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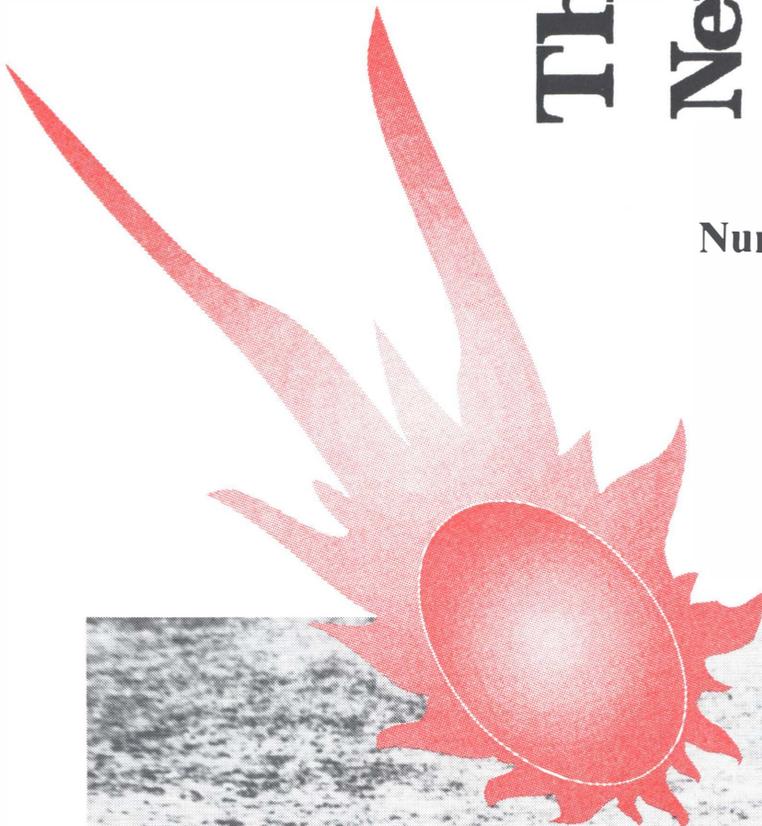


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EDITORIAL

Well, there you have it, life on Mars ! Micro-organisms, anyway - micro-fossils, to be precise, for they had been dead four billion years. But life ! Trapped in a meteorite that had crossed vast gulfs of time and space with the message that we were not alone and implications that reached to the farthest galaxy. Human kind should have been dancing in the streets; there should have been festivals, wild celebrations, free beer for everyone on the planet.

But the Grey Brigade were not impressed. Paula Clayton, proprietress of the Little A-le-Inn was quoted in *The Times*: 'Oh really, they got proof now ? That was pretty much assumed round here !'.

For the rest of us, though, it was like coming into the sunlight after being submerged for so long in the murky waters of government cover-ups, alleged implants and the ubiquitous 'genuine footage'. Here was a rock. Not a rumour of a rock, not dubious video footage of a rock, not a report of a rock by an undisclosed source, but a rock whose existence is not in question, examined by scientists whose names, backgrounds - everything about them - is known.

Now I know that NASA is desperately short of funds, and that the timing of the announcement leaves a lingering smell of fish in the nostrils. I know, too, that there are going to be lively debates on how to actually interpret the data: bitter, internecine, childish rows even - just like in Ufology - but in the end these differences will be resolved, and they will be resolved by proper scientific methodology and further research. That's the difference between science and blind belief, and that's why a few micro-fossils are worth a thousand alien retrieval stories, all invented by minds as

banal, unimaginative and culture-bound as those that created the aliens in *Independence Day*.

I'm not going to review this film, by the way, as I can't find anything non-abusive to say about it. Except, perhaps, that if 'up your alien arsehole' - sorry, *asshole* - and 'I wanna kick ET ass' is the sort of dialogue that appeals to you, then you'll probably enjoy it.

On the same (bum) note, the Santilli alien autopsy footage, which has turned out to be a farce (surprise, surprise!) will no doubt be used as yet another stick with which to beat the backside of the True Believer (that's same as kicking ass, but on a higher level). Of course there will always be those who won't admit when they're beat. Even if Santilli were to publicly confess that he faked the whole thing, you can bet someone would say he was under pressure from the government to do so. You just can't win against the True Believer - it's like thumping a pillow; hit one part and another fills out !

Some of you may protest that I'm being too harsh. You may argue that while the probability of this or that alien footage being genuine is indeed low, it is not zero, and therefore it deserves a fair trial. But why ? There may be a lavatory brush orbiting Uranus, but the chances against the existence of such a satellite, approximately the same as footage like Santilli's being genuine, is so astronomical that it doesn't even warrant a serious debate.

Let's just pause for a minute and consider exactly why this is so. Why are crashed UFOs and alien retrievals so essentially silly, so *a priori* surreally absurd ? OK. Let me put it this way. What would you say if I told you that the famous Rosenheim poltergeist has not only remanifested itself but has been captured in a sack and is, as you read this, being transported to the Koestler Foundation in Edinburgh ? You would guffaw unmercifully, admit it ! Or that an optical telescope, more powerful than any yet built, had been turned on the night skies, and angels had been seen peering back at us. You would be helpless with mirth at the absurdity of such a thing. Yet the claims that a UFO has crashed and alien bodies have been dragged from the wreckage are not only just as absurd, they are absurd in exactly the same kind of way.

We have been studying the phenomenon now for nearly half a century, and if we have learnt anything

at all it is that aliens are not real in the sense that you and I are real. They belong to another world: to that same twilight world inhabited by faeries, angels, demons, ghosts and lake monsters: a world accessible only through an altered state of consciousness.

That is not to deny that aliens, faeries, angels et al. have an intangible reality, a 'rainbow' reality - see Ralph Noyes this issue - that we do not yet understand. If dreams could be shared, if hallucinations could leave ground traces, if fantasies could interfere with electrical equipment we would understand them - but they can't, and we don't. Maybe the UFO/Close Encounter/Abduction 'thingie' (we have no word yet for something which is both phenomenon and experience yet is not exclusively either) will turn out to have profound implications for our understanding of the nature of, and relationship between, consciousness and what we call the external world. Maybe, at the last turn of the labyrinth, we will be confronted with something truly unexpected about ourselves and ultimate reality. Maybe...

But dead aliens? Crashed UFOs? Well, if an alien spacecraft did crash at Roswell in 1947, a spacecraft measuring apparently exactly one hundred feet (see *Above Top Secret* p.384) - so the aliens ludicrously would have had to have used both base ten arithmetic and Imperial Measurements - it would have nothing to do with the phenomenon which has been puzzling us for half a century.

I must confess I have difficulty in understanding how our colleagues on the other side of the Pond can take this sort of thing seriously. And I am not just talking about those whom Staff Nurse won't allow anything sharp. I am talking about intelligent researchers, men of high academic standing. In fact, I'll tell you something...I don't believe they do. And before you turn the page, let me ask you this: - have you actually bothered to read John Mack's *Abduction*, for instance? Mack confesses to being baffled by the paradoxical nature of the phenomenon, to such an extent that he feels it calls into question the whole 'consensus reality': the Newtonian/Cartesian paradigm (and only paranormal events and quantum mechanics can do that!). The Professor goes so far as to suggest that the alien experience is part of a much older, wider phenomenon. He approvingly quotes Vallee: 'The UFO occupants, like the elves of old, are not

extraterrestrial, they are denizens of another reality.' And there's more. 'Is there a shared, collective consciousness?' asks Mack. 'Is the UFO abduction a product of this shared consciousness?' and 'Is there any reality independent of consciousness?' Profound questions, these. Intelligent questions. But then he goes and blows it by referring to a 'space vehicle' crash at Roswell (p.235).

