

THE MONSTER OF THE A85

F. W. Holiday

Although not on the topic of UFOs, this article is presented in view of the theme of Mr. Holiday's new book *The Dragon & the Disc*.

UNKNOWN monsters of huge size and curious shape, apparently living animals, can only be one of two things. If they are not hoaxes or absurd mistakes by the witnesses they must be either actual organic creatures unknown to science—a view presently held by the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau—or some strange form of reality so far described only by certain religious thinkers and other mystics.

If the subject of monsters is explored in depth then all sorts of weird "coincidences," psychic overtones and illogicalities are found to occur. In the end the researcher finds himself holding a bunch of paradoxes which causation as currently understood cannot possibly explain. It is as if we were flat-earthists admitting worriedly that there does indeed seem to be evidence that one or two ships have unaccountably disappeared in the west only to reappear, after a long time-interval, in the east. But of course (since the earth is flat, say we) this obviously must be a mistake and a delusion. It stands to reason. We feel very firm on this point and insist that observers of the alleged phenomenon are somehow unreliable (we are careful not to say how). This leaves our dogma intact and all further discussion is avoided.

This is the situation I came across in the case of the monster of the A85. It was first reported in the *Scottish Daily Express* on October 5, 1965.

The story began when Mrs. Maureen Ford, wife of the Scottish amateur fly-weight boxer David Ford, was driving home with friends along the A85 between Dundee and Perth at 11.30 p.m. on the night of September 30. The car was moving fairly fast towards Perth. Out of the side window Mrs. Ford suddenly saw a large strange object by the roadside. "It was a long grey shape," she said. "It had no legs but I'm sure I saw long pointed ears. It was only a few yards from the banks of the River Tay."

Nothing more might have been heard of this incident had not a second motorist encountered the object. This was Mr. Robert Swankie, owner of the National Bar in Arbroath, who was nearing home after a journey up from London. He had left Perth and was heading for Dundee along the A85 when suddenly a large object was picked up by his headlights. The object had apparently crossed the road since Mrs. Ford saw it. The time was now 1 a.m.—an hour and a half after Mrs. Ford's sighting.

"The head was more than two feet long," Mr. Swankie stated. "It seemed to have pointed ears. The body, which was about 20 feet long, was humped like a giant caterpillar. It was moving very slowly and made a noise like someone dragging a heavy weight through the grass."

This was all I could usefully learn from the *Express*.

At once I tried to get in touch with Mrs. Ford and Mr. Swankie. Mrs. Ford soon replied confirming her own sighting and enclosing a very rough sketch of the object's head. She mentioned the arrival of a "Miss Fergusson" on the scene.

This later turned out to be Miss Russell-Fergusson of Clarach Recordings, Oban, with whom I opened a correspondence. She had, she told me, taken down on tape both Mrs. Ford's and Mr. Swankie's accounts. "I seem to have stumbled on something quite exciting,"¹ she wrote, adding: "We both had the same *cri de coeur*: Why did he not stop?" Why indeed.

It soon transpired that the recordings were on their way to Dr. Constance Whyte who is an M.D. and who, as wife of the manager of the Caledonian Canal, had written a book called *More Than A Legend*² which sparked off the post-war Loch Ness investigations. I had corresponded with Constance Whyte for years and at once asked her to describe the Swankie affair as given in the tape.

She wrote: "He was motoring at about 1.00 a.m. towards Dundee and was on a twisty bit of road about 6 miles from Perth. His headlights picked up something moving on the near side of the road (i.e. the side away from the Tay estuary). He said that the silhouette was as drawn by him (no doubt you have a copy of his sketch). He slowed down and opened his window—looked to see if there was any following car—and saw the lights of one about five minutes (sic) behind him, so carried on to the start of the Dundee bypass (about 12 miles further on) when the following car occupied by a lady driver alone caught up with him and he waved her to stop but without success."

