



## N is for NESSIE

[the latest instalment from Kyle Granite—the A—Z of Scottish History]

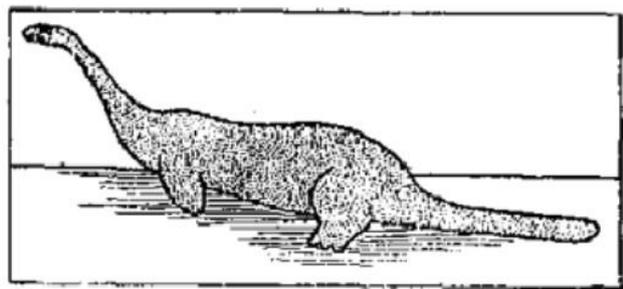
Of all of the wonderful mythological creatures that Scotland boasts, none have quite captured the world's imagination quite like Nessie. Believed to be a long necked and multi-humped creature that inhabits the depths of Loch Ness in the Highlands of Scotland, Nessie is a common feature of any Scottish tourist book.



Believe it or not the phenomenon of a monster lurking in Loch Ness dates as far back to the time of Saint Columba. According to Adomnan in *Life of St Columba*, written in the sixth century AD, the Irish monk was visiting the land of the Picts when he came across a group of men burying a man who had been “attacked by a water beast” whilst swimming by the River Ness. Columba sent a follower across the river who was swiftly chased by the monster until the saint made the sign of the cross and exclaimed: “Go no further. Do not touch the man. Go back at once”, allegedly scaring the monster back to the depths of the river. Sceptics argue that due to the prominence of water beasts in Scottish folklore (the kelpies are a prime example), the story does nothing to prove the existence of Nessie and believers have used the fact that it is the River Ness as a way to bolster their claims.

The next major sighting didn't take place until April 1933, when Aldie Mackay and her husband John, witnessed what looked like a whale-like fish when they were driving past the loch. Their sighting was published in the *Inverness Courier* with the following description:

*"The creature disported itself, rolling and plunging for fully a minute, its body resembling that of a whale, and the water cascading and churning like a simmering cauldron. Soon, however, it disappeared in a boiling mass of foam. Both onlookers confessed that there was something uncanny about the whole thing, for they realised that here was no ordinary denizen of the depths, because, apart from its enormous size, the beast, in taking the final plunge, sent out waves that were big enough to have been caused by a passing steamer".*



**The Loch Ness Monster, As Sketched by Mr. A. Grant From Lieut.-Commander Gould's Interesting Monograph Upon the Subject.**

A mere three months later the most famous sighting of all took place when George Spicer and his wife saw an enormous dragon-like creature cross in front of their car and disappear into the loch, in July 1933. Spicer described the beast as having a large body with a long, narrow neck and no limbs. Several months later a motorcyclist described nearly hitting a large animal whilst driving past the loch in the early hours of the morning. The motorist, called Arthur Grant, insisted the creature looked like a cross between a seal and a plesiosaur, producing a sketch of his sighting. (as above).

Spicer's sighting garnered an array of interest and speculation, resulting in a substantial increase in sightings and the solidification of the moniker, Loch Ness Monster. Efforts to prove the existence of Nessie intensified and in 1934 English physician Robert Kenneth Wilson claimed to possess the first photographic image of the water beast. Showing the head and neck of Nessie peering out of the water, the iconic image known as the 'surgeon's photograph' sparked an international sensation. The photograph was disproven in 1994 as simply a plastic and wooden head attached to a toy submarine.



Numerous sonar explorations have been carried out throughout the years to find the elusive creature, but none have been successful. The mystery of the Loch Ness Monster remains a popular legend today and has an estimated contribution of £80 million annually to Scotland's economy.

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