Mack's position, like that of the Heisenberg electron, seems impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy. Whether this is a ploy to reach audiences other ploys might not have reached, I wouldn't like to say. But I do think Mack's position has far, far more in common with Vallee's, Jung's, Devereux's et al. than any of us previously imagined.

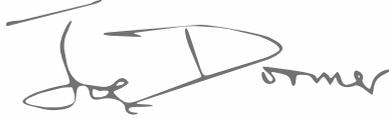
I could be wrong, of course, and if I am I'll eat Stuart Campbell's hat - and a very big one it is too! Stuart's at it again this issue, trying to prove that the Alan Godfrey UFO, which interfered with the car's electrical system, left a circular patch in the road, and was sketched by the police officer from only a few yards away, was a mirage of the planet Venus.

Now Campbell is what you might call a *Sceptic's Sceptic*. Explanations of UFO sightings put forward by other sceptics, such as unusual atmospheric effects on the fringe of scientific understanding are dismissed by Campbell as outrageous. UFOlogists with long memories must be having quite a chuckle recalling how Campbell once espoused ball lightning as the *fons et origo* of the UFO phenomenon. Nor was this the only blind alley this poor man stumbled down. His career as a UFO sceptic was almost ruined by - how can I put it - otherworldly musings. But that's another story (it's called 'From Demons to Mirages: The Stuart Campbell Story')!

There are disturbing signs that Campbell may be about to enter another phase of UFO scepticism, where everything is attributed to marbles. His second offering this issue would seem to support this hypothesis. Perhaps we shall hear that marbles can explain all the classic UFO cases (did Godfrey see a marble and not a mirage?) and that belief in mirages is the insignia of a superstitious mind.

Well, I can't stay here all day talking about mar...Hang on a minute! News has just reached me of the discovery of an unknown object orbiting Uranus. It has a handle at one end and bristles at the

other. A spokesperson for NASA says space scientists are baffled...*You don't believe me do you !*



FINAL NAILS IN THE ALIEN AUTOPSY COFFIN

KENT JEFFREY

ANTHROPOMORPHIC EVIDENCE

Medical experts are unanimous in pointing out the absurdity of the anthropomorphic aspect of the alleged alien. Quite apart from the obvious fact that a lifeform evolving on some other planet would be most unlikely to bear any resemblance to us at all, the alien in the Santilli film looks like us on the outside, even down to the protrusions of human-like muscles and bones, yet has only amorphous lumps of tissue in its body cavities. This incongruity did not escape Houston pathologist Ed Uthman, who remarked: 'I cannot fathom that an alien who had external organs so much like ours could not have some sort of definitive structural organs internally.'

SOME DUMMY !

Movie special effects experts who have examined the alien autopsy video believe that the scene was faked using a dummy. Special effects artist Trey Stokes has pointed out that the posture and weighting of the corpse on the table in the film is inconsistent with a body in the supine position and therefore it must have been made from a body-cast taken in the upright position.

FALSE PROMISES

Santilli's story is riddled with inconsistencies. Back in January 1995 we were told that President Truman was to be seen clearly on the film. Also visible, according to Santilli, was the craft - not in one piece but in a number of large pieces, requiring the use of a large crane to shift them. Because scenes such as that of President Truman and the debris site would be extremely difficult and expensive to hoax, there seemed at first to be a real possibility that the footage might be genuine. However, nobody has seen anything of either scene. In place of the 'debris site' were two small wooden tables covered with

something which looks like slabs of pavement. What is clearly visible is an I-beam, complete with symbols, which seems to have been inspired by Jesse Marcel Jr, although it is not quite what Marcel described. The symbols supposedly come from an alien alphabet, yet ludicrously these can be seen to spell out the words 'VIDEO O TV' - although the 'E' and the 'T' are disguised (embedded in hieroglyphs).

THE COLLECTOR

The reason given for the 'original' film being unavailable is that it was in the possession of a wealthy collector. Now, thanks to the admirable efforts of the investigative team at Television France One (TF1), the only network to do a proper investigation into the Santilli film, we know not only the name of the mysterious, so-called collector, Volker Spielberg, but also something about his background and business activities. Spielberg, like Santilli, is in the video distribution business. He has a small office in Hamburg, Germany, but presently resides in Austria.

During a live interview on TF1 on 23 October 1995, Santilli, when pressed to provide the original film, skated around the issue and reiterated that the film had been bought by a collector and that matters were out of his hands.

TF1 then showed video clips of Volker Spielberg's business office in a small cottage in Hamburg, Germany, and his apartment in Austria with his name visible on a common doorbell marker. It was then announced that TF1's background check revealed that Spielberg was in fact not a film collector. At this point Santilli became noticeably angry and accused TF1 of violating their agreement to keep certain aspects of the film story confidential.

TF1 also played an excerpt from the recording of a September 28, 1995 phone conversation between TF1 investigator Nicholas Maillard and Spielberg. A partial transcript of Spielberg's remarks goes like this:

'I want to be left alone...I'm a collector, I want to be out, I want to have no contact with nobody regarding this matter...I don't want to support any f__ckin' TV or radio station in this particular matter...all I can tell you is I'm happy, I got what I want, and that's it. F___ the world, I mean the world is full of egoism and so am I.'

THE NON-EXISTENT FILM

Ray Santilli first claimed that he had obtained 'fifteen 10-minute reels' from the elderly American camera-man who allegedly took the film. Later he changed his story to 'twenty-two 3-minute reels'. He also claimed that the footage was '1947 16mm nitrate film'.

Kodak, however, say they have never produced 16mm nitrate film. Kodak are the only people who could authenticate the film. Tony Amato, a motion picture specialist for Kodak, has explained that since the chemical composition of Kodak film has changed through the years, the approximate date of manufacture of a given piece of film can be determined by analysing its chemical structure. Because Kodak never releases the formulas from any of its film, testing of the film's date by any other firm would be useless.

Eastman Kodak has kindly offered to verify the film, but to do this requires the original film or part of it, perhaps as little as two or three frames. Although Santilli has submitted some film, and this has had the appropriate edge code for 1947 (a square and a triangle), it has been either blank leader film or film with unidentifiable images - both of which are meaningless for verification purposes.

THE TENT FOOTAGE

In the July 30, 1995 edition of *The Sunday Times*, investigative journalist Maurice Chittenden described some unusual security markings that appeared on the bottom right-hand side of the screen in what has become known as the 'tent footage'. This is a separate film showing some sort of medical procedure being carried out in what appears to be a tent. The markings were:

RESTRICTED ACCESS
AOI CLASSIFICATION
SUBJECT 1 of 2
July 30th 1947

The Sunday Times article pointed out, however, that 'restricted access' is not a recognised US military code and that the AOI classification is 'pure Hollywood'. Even more telling is the format of the date. The US military always uses a day-month-year format and therefore the date should have read '30 July 1947'. The markings disappeared after their

authenticity was challenged.

Among other British newspapers that ran stories declaring the film to be a hoax was *The Daily Mail*, which made a rather interesting discovery. Reportedly, a routine check of their database revealed that Santilli had contacted the paper four years earlier claiming to have information on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Shroud of Turin.

THE CAMERA-MAN

Santilli has related how he purchased the film from an elderly American camera-man. In a detailed statement, he described how the camera-man told of being stationed in Washington DC and flown by way of Wright Patterson to Roswell. Because the trip was a distance of over 1600 miles it would have been impossible for him to have arrived much before ten to twelve hours after the crash was discovered. Yet the camera-man described filming the initial approach of soldiers to the downed spacecraft and the 'screams of the freak creatures that were lying by the vehicle, 'screams that got even louder as they were approached. The idea is preposterous that the military would have waited for a lone camera-man to fly more than halfway across the country before they made a move or started filming. Former combat camera-man have pointed out that there were already qualified camera-man with top secret clearance stationed at military installations all over the country, including New Mexico.