"Mr. Swankie does not say that he actually stopped at all. He does not explain by what illumination he saw the 'thing' when he was alongside it. He makes no mention of any reaction on the part of the 'thing' either to him or the sound of his car. His description seems to me to correspond pretty closely to the semi-comic postcards of the Loch Ness monster."³

Mrs. Whyte clearly did not approve of Mr. Swankie's apparently irrational behaviour in not investigating the phenomenon on the spot nor in its alleged appearance as described by him. Miss Fergusson declined to loan the original tape because "I am using it for my own research." The authorities, naturally, did nothing whatever. A police spokesman at Longfargan told the *Express*: "We know of nothing in that area which could possibly be confused with a monster. Of course in the dark the headlights of a car could play tricks when they strike walls and trees."⁴

In that case one wonders why Mr. Swankie didn't see monsters all the way up from London and why he didn't report them as he reported the A85 specimen. And why

would he associate such a thing with "dragging" sounds? The crunch question of course is why a completely independent witness supported his strange story if, in fact, it was no more than mistaken observation.

Everyone seems to have made up their own minds at the outset. Mrs. Whyte seemed to retire in a slight huff at what she considered the quality of the evidence. Miss Fergusson took her tape elsewhere and mentioned "prominent zoologists who are carefully checking it with me." At no time was anyone able to explain what the witnesses saw (or thought they saw).

The story becomes even odder when the surrounding topography is considered. As it leaves Perth the A85 skirts Kinnoul Hill and it was in this area that the monster was seen. In *The Muses' Threnodie* (1638) by Henry Adamson he describes a "dragon's hole" in a steep rock on the face of Kinnoul. Ancient records of the Kirk Session at Perth show that Kinnoul was used for various pagan rites which were suppressed at the Reformation.⁵ Earth models of dragons occur on some Scottish estuaries where they were used for cult purposes. There is one on the banks of the Clyde and another near Oban which I have examined.

Mr. Swankie's description of a caterpillar-like object was supported by Mrs. P. Cameron of Fort Augustus, the oldest living witness to see a Loch Ness monster on land. I had tea with her in August, 1972, and found her to be a delightful old lady with clear recall back to September, 1911, when she was a young girl.

It was a Sunday—she told me—and Fort Augustus was very quiet. She and some small friends had arranged to meet some other children by the loch near Cherry Island in order to swap cigarette-cards. While they sat in the heather waiting for the others to arrive there was a crashing sound from a wood fringing the water a hundred yards away across the small bay behind the island. They thought it was the sound of wandering cattle.

All at once a large animal started to come out of the wood. It was elephant-grey in colour and wider than two cows. It had a long horse-like head. She couldn't see the shape of the neck. Under the front end were big thick legs. The amazed children saw that the thing was moving "like a caterpillar crossing a leaf." The crashing in the wood caused by the hind-parts continued even as the front portion entered the loch. The children felt afraid and ran home where, Mrs. Cameron said, they were ill for the rest of the day. Their Victorian parents told them they had "seen the Devil." No-one seems to have looked for tracks or examined the trees for damage.

Mrs. Ford, Mr. Swankie and Mrs. Cameron appear to have seen what in medieval times would have been called a dragon. Three parties of sonar experts—two American and one British—have now proved that the things are not hallucinations. But no-one has yet proved that they are organic living creatures and it is now time that this assumption was challenged. Living animals fit into detectable eco-systems; their nests, dens and excrements are discoverable; their carcasses are found, no matter how rarely. So far as we know this has never happened during the whole of British history.

My belief is that the basic position was wisely summed up by Professor R. P. Mackal of Chicago University in a letter to me dated February 12, 1968, in which he said:

"Please understand that my position is that speculation has its place even in the face of totally inadequate evidence. However I am very dogmatic that at this point one can legitimately have no more than a slight bias towards one theory or another as to what is in Loch Ness. Officially I will not be satisfied that we are dealing with living creatures until I have a sample of the phenomenon's substances for histological, immunological and chemical studies."

That pungent writer John A. Keel demanded: "To hell with the answer! What's the question?"⁶ If it be argued that the laws of the universe first existed in a mind before they became manifest then clues about its nature may be found by examining afresh "the physical non-evidence" (as Keel calls it) for dragons and UFOs. That these objects have been seen since prehistory seems to me self-evident.⁷ That speculation about their nature should be replaced by facts seems most desirable.

References

- ¹ Letter dated November 11, 1965.
- ² *More Than A Legend* (1957), Hamish Hamilton, London.
- ³ Letter dated December 6, 1965.
- ⁴ October 5, 1965.
- ⁵ See: W. Carew Hazlitt (MCMV), *Faiths And Folklore*. Reeves & Turner, London.
- ⁶ *Operation Trojan Horse* (1971), Souvenir Press, London.
- ⁷ See: *The Dragon And The Disc* (1973), Sidgwick & Jackson, London.



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UFO ENTITIES: OCCULT AND PHYSICAL

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Our contributor is well known as a former Chairman of BUFORA, and as a researcher who possesses a profound knowledge of the whole parapsychological field, and the Occult.

THE literature of UFO "contacts" and "entities" is full of incident which, to a rational mind, appears not only improbable but impossible. However, the term "impossible" is only relative to our degree of knowledge and comprehension. It is for this reason therefore, although there is already enough speculation on the subject to choke a leviathan, that I append the following notes.

My observations on this exceedingly complex, provocative and "impossible" subject are necessarily very generalised in scope and I do not for a moment expect anyone unversed in such matters to believe them. I am of the opinion, however, that the comparative similarities in the classifications which I put forward are, at the least, worth consideration. Those suffering from the "nuts and bolts" syndrome will scarcely be expected to understand a word, let alone *what* I am suggesting, in spite of the fact that they are based on the words of Dr. F. C. Happold: "The scientist now envisages the universe in terms of a multi-dimensional space-time continuum . . . He does not consider it inconceivable, indeed it seems to fit in with his experience, both as a man and as a scientist, that in those regions of personality which lie outside the orbit of normal consciousness the categories of time and space may be inappropriate and that man in his wholeness dwells in a realm which comprehends infinity."

The E.T.V. hypothesis still maintains a strong case I am glad to say, but there is also much evidence to support the suggestion that many UFOs belong to other genera of phenomena such as hitherto unrecognised Geo-Magnetic or Atmospheric effects, Psychic and Psychological events, extra-dimensional objects, or life forms of such a tenuous nature, yet indigenous to our physical environment, that they (normally invisible) occasionally emerge within our "space" and into the range of our visibility-spectrum. A propos of this, the feasibility of the existence of such organisms, obnoxious as the idea may be to many of us, appears to be growing amongst certain of the scientific fraternity. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to believe too readily the statements in regard to these matters appearing in the press without checking carefully the source and truth of the report.

Researchers in the UFO field are already aware of the statements regarding the alleged appearance and behaviour of UFO entities which are claimed to have been observed or encountered, and so I will only briefly sketch in the salient features which I have divided roughly into three categories:

A. Acceptable: These are the entities whose physical

form and characteristics resemble those of the human being so closely that they could fairly easily pass as one of them. These not only include the fine looking blond-haired type made famous by Adamski after his alleged contact, but also entities whose statures range from very tall to child height, whose skin and hair pigmentation shows surprising diversity, and whose facial characteristics resemble a variety of earth-racial types. They are invariably said to exhibit a well-disposed yet powerful and commanding character, and to convey the impression that they are of vastly superior intelligence with highly organised powers of mind. They are reported to have been encountered not only in connection with UFO landings but apparently in all sorts of unlikely places.

They seem to be CONCERNED for our welfare—their aid being given chiefly in the form of advice, Philosophical, Metaphysical and Ethical which, as far as I can determine, appear to be restatements on such matters which are already available for reading in existing world literature if you have the patience to hunt it out. A number of sources claim mental contact with these beings without the obligation of their physical presence, the purport of their communications being similar to the above. Certain counter-pollution activities in the upper atmosphere, and high-level social, political and scientific contacts and pressures are claimed for them from time to time, but these amount to only rumour.

B. Peculiar: These are the hairy, thick-skinned, clawed, squat and somewhat strange creatures, also the pixie, gnome and strange-little-men-with-very-large-heads types. Their features, when seen, appear rather odd and like caricatures of the human face: glowing eyes, hair and skin pigmentation showing great diversity and sometimes of unusual hue. Their clothing is either completely utilitarian (uniforms, cover-alls, space or divers' suits) or rather on the quaint and theatrical side. They seem to resent the presence or the interest or the approach of a human being and have often been known to paralyse one by some sort of mental control or by means of a small tube or instrument emitting gas, light rays or radiation, before rushing back to their craft, or riding up a beam of light into it or through its walls, before taking off at tremendous speed—or just suddenly vanishing! It would appear that they might even attack one if they were suddenly startled.

Thus it would seem as if they were UNCONCERNED with the human race, landing and pursuing their mysterious activities in wild and remote places, wandering around fields, interesting themselves in wild-life and livestock and agriculture and the collection of plants