

LOCH NESS 1963 - AND THE FUTURE

During the 150 days between May 17th and October 14th the H.Q. Station at Achmahannet was manned for a total of 1,736 hours (11.6 hours per diem) while mobile units were manned for about a further 500 hours when conditions were favourable. Despite atrocious weather, on only four days was H.Q. not opened. These figures reflect the utmost credit on members of the Expedition.

How atrocious the weather was can be gauged from the fact that only 192 hours (11½% of hours of photographic light) were flat calm while only 44 hours (2½%) were both calm and sunny. By comparison, 1st - 13th June 1963 produced 81 hours (40%) of flat calm and 42 hours (20%) of flat calm with sun. Since the relationship of calm, sunny weather to sightings is now beyond dispute (more than 95% of all recorded sightings are under these conditions) it is not surprising that this season only yielded nine episodes of tolerable authenticity as opposed to eighteen in 1964 and forty in 1963. Of these nine sightings, two were prior to the arrival of the Expedition (during an anti-cyclone in March) while four were in other sectors of the Loch. Of the remaining three, one, a head-and-neck sighting of four minutes duration, was plumb in the rays of the rising sun from our O.P., one, witnessed simultaneously for fifty minutes from both sides of the Loch, was on June 15th during the long hours of photographic twilight, while the last, of two separate objects creating considerable wash, is the subject of clear photography at present under scientific analysis. The maximum that could be claimed for this episode at present is that it is one more recorded phenomenon to be explained away.

While Fortune has thus not yet smiled on us, much has been learned and the tide of professional and public opinion has shown marked signs of flowing our way. Since the latter, it is to be hoped, will lead to the provision of the necessary funds, it is worth dwelling on the former. Here everything stems from a consideration of the weather.

I. Since settled anti-cyclonic conditions are infrequent, as long as funds are short they should be devoted to keeping a small unit going for a long time rather than several stations for a shorter period. This furthermore reduces capital requirements in relation to observation time.

II. Since condensation during unsettled weather causes frequent film jams in the gate, all cameras must be unloaded every evening and serviced daily. This would involve a resident technician. As a further

re-insurance 16 mm hand-held 6" Bolex's must be available for each site.
- Since the Expedition has now spent a total of 6,500 hours watching, it would be disastrous if the conclusive sighting were lost through any camera failure.

III. Since optimum conditions are almost invariably hazy, all main cameras must be adapted and calibrated for infra red film.

IV. Since flexibility of site in relation to area covered is vital in relation to the position of the sun, mobile vans (with cameras driven and heated off car batteries) are essential other than for H.Q. They can be kept at H.Q. and only sent out under optimum conditions thus reducing strain on volunteers.

- V. A fixed site at H.Q. must be maintained, and permanently manned
- (a) as a control on passage of craft through the Loch
 - (b) as a living centre and car park
 - (c) as a maintenance and operational centre for sending our mobile units
 - (d) as a fully equipped Stevenson Screen Met. Post

VI. H.Q. now has a permanent observation platform. It should be on the telephone to obtain daily (6:45 a.m.) weather reports from Fort Augustus and it would be an enormous economy if the necessary caravans could be bought for ultimate re-sale rather than paying ruinous hire charges as we have done hitherto through lack of working capital.

If these conditions could be fulfilled and, above all if we could be relieved of the rather odious task of asking our wonderful volunteers to contribute cash as well as work, I am confident we would have no difficulty in manning future Expeditions until such time as patience reaps its reward and the mystery is finally solved.