot and the rural associations. Every year, on a Sunday in spring, all enfranchised men in the canton assemble at some historic spot to elect their governors and make their laws. Albert Welti, the Swiss artist, painted a superb and vivid picture of the *Landsgemeinde* at Nidwalden for the Hall of the Council of States at Berne, in which the impressive nature of this ancient institution is admirably rendered. Every citizen is under the obligation of attending the *Landsgemeinde*. With early morning the people begin to flock in from the remotest villages, leaving behind only the aged, the sick and a few firemen. If there is urgent business to be transacted, the *Landsgemeinde* can be summoned at other times in the year. If the weather is very bad, it is transferred, in certain cantons, to the church or the place of assembly; in others this is not possible, owing to the numbers attending. The *Landammann*, i.e. the

president of the cantonal government, conducts proceedings in a loud voice —up to quite recent times no loud-speaker was used. Accompanied by the other members of the government, the Chancellor and the *Landweibel* (sergeant of state), he stands on a platform which gives him a good view over the whole assembly. The *Landweibel* wears a handsome cloak and a cocked hat, for which reason the uninitiated often take him for the most important person present. The citizens proclaim their will by a show of hands. Where more than 10,000 are present, as in the canton of Appenzell Outer Rhodes, it is sometimes very difficult to assess a majority when the ayes and noes are nearly equal. Yet the practised men of the governments of these cantons can cope even with this part of the business in a truly astonishing fashion, and their ruling is very seldom questioned. In certain *Landsgemeinde* cantons, proposed legislation and even the names of candidates for election may be discussed prior to the assembly. The plain man of the people can stand up and express his views. Strict discipline is necessary, on the part both of the speaker and of the meeting. The latter, however, loses its patience now and then and compels a speaker to return to