One humorous aspect of the American camera-man's story is that it was told in British English. While the nuances may not be readily apparent to those who speak the Queen's English' they are obvious to Americans. Certain expressions are a give-away, such as 'I joined the Forces', 'I fast learnt' 'Assistant Chief of Air Staff' (a Royal Air Force term) 'no messing', 'the decision was taken', a flattop' 'a further three weeks' etc.

Even the filming techniques of Santilli's camera-man, according to three former combat camera-man, was inconsistent with the highly standardised procedures used at the time. According to the box label submitted by Santilli, the film used was Kodak 'High Speed Super-XX Panchromatic Safety Film'. With a Bell and Howell Model 70 (the camera used by the alleged camera-man) the field of depth should have been very good when using this film.

Consequently even with the apparent mediocre lighting conditions in the Santilli autopsy film, the picture quality should have been excellent. One former combat camera-man, Joe Longo, said: 'If anybody in my unit shot film like that he'd be scrubbing potatoes in the kitchen.'

Based on an article by Kent Jeffrey which appeared in the March 1996 issue of MUFON Journal.

1964 Unexplained Ground Marking and UFO Incident

The following article by Nick Redfern first appeared in *Northern UFO News*, issue 172 (Christmas 1995).

A 1964 Crop Circle Incident by Nick Redfern

In accordance with the British Government's 'thirty year ruling', a three hundred page file of UFO reports, covering the period 1963-4, has recently been de-classified and made available for inspection at the Public Record Office, Kew. Although the overwhelming majority of the file (which originated with a now-defunct Air Ministry secretariat, S4) is devoted to routine matters, such as responding to enquiries from UFO researchers, and examining 'lights in the sky' -type UFO reports submitted to the Air Ministry by members of the public, there are several incidents which stand out as being potentially important. One such incident occurred during mid-March 1964 and may well have a bearing on the crop circle mystery.

On 23 March 1964, T.E.T. Burbury, the Rector at Clifton Rectory, Penrith, Cumberland, wrote to the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington describing an encounter which had occurred some days previously. I quote from the Rector's letter :

Dear Sirs :

Does an apparent column of Blue Light about 8' in diameter and about 15' high which disappears and leaves a mark of very slightly disturbed earth, the same diameter, mean anything to you ?

This occurred about 9.30 P.M. last Saturday about 2 miles from here. It was seen by a person who is very short sighted who would have been unable to see

anything, except the light, even if it had been present.

I examined the ground which is about 100 Yds from the nearest building and there are no pylons near. There was no sign of burning, either by sight or smell, the grass growing between the exposed ground appeared quite normal.

There were no signs of bird tracks or droppings : the ground simply appeared to have been lightly raked over in an almost perfect circle.

For your information only. I told the farmer to have a sample of the earth collected and analysed for bacteria content, but don't know whether he has done so.

Yours faithfully, T.E.T. Burbury.

'... the ground simply appeared to have been lightly raked over in an almost perfect circle,' said the Rector. Does this not sound somewhat familiar. Furthermore, Burbury's reference to 'the farmer' strongly suggests that the circle was found on farmland. And what of the column of blue light ? Realising that this was out of their jurisdiction, staff at the National Physical Laboratory forwarded a copy of the Rector's letter to the Meteorological Office at London Road, Bracknell. In turn, H.M. Race of the Meteorological Office advised Burbury that : 'This does not appear to be a meteorological matter and we are therefore passing your letter to a London office who may be able to deal with it.'

The 'London Office' to which Race was referring was the aforementioned S4. For its part, S4 seemed largely unconcerned, even amused by the Rector's report, as the following internal memorandum of 16 April 1964 from Mr. R.A. Langton of S4 to a colleague, Flight Lieutenant A. Bardsley shows : 'I should be grateful for your advice on the report in the attached correspondence. Could it be Will o' the Wisp?'

Two months later, Flight Lieutenant Bardsley stated the following in a good-humoured 'Loose Minute' to Mr. Langton :

This is quite a corker ! The explanation could be one of several things, depending really, on the state of the investigator's liver. One explanation could be aurora borealis. This phenomenon however, is so

unpredictable that it would be rather hopeless to expect someone to have seen the aurora at the same date/time as our short-sighted observer. Professor Paton at Edinburgh is an aurora expert, but I cannot really justify pestering him with this one.

Again your 'will-o-the-wisp' theory may be correct. However whilst following this line, the Royal Geographic Society confirmed that Penrith did not exist - at least in Bradshaw's Gazetteer [sic]. Further, information on the geological structure around Penrith again confirmed that there probably would not, but possibly could be, local ignitions of methane gas - absolutely no use these experts !

Our myopic observer, may possibly have seen car headlights shining up into a low cloud base. There is no mention of any sound in the report - could the observer be also deaf !

One comment by the rector intrigues me : the reference to birds etc. Could it be the rector thinks the object could be a phoenix ? Finally :

There once was a rector of Penrith,
Who reported that one of his Kith,
Saw blue light in the night,
Got a terrible fright,
And the rector thinks its a "myth".

Although Flight Lieutenant Bardsley signed off his 'Loose Minute' in fine poetic style, he did not see fit to comment on the 'almost perfect circle' reported by the Rector, nor did he express an interest in following up on the Rector's suggestion to the farmer that a sample of earth should be collected for study. Moreover, an examination of the Air Ministry file in question reveals no further reference to this particular case, and to the best of my knowledge, the entire matter appears to have been summarily dismissed. To my way of thinking, this seems somewhat curious.

Of course, it should not be forgotten that the only papers to which we currently have access originated with S4. Flight Lieutenant Bardsley, however, was attached to the Defence Intelligence Staff - a wholly separate division whose work is highly compartmented. Indeed, I was informed by the Record Public Office in 1994 that the overwhelming majority of all papers which originated with the DIS remain exempt from disclosure. '... these records,' I was told, ' are retained because they contain information relating to

the security and intelligence agencies and are obviously highly sensitive'.

In light of this, perhaps we should not dismiss the possibility that the DIS built up its own file on the case; a file which has still to see the light of day. While this is simply speculation on my part, it is speculation which should not be discarded out of hand.

More importantly, now that we know the approximate location of the 'circle' (around two miles from Clifton Rectory), perhaps some enterprising researcher will do the necessary follow-up work and track down the Reverend Burbury and the un-named farmer - presuming, of course, that they are still alive. If they are, their recollections may prove vital in furthering our understanding of the 'crop circle' mystery.

Nick Redfern, Walsall, West Midlands.

Nick has asked us to point out that the direct quotes in his article come from papers which are Crown Copyright. They can be found at the Public Record Office at Kew in file AIR 2/17526.

INVESTIGATION

Well thanks to a little detective work by Maria Ceresa Paul Fuller quickly managed to track down the Rev. Burbury's widow, and she in turn kindly put Fuller into contact with Robert G. Ellis, the witness who reported this event to the Rev. Burbury back in 1964. Robert Ellis had no idea that an official file describing his sighting existed in the Public Records Office, but he was more than happy to provide *The New UFOlogist* with a written report, dated March 1996.

"LOW WOODSIDE EVENT

On the night of the 21st March 1964 I was alone in the house at Low Woodside farm which stands about eight miles south east of Penrith, and half a mile from the A66.

At about 9-30 I became aware that our working dog was howling, she slept in an outbuilding. Thinking that some stock might have broken loose and be out in the yard I went to the back door to check but the yard was empty.

During my inspection I noticed that the tops of two apple trees visible above a low roof ridge were illuminated by a blue light. I felt immediately that this was unusual so I walked along the rear of the house and through a corner door into the orchard which afforded un-obstructed views to the south and east.

Approximately one hundred yards from where I stood was a vivid 'electric blue' light. Its shape was elliptical - that is broad in the centre and tapering out at each side. It stayed in a horizontal position remaining motionless and making no audible sound. I could see no detail within the light in fact I had to shade my eyes with my hand, the light was so intense (shiny). I was quite frightened - being alone and quickly went indoors.

By the time I had calmed down and opened the curtains and shutters of the front window to look out again in that direction all was in darkness.

The following morning in the place where I had seen the light my father and I found a circle of disturbed earth twelve feet in diameter. In some places the disturbance was two inches deep as if the area had been vigorously raked. The roots of the grass were damaged and the circle remained visible well into May of that year.

We estimated the size of the light to be at least twenty four feet from tapered edge to edge by placing markers out from the circle and viewing them from the original sighting position. A soil sample was given to the Rev T.E.T. Burbury but had no news of the analysis.

I was twenty years old at the time of the event. Robert G. Ellis. March 1996."

Robert enclosed three photographs relevant to this case. The first (reproduced on page 10) was taken in 1963 and shows a general view of the field and surrounding countryside where the light and mark appeared. Photo number two (reproduced on our front cover) shows the circular mark and was taken about a week after it's discovery. Photo 3 (reproduced on page 10) is a reconstruction by Robert Ellis of how the light appeared.

Robert adds that

"I would also like to say that although I cannot read

a car number plate at 25 yards I can still tell the make and model of cars I am familiar with at distances of up to 50 yards. The Rev Burbury stated I was very short sighted - I say 'Not that short sighted'."

THE UFO SIGHTING

Paul Fuller sent Robert Ellis a list of 13 additional questions in a letter dated 23 April 1996 and from Robert's answers the following evidence has emerged.

Robert believes that he saw the light for only 30-45 seconds. It was approximately 100 metres to the east (at OSGR NY 590290). The light did not change in intensity and was "uniformly blue". Robert estimates that the light was about 7 to 8 feet deep at its centre. The weather was calm and damp but there was no rain. The temperature was about normal for March.

Unfortunately there were no other witnesses to the anomalous light because Robert's parents had gone to Penrith that evening to watch a production by the local musical society. However, Robert has been able to accurately date the event by checking *The Cumberland and Westmoreland Herald*. No account of the light or the ground trace appeared in this newspaper.

WITNESSES TO THE GROUND TRACE

Four people visited the circular trace. Robert Ellis, his father, the Rev. Burbury and a neighbour, Mr Percy Dodd, who is now deceased. The trace was discovered by Robert and his father at approximately 11 am the following morning. They inspected the trace for about ten minutes and told the Rev. Burbury about it at church. He visited the trace that same day and Percy Dodd came to visit the formation later that week. In all Robert Ellis and his father visited the trace several times over the following weeks. Robert's father was aged 56 at the time of the event and had farmed in the area all his life. He knew what the weather could do and was puzzled by the trace. As far as Robert knows, the trace was never discussed beyond this small group of people.

THE GROUND TRACE

In his second letter Robert emphasises that there was no evidence of hoaxing. There were no footprints and no hole at the centre. The print on our front



**Photo 1 : Generalised View of Sighting Location, looking south/south-east
(copyright Robert G. Ellis)**



**Photo 3 : Robert Ellis' Reconstruction of the Light
(copyright Robert G. Ellis)**

cover shows two tractor wheel marks crossing the trace in the upper right corner. These marks pre-existed the event. Even the tractor marks were damaged inside the trace.

The trace itself "had the appearance of a roughly prepared seed bed, there were no scratch marks at all but the loose and broken condition of the soil and grass most resembled a raked seed bed surface. Inside the trace what grass remained was normal in colour and there was no evidence of burning. Some of the roots were complete, some damaged, most had some soil still on them. Quite a lot of grass was still attached to their roots and lay on the surface."

Robert recalls seeing no evidence of rotational forces and cannot recall when his dog (a border collie aged about six years old) stopped howling. There were no fungal growths in the field where the trace appeared, although there were other places on Low Woodside farm where they grew quite regularly.

ASSESSMENT

Robert Ellis' account of the circular ground trace fits a world-wide pattern which Paul Fuller and Jenny Randles have examined throughout their published work. The event itself bears similarities with some of the cases discussed in chapters 9 ("A Vortex Case Book") and 11 ("The Death of the UFO") in the first edition of "Crop Circles, A Mystery Solved" (Robert Hale Ltd. 1990).

Low Woodside farm is located at OSGR NY 589290, 8 kms to the east of Penrith and just north of the A66 trunk road. The farm lies near the bottom of the Eden Valley, with the Cumbrian Mountains in the west and the Pennines in the east.

David Reynolds had tracked down the known meteorological weather conditions for 21st March 1964. The "General Synoptic Development" states that

"The depression off north west Ireland has filled steadily but otherwise the general pressure distribution around the British Isles has remained mainly unchanged. The anticyclone centred east of Scandinavia has persisted and pressure remains low over the majority of Europe. An occluding frontal system is moving towards western districts from the Atlantic".

An inspection of the weather map for 1800 Hrs GMT

on 21 March shows that Northern England had cloudy skies and there was an easterly wind of 10 knots. Atmospheric pressure was approximately 998 millibars and that 6mm of rain had fallen in southern Scotland, 150 kms to the north east.

An easterly wind rules out the possibility that the ground marking was created by an eddy effect in the lee of Leacet Hill (which lies to the south-west of Low Woodside Farm). The Pennine escarpment to the east is probably too high to create small eddy whirlwinds of the kind discussed throughout Meaden's research. For this reason CERES' David Reynolds proposes that the unexplained ground marking was created by the breakdown of an eddy vortex which could have been created by wind shear within katabatic airflow. Katabatic flow is the term given to the movement of air from high ground into valleys at night. This occurs in otherwise calm or light winds at night, when air over high ground starts cooling and then sinks into valleys under the influence of gravity. Within this flow, or at the boundary where two flows may meet, wind shear can occur and may result in the formation of eddy whirlwinds. A short-lived vortex could become self-illuminated, thus creating the marking and the light effect witnessed by Robert Ellis.

It is also important to note that had the weather symbols indicated strong winds over the Cumbrian area then Meaden's theory could not have applied, as the kind of electrical vortex postulated by Meaden is most likely to form in relatively stable, stratified air. Furthermore the known weather conditions also demonstrate that Robert Ellis correctly recalled the weather conditions that night, as he described them as calm and damp, which they certainly were.

Unfortunately not all the evidence points towards a meteorological explanation for the Low Woodside farm event. To begin with, the ground trace and associated light effect gave no indication of rotational forces. Also, no vortex acoustics or electro-static effects were experienced. However, the lack of acoustics may be because Robert Ellis was quite some way from the light phenomenon when he saw it.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONNECTION?

It is interesting to note that there is a cairn circle at OSGR 563263, on the other side of Leacet Hill to Low Woodside farm. Since this is the only cairn site

for several kilometres, and as it is unusually not located on the hill summit, this does suggest that Meaden's controversial archaeological theory of cairns and tumuli being located on top of vortex-produced crop circles might be relevant in this case. However, it should be emphasised that Robert Ellis does not support a meteorological theory for his sighting.

The New UFOlogist would like to express its grateful thanks to Robert Ellis, Maria Ceresa and Nick Redfern for their help in producing this report.

The Westbury White Horse Mutilation

Joe Dormer

Kevin McClure does not believe that a white horse was killed and mutilated in the manner described by Albert Budden in his article in issue 2. In Right to Reply the following issue, Kevin writes: 'The 'mutilation' near Bratton is apparently based on a non-expert report uninvestigated by Albert Budden himself...I do not think that any such event has ever been recorded.'

Well, I happen to be that 'non-expert investigator' (thanks for that vote of confidence, Kevin!). And I would like to present the facts of this case here, so that readers can make up their own mind about it. It has not been published before.

My interest in this particular case stemmed from an incident which occurred at the 1991 International UFO Congress at Sheffield. During question time following T.V. producer John MacNish's talk on crop circles, a member of the audience raised his hand and asked if the speaker had any news on the Westbury white horse mutilation. This was a reference to the rumour that a white horse had been discovered dead and mutilated close to the location of Operation Blackbird, the widely publicised crop circle watch. Now most of us were of the persuasion, at that time, that there was no truth in this story. And MacNish's reply did nothing to dispel that view. 'The horse died of natural causes,' he said. 'We know this to be true since we got this information from the police.'

At this point, a man in the audience stood up. 'Excuse me,' he said. 'I was the one who, with a

colleague, discovered the horse. Its penis and its left ear were cleanly removed...It was we who gave this information to the police. It's a cover-up!'

At the end of the session I managed to manoeuvre my way through the crowd just in time to catch up with the man on his way out into the street. Could he tell me more, I asked. Why did I want to know, he immediately counter-questioned.

Now every investigator must be on his guard against hoaxing. And obviously any remarks I might make here about the witness's credibility must, of necessity, be subjective. Nevertheless, for what it is worth, I will say that I found it hard to question the man's integrity. His apprehension over the consequences - real or imaginary - of disclosing this information was evident enough. Only when he was satisfied that my request was genuine did he volunteer to send me further details. These arrived by post two days later: a four-page (A4) report written in longhand with a sketch pin-pointing the exact location at which the horse was discovered.

Briefly, the report describes how on the morning of 30 July 1990, at about 7.15 am, he and his friend discovered the horse at the rear of the famous hill (opposite the White Horse monument). 'It was a white male horse lying dead on its left side. Its feet were all caught up in a large link fence. Its sex organ was cleanly removed, along with its left ear. There was a mass of foam protruding from each nostril and its eyes were bulging...The whole area around the horse was free of blood...only one drop could be found about four feet away, no bigger than a ten pence piece. This struck us as very odd, along with the partially collapsed fence (where it had caught its feet) that showed no signs of blood, despite it being very close to the gaping wound - clearly indicating that it had not wounded itself. We looked for the missing organ and ear, but found nothing. There was a pile of dung about 12 feet away. The horse must have died only a couple of hours before our discovery (or less) as the foam suggested. Rigor Mortis was beginning to set in.'

I wrote immediately to Clive Potter whom I knew had already made some inquiries. His interest was sufficiently rekindled to want to look further into this matter, and he suggested we work together.

We began by writing to Trowbridge Police Station, where officers investigating the case would have

been based. Trowbridge denied all knowledge of a mutilated horse. Less predictably, they claimed to have no record of any incident involving a dead horse on the day in question ! We also wrote to Wiltshire Constabulary, giving full details of the case, but the outcome was the same. Their reply reads: 'I have checked our records, and inquired of the local officers, but can find no trace of any such incident.' This is impossible to reconcile with what the police told MacNish: that there was a dead horse, but it had died of natural causes.

MacNish's account (which we transcribed from an audio recording of his talk) is as follows:

'Basically, the white horse mutilation...we checked with the police...And the police report...I rang the police and said, 'Can you tell me a bit more about the horse mutilation?' and they said, 'What, you mean the alien encounter with three beings from outer space and the woman was abducted and the horse got mutilated?' and I said, 'Well, it might be'...And they said, 'Well, the farmer went over to where the horse was...It turned out that it actually...our post mortem on it was the horse died of natural causes.' Now that's what I know about the...That was the police report...[inaudible] actually had suggestions of UFOs and aliens in it...the actual police report!'

So we have, according to MacNish, a police inquiry, a post mortem, an official police report...and no one recalls a thing: neither the officers who investigated the case nor those who apparently found the joke about aliens such a source of amusement. And not a trace on record. How was this possible ?

We put this question, mischievously, in a second letter to Trowbridge, this time playing the MacNish card. We also put it to them that 'whoever performed the autopsy would surely have kept a separate record. In the - hypothetical, shall we say - event of a mutilated horse being discovered, who would have performed the autopsy?' They chose to ignore both questions.

So did a computer error wipe out the records and do all the police officers suffer from poor memories or did MacNish (and our witness) make the whole thing up? Or were the 'pigs' telling 'porkies' ?

If the police would not be straight with us might members of the Operation Blackbird team be persuaded to tell us what they knew. We wrote to

one leading member of the Blackbird team. His reply was less than informative, not to say strange.

'The best help I can give you is the address of the person who reported it to me at the Bratton site...Among everything else that was going on, I must say it was a bit of a surprise to suddenly have the report of the dead [sic] horse...I would appreciate it if you did not disclose the source of this information.'

This reluctance to say very much incongruously coupled with requests for anonymity was the recurring theme of every reply received from Blackbird members.

We wrote to yet another member of the Blackbird team, this time putting all our cards on the table. We were aware, we said (bluffing, of course) that the police 'quickly adopted a policy of secrecy and that Blackbird members were persuaded to go along with it.' Put like that, he could hardly deny it - and didn't! 'There is very little I can add to the information you already have,' he replied. He then offered his opinion that what happened at Bratton might be related to the cattle mutilation phenomenon in the US. This was not a view shared by our original witness, incidentally !

Continuing our search for the truth, we approached the *Wiltshire Evening Advertiser* to see if they were interested in doing a feature on the incident in return for issuing an appeal on our behalf for other witnesses, information etc. The feature went in; the appeal didn't.

We did find one other witness. Busty Taylor, who was also part of the Blackbird team, recalls being woken up early in the morning on the day in question, by a colleague who asked him, 'Did you hear that noise?' 'What noise?' Busty recalls replying, 'I didn't hear any noise, I was asleep.' What his friend had heard was like the sound of an animal in pain. And it turned out to be around the time the horse must have been killed.

I have managed to obtain the name and address of the farmer who owns the land on which incident - allegedly, I suppose I still have to say - occurred. I have not yet written to him - partly because I am not too optimistic about getting any more information out of him than we did out of the police, and partly because I've been too busy putting together this issue

of The New UFOlogist. But I will.

Addendum

Jayne Macnish has kindly supplied The New UFOlogist with the following statement concerning this incident :-

"As far as John Macnish is concerned he saw nothing and didn't investigate the alleged incident. At the time he and David Morgenstern put it down to pure fluke that a horse died near Blackbird. As far as John recalls it was probably Colin Andrews that told him the police said it was nothing and everything was normal; the police said there was a lot of wild rumours re-aliens flying around etc etc, so it was left at that. John cannot even remember if it was the police or even the knackers or a vet was involved, but certainly the main team at Operation Blackbird did investigate the 'happening' and there was definitely no mystery to the horse's death according to what was reported back."



GAO Report Fails to Provide 'Smoking Gun' for Roswell Incident

Paul Fuller

BACKGROUND

On 28 July 1995 the US Government Accounting Office (GAO) finally published the result of its long search for government documents relating to the events at Roswell in 1947. The GAO's report, Results of a Search for Records Concerning the 1947

Crash Near Roswell, New Mexico, was prompted by Congressman Steven Schiff, who had been alerted to the case by a number of his constituents. Perturbed Schiff first approached the US Department of Defence for an explanation but, according to an interview in a recent *Network First* UFO documentary, he was referred to the US National Archives who disavowed any knowledge of the case. Schiff expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of assistance he was receiving from the military authorities and in early 1994 successfully persuaded the GAO to mount an archive search to find out more.

In the meantime, the United States Air Force pre-empted the GAO by conducting its own more comprehensive investigation, which concluded that the event was triggered by the crash of a then top secret balloon train designed to detect Soviet nuclear tests. This covert operation was codenamed Project Mogul - a name which was not even known to meteorologists involved in the project until very recently. Whilst the USAF fails to explain why the crashed spaceship story was promoted by key military officers based at Roswell, many observers have interpreted the USAF report as implying that the crashed flying saucer story was a fake cover story should anything go wrong with the top secret project. Clearly if the USAF were right then this explanation should be verified by a comprehensive search for further documentation. For this reason, the GAO report was eagerly awaited by protagonists on all sides of the debate.

WHAT DID THE REPORT SAY ?

In their report the GAO state that they were asked by Steven Schiff 'to determine the requirements for reporting air accidents similar to the crash near Roswell and identify any government records concerning the Roswell crash'. The GAO report that they examined 'a wide range of classified and unclassified documents dating from July 1947 through [to] the 1950s'. These documents included those held by the Department of Defence, the FBI, the CIA and the National Security Council. The GAO found the following:

1. In 1947 the US Army was required to maintain permanent records of air accident reports, but that none of these related to the Roswell event.
2. The US Navy reported no air accidents in New

Mexico during July 1947.

3. Air Force officials informed the GAO that in 1947 there was no requirement for them to prepare a report on a crashed balloon.

4. A more interesting discovery by the GAO is that important documentation covering this period had been destroyed and that the authority for disposing of this documentation was not clear. The documents concerned were those held by the National Personnel Records Centre in St Louis, Missouri, and these would have detailed both administrative records (relating to finance, accounting, supplies, buildings etc.) and RAAF outgoing messages from October 1946 to December 1947. According to Steven Schiff's press release these were the records which should have explained what was really happening at Roswell, but that they had been destroyed over forty years ago. The GAO states that:

'The Centre's Chief Archivist stated that from his personal experience, many of the Air Force organisational records covering this time period were destroyed without entering a citation for the government disposition authority. Our review of records control forms showing the destruction of other records - including outgoing RAAF messages for 1950 - supports the Chief Archivist's viewpoint.'

Furthermore, the GAO could find no record to indicate that the 1395th Military Police Company ever submitted records to the National Personnel Records Centre. This too has concerned some researchers, as the military police feature in some accounts of what allegedly took place at Roswell (some witnesses claim to have been threatened with violence and even death by military police).

5. The GAO discovered two documents which specifically mentioned the Roswell event. The first is a July 8, 1947 teletype message to the Director of the FBI in Washington from its Dallas bureau, stating that: 'EIGHT AIR FORCE, TELEPHONICALLY ADVISED THIS OFFICE THAT AN OBJECT PURPORTING TO BE A FLYING DISC WAS RECOVERED NEAR ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO, THIS DATE. THE DISC IS HEXAGONAL IN SHAPE AND WAS SUSPENDED FROM A BALLOON BY CABLE...FURTHER ADVISED THAT THE OBJECT RESEMBLED A HIGH ALTITUDE WEATHER BALLOON WITH A RADAR

REFLECTOR...' the GAO confirmed with the FBI that this was an authentic FBI message and that a further FBI memo dated 12 July 1947 also referred to this earlier message.

The second document located by the GAO was from the Combined History [of the] 509th Bomb Group and Roswell Army Air Field, 1 July 1947. This once classified document states that: 'The Office of Public Information was kept quite busy during the month answering queries on the 'flying disc' which was reported to be in the possession of the 509th Bomb Group. The object turned out to be a radar tracking balloon.' The GAO claim that because this document was signed by the RAAF's commanding officer this represented 'a complete and accurate account of RAAF activities in July 1947'.

Both these documents were already known to UFOlogists prior to the GAO study.

6. The GAO state that during the course of their investigations they wrote to the National Security Council, the White House Office of Science and Technology and the Department of Defence, all of whom claim that they had no government records relating to the Roswell crash. The FBI informed the GAO that 'all FBI data regarding the crash near Roswell' had been released under the Freedom of Information Act. The Department of Defence responded by stating that the July 1994 USAF report represented the full extent of their records regarding the crash. The Executive Director of the CIA responded by stating that earlier searches for records on unidentified flying objects which mention the Roswell crash had produced no new information. Interestingly the Executive Director added that it was unclear whether or not the agency had ever conducted a records search relating only to Roswell (i.e. not mentioning UFOs). However, a further search of CIA documents still produced no result.

7. All the agencies mentioned were offered the opportunity of commenting on the draft of the GAO's report but only the National Personnel Records Centre offered clarification. The GAO admit that their search of government records was complicated by the fact that records they wanted to review were sometimes missing and there was not always an explanation. In addition it seems that the rules governing the retention and destruction of records during 1947 were either unclear or changing. Given the nature of what is being alleged

about Roswell it is perhaps surprising that the GAO admit that they did not 'independently verify' the written responses they received from the National Security Council, the White House Office of Science and Technology, the Department of Energy, the FBI, the Department of Defence and the CIA. According to Rodeghier and Chesney the NSA did not even reply to the GAO's letter of enquiry.

EVALUATION

Not surprisingly, the GAO report has attracted varying degrees of support and criticism. In *International UFO Reporter* (vol 20 No 4) Mark Rodeghier and Mark Chesney point out that the GAO report does NOT confirm the USAF's conclusion that the event was triggered by the crash of a Mogul balloon. They add that in their opinion if the Mogul balloon train hypothesis is correct then surely the GAO investigation should have discovered many more documents proving the USAF's case.

In *Bulletin No 3* from The International Roswell Initiative (issued August 9, 1995), Kent Jeffrey agrees. He states that 'Noteworthy is that the GAO report refers to the 1994 Air Force report only briefly and offers no [additional] evidence to support the Air Force report's Project Mogul balloon hypothesis. The GAO report also contains no significant revelations and no conclusion. Unlike the 1994 Air Force report, which represents a selective and obviously biased presentation of the facts, the GAO report is objective and straightforward. Significantly, it is admitted in the report that 'our search for government records was complicated by the fact that some records we wanted to review were missing and there was not always an explanation.' Most significant is that the outgoing messages from Roswell Army Field (RAAF) for the period from October 1946 through December 1949 were destroyed without authorisation. Those messages would most probably have contained the key to what really occurred at Roswell in 1947.'

Kent Jeffrey continues:

'It could be strictly coincidental that those records are missing. However, in view of the conflicting stories told by the military at the time (the two July 8 1947 press releases), the absence of the records is very 'convenient' and therefore suspicious. Also interesting is the fact that no documentation for the 1395th Military Police Company could be located.

Presumably this would have been the outfit responsible for guarding the debris.

During the course of the investigation, the GAO did query agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the National Security Council (NSC) for records on Roswell. The GAO investigators, however, were not given direct access to the files of those agencies. Instead, the GAO received brief written responses, but was not able to independently verify the information contained in them.

The Roswell event, whatever its cause, was one of the biggest public relations fiascos in military history. Given the government's penchant for keeping records, the fact that not one single official military file or record can be found to document this event strains all credibility. While the GAO report provides no definite answers, it does bring to light the absence of certain critical evidence, thereby raising new questions and underscoring the need for further and more thorough investigation into this unusual event. As co-ordinator of the International Roswell Initiative, I assure you that in the months ahead, we will be redoubling our efforts, both in the investigation of the Roswell case itself and in the effort to make it resoundingly clear to our political leaders that the vast majority of people desire a more open and candid US government policy concerning the entire UFO phenomenon. Kent Jeffrey.'

Not surprisingly Philip Klass' *Skeptics UFO Newsletter* (September 1995) takes a more negative view, pointing out that the GAO's search failed to find 'a single document to indicate that the government recovered a crashed saucer in mid-1947'. Instead Klass concentrates on the two crucial documents which support the weather balloon hypothesis. Klass comments that if the Roswell event was really triggered by the crash of an extra-terrestrial craft then President Truman would certainly have been told and that the matter would have been discussed at subsequent National Security Council meetings. According to Klass the GAO reported that neither Roswell nor a crashed UFO was mentioned in any of the previously highly classified minutes of the NSC in 1947 or 1948.

Readers will recall that former CIA man Fred C. Durrant III claims that he reported these same negative comments about the lack of physical proof of UFOs at the 1952 Robertson Panel at the end of

the *Secret Histories* Channel 4 documentary shown in August 1995. Durrant's claims are confirmed in Michael Sword's highly detailed account of the first day of the Robertson panel in IUR vol 20 No 4.

The unauthorised destruction of the RAAF messages may or may not be significant - it really depends on your point of view - but the failure of the military police to submit records seems to be an important lead which requires further research. Rodeghier and Chesney point out in their IUR article that the Chief Archivist does not appear to have been invited to comment on the failure of the military police to submit records for the period stated. In their words: '...the missing records from Roswell are specifically those that would have compromised the security and effectiveness of the cover-up. That these records are missing is consistent with a cover-up.' Meanwhile, according to Dennis Stacy (FT 78), the 1994 USAF report mentioned '...millions of old documents, badly filed and not yet declassified, had been discovered in a government warehouse in St Louis'. One wonders what these records contain and whether or not they would reveal the truth behind the Roswell myth.

Saucer Smear (September 1995) takes a similarly sceptical view of the missing records to Klass, stating that 'Roswell conspiracy buffs are free to speculate that this long period of records was destroyed just to cover up one event. We prefer to speculate that: it was done to cover up something else, long-range and more important, such as atomic secrets from the only US base that had atomic weapons at that time; or, more likely, it was done in a typical act of military incompetence, and this has no significance.'

Steven Schiff himself seems dissatisfied with the GAO report, although he has publicly praised it as 'professional, conscientious and thorough'. Schiff concludes, rather strangely, that the GAO report 'caused the Air Force to acknowledge that the crashed vehicle was no weather balloon'. As Klass points out, this is not true, as the USAF continues to claim that the event was triggered by the crash of a Mogul balloon. Klass criticises Schiff for implying that only those RAAF outgoing records for July 1947 were missing, whereas in fact the missing records cover a far longer period. Klass goes on to claim that Schiff was shown two early drafts of the GAO report and that Schiff pressured the GAO to omit from their final report their endorsement of the USAF's conclusion that the Roswell debris was a

Mogul balloon train. Schiff was shown two early drafts of the GAO report and that Schiff pressured the GAO to omit from their final report their endorsement of the USAF's conclusion that the Roswell debris was a Mogul balloon train. Schiff has yet to respond to this interesting allegation.

CONCLUSIONS

Not surprisingly the GAO report has done nothing to quell the claims of those researchers who insist that the Roswell case was the cover-up of the crash of an alien spaceship. On the other hand, it has provided sceptics of this solution with further negative evidence. Without doubt there still remains work to be done. But whatever the outcome, the Roswell case seems to present only two possible explanations. Either the case is an ever-growing social myth of unusual proportions, one which was originally used by the USAF to cover up the crash of a super top secret spying project and which grew and grew out of control as rumours were turned into 'facts' and suspicions were fanned by unscrupulous personalities, or alternatively the case really does represent the cover-up of something more unusual (and not necessarily involving an alien spaceship). The choice is yours. Undoubtedly the controversy will continue.

Further information can be found in:

Fortean Times, Box 2409, London NW5 4NP

International UFO Reporter, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659, USA

Saucer Smear, P.O. Box 1709, Key West, Florida 33041, USA

Skeptics UFO Newsletter, available from 404 'N' St. SW, Washington DC 20024 USA

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GHOSTS, UFOs AND OTHER RAINBOWS

Ralph Noyes

Ralph Noyes served twenty-eight years in the Ministry of Defence, during which time he was Head of Secretariat Air Staff 2a. He is now Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research.

Stuart Campbell has been telling us for a long time that flying saucers, when they aren't something boringly mundane, are mirages. We last heard from him at book length in 1994 in *The UFO Mystery Solved* (1). More recently, he has assured the readers of *New Scientist* (2) that the celebrated incidents which occurred at RAF Woodbridge in late December 1980 were the misperception, by Colonel Halt and others, partly of a lighthouse on the Suffolk coast, partly of planets. The wonderful implausibility of Stuart's dogged eccentricity has made him a ufologist we affectionately love to hate. This is not the place to explain yet again why most of us have had to reject his stark and simple view that all Unexplained FOs are the mirages of stars and planets: John Harney's patient and courteous review of *The UFO Mystery Solved* in *Magonia* #50 can stand in for the volume of sensible criticism

which has been levelled at Stuart for years past. Most of us would agree. And yet.. And yet..

After nearly half a century in which the transient occurrences we call UFOs have continued to prove as elusive as the rainbow, perhaps it could be that 'mirage' is a more fruitful concept than we've tended to think. With grateful apologies to Stuart Campbell, I would like to take his suggestion that all UFOs we can't explain in mundane terms are the mirages of stars and planets as a point of departure for the idea that UFOs do indeed have some of the characteristics of a mirage, even if a mirage with interesting complications.

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, rather tight-lipped, calls a mirage 'an optical illusion' and gives as its sole example that overworked instance, 'the false appearance of a sheet of water'. *Webster's Dictionary*, which is often better when it comes to technicalities, describes a mirage as 'an optical phenomenon' or 'an atmospheric phenomenon' (note that *phenomenon*) and mentions the Fata Morgana, that remarkable appearance in the sky of an island or city which is below the horizon and sometimes hundreds of kilometres distant. Both dictionaries remind us that 'mirage' is also often used in common speech as a synonym for the illusory, a metaphor for 'something which isn't there'.

That usage of the common speech is curiously misguided. As Webster's rightly says, a mirage is a phenomenon, a happening, an occurrence. For the short time it lasts a mirage is very certainly 'there', even if we need to take more care than usual in saying what we mean by 'there'. A phenomenon it most definitely is, sufficiently so to give thirsty desert travellers a hope of water and ships at sea a glimpse of distant land. The perceivers of a mirage are not hallucinating, there is a definite something ahead of them which can be seen. If they mistake it for water or a solid city, this is simply because they expect too much of it: they have made the assumption that what affects the retina must also have the attribute of affecting the other senses as well, that what can be seen can also be touched, tasted, smelled, heard. The assumption is reasonable enough; it is virtually an instinctive one; we wouldn't last long if we didn't make it. Most of the phenomena of common experience have this attribute of affecting more than one sense at a time: tigers and bananas, for example. We would soon be eaten or go hungry if we didn't assume that tigers

and bananas amount to more than merely meets the eye. But there are some phenomena of which this is not true. The mirage is one of them. And so, for example, is the rainbow.

This does not, of course, make the rainbow or the mirage 'unreal'. Our tendency to divide the objects of experience into 'real' and 'unreal' is an unmitigated nuisance, especially when it comes to discussing the kind of object which comes and goes rather rapidly and fails to leave much, if anything, in the way of a lasting physical trace. It would be far more useful if we adopted what some have called 'the phenomenological approach' (3). The term is ponderous but the idea is fruitful. One simple account of phenomenology in the sense in which I want to use it in this article is that it calls for 'a plain description of direct experience, free of prepossessions, speculations and theories'. It sounds like nothing more than common sense - but common sense is amazingly difficult to apply when unusual events occur. Rainbows are, with us, a fairly usual event, but even so they remained mysterious for centuries and still carry that stigma of being 'not quite real'. What if they were rarer still?

Let us imagine a remote desert country in which rain falls only a dozen times in a century. (We can suppose that its inhabitants get their water from abundant underground rivers, flowing from unknown regions, rivers of the kind which supplied the Xanadu of *Kublai Khan*.) During a few of these rare rainfalls a rainbow will be seen, perhaps by many people in a city, perhaps by a solitary individual in a lonely place. It will last for no more than a few minutes. It will leave no physical trace. It will be impossible to relate it to anything except, perhaps, some written records - probably conflicting with each other and probably inaccurate - of something similar seen very occasionally - by previous witnesses. If the puzzled observers confine their discussion to whether the phenomenon was 'real' or 'unreal' - 'imaginary' being the usual term of abuse attached to the category 'unreal' - we know what will happen. The populace will divide into believers and non-believers. If things go badly, especially if there is a priesthood or scientific establishment which has reasons for denying the phenomenon, there will be persecutions of greater or lesser severity and fantasies of less or greater absurdity. The non-believers will appoint inquisitors and guard their sacred books - or their learned journals - against any mention of rainbows; the

believers will found Rainbow Liberation Fronts and write many books which postulate links between the rainbow and such things as the phases of the moon, or the purified state of mind required for seeing one, or the rituals (probably gruesome) which will invoke it. When the next rainbow comes, nobody will have the faintest idea of how to study it effectively.

One should add that the situation will be quite as bad if the existing priesthood or scientific establishment has reasons for affirming the rainbow: in that case, a bible will be written or a paradigm will be propagated. Quite as many people will go to the stake or fail to get their research funding renewed; but they will be non-believers instead of believers.

Just suppose, however, that there happens to be living during a rainbow flap or wave one of those rare individuals (a Copernicus, a Faraday, a Wegener) who devotes himself to studying the details of the phenomenon without prepossession, theory or prior speculation - a 'phenomenologist', whether or not he cares to adopt this description. There may then be some faint chance of sensible progress. He will, of course, satisfy himself that something has actually occurred, for example by taking reports from witnesses and assessing their credibility. He will want to know how many reports have been made, whether they show a reasonable degree of consistency with each other, how far the witnesses' stories can be corroborated by others, whether they have something to gain (or lose) by giving (or withholding) their reports. He will find himself in much the same position as Edmund Gurney and his collaborators when, in the early 1880s, they set out to study the reports that people in crisis (commonly at the point of death) sometimes briefly appear to distant friends or relatives in circumstances which rule out the ordinary channels of communication. Gurney et al. concluded that many such reports were evidenced beyond reasonable doubt and their resulting book (4) remains a classic in the field. My hypothetical rainbow warrior will have far less to go on; my postulated Xandu will have offered him far fewer reports of the rainbow than Gurney received of crisis apparitions. Nevertheless, we can assume that our thoughtful phenomenologist has been convinced that seven-coloured semi-circles do occasionally appear in the sky to credible witnesses. And he notices that they seem to have a one-to-one correlation with that other great rarity, rainfall. If he sticks to the phenomenological method, cautiously conducting his

enquiries out of the sight of believers and inquisitors, we can imagine him putting some down-to-earth questions and receiving the following answers.

Q. How quickly did it come and go ?

A. I looked up and there it was. After a while it sort of faded out.

Q. How far away was it ?

A. Not sure. But it wasn't near.

Q. Did you try to get nearer ?

A. Yes. But it moved away as fast as I approached it.

Q. Did you hear anything (or smell or taste or touch anything)?

A. No.

Q. Could you see where it touched the ground ?

A. Yes. But, as I've said, it moved away when I tried to get nearer.

Q. Had anything happened to the ground where it seemed to be touching the earth?

A. (Most witnesses) I didn't look (Rather rare witness) I walked for miles. Couldn't find a thing.

Q. So there's no evidence that anything happened at all?

A. I saw it. Nobody and nowt will talk me out of that !

Q. What do you think the rainbows are, then ?

A. (Some witnesses) God's warning to the world to mend its wicked ways.

(Other witnesses) God's promise to the world that He won't clobber us.

(Yet others) Demons

(Others again) Angels

(Even more others) Visits to Xandu by some of them rumoured aliens.

Our phenomenologist then writes a report which affirms the existence of rainbows, avoids all religious and metaphysical interpretations, but offers the guess that the phenomenon - in common with all other phenomena - depends upon an interaction between the witness and an independent stimulus. Funds are requested for further research. The paper is, however, turned down by all outlets except the *Journal for the Society for Rainbowlogical Research* (which is always careful to say that it has no collective opinion). Fortunately the report is read by a woman scientist who has become interested in optics because her youngest child, a precocious boy of seven, has been producing something like a rainbow on the wall of the apartment by messing around with the water carafe and a sunbeam coming through a hole in the shutter. A fruitful relationship ensues. The phenomenologist and the lady scientist elope to a rainy country in the distant north where they see many rainbows and develop a working hypothesis. In Xanadu they are condemned, in absentia, to a life sentence in the caverns of the subterranean river, partly for adultery but mainly for fostering a superstitious blasphemy.

Rainbows are, of course, rather simple (now that we've understood them); flying saucers, especially if we include the associated entities which are now so frequently reported, are more complex. But the comparison between them is useful. We find the same division as in Xanadu between believers and non-believers. The believers offer an enormous range of guesses (God, the Devil, extraterrestrials, terrestrial energies); the non-believers either ignore the matter or express offended scepticism about whether the phenomenon exists at all ('it's mere imagination; it's mere hoax...'). But by far the most interesting comparison between rainbows and UFOs lies in the analysis of the term 'mirage' with which this article begins.

Let me stress again that rainbows, among other mirages, are utterly 'real'. They exist 'out there'. They differ from tigers and bananas merely in the minor respects of lasting for a shorter time and responding to a smaller spectrum of our senses. And they strongly share these latter characteristics with UFOs. There are some other analogies, as well. For example, that puzzling tendency of some UFOs to be seen by only one witness in the middle of a busy city where one would expect multiple-witnessing has a parallel in the behaviour of the little rainbow which can sometimes be seen at the bottom of a waterfall.

This mini-bow, often forming a complete circle, can usually be seen from only one privileged position, narrowly determined by the altitude and direction of the sun. In a party of visitors someone will suddenly say, 'I see a rainbow', only to be greeted with blank stares by others who are standing only a few feet to his left or right. A witness who doesn't understand the optics of the situation will sometimes return to the waterfall later in the day, hoping for another sighting - but the mini-bow has gone, the sun has changed its position. Among a community which lacks scientific knowledge, the waterfall might well become known as a 'window area' for the occasional occurrence of the Blessed Seven-coloured Mandala. Rainbow flaps might come to be identified, curiously dependent on bright weather and altering the time of their apparition at different seasons of the year. Witnesses might well come to be venerated (or locked away).

In pressing these analogies, I am not arguing that UFOs are rainbows, merely that they share some interesting characteristics with that great class of the utterly real but terribly evasive occurrences we call mirages. The hauntings and apparitions of psychical research behave in a rather similar manner: they, too, come and go in their own time, affect some witnesses but not others, impinge mainly on the sense of sight, rarely leave physical traces and give rise to an amazing variety of speculation. I'm not arguing that UFOs are ghosts, either ! But both classes of phenomena could do with a hard-headed phenomenological approach which sets all theories aside and attempts to devil out what we might call the sheer 'optics' of what is going on. What are the favoured times and 'angles' of vision, the nature and state of the 'privileged' witnesses, the environmental circumstances ?

With ghosts and UFOs the phenomenological task is immensely more difficult than with rainbows. We should not be discouraged that more than a hundred years of psychical research and nearly fifty years of ufology have yielded almost nothing in the way of explanation; let us remember that many centuries passed before Newton's explanation of that rather simple occurrence, the rainbow, centuries in which this stubbornly independent phenomenon was given a great variety of occult interpretations. Ghosts and UFOs still await their Newton.

For ghosts, however, there has recently been the glimmer of a coming dawn. There is, in psychical

research, a growing idea that we need to postulate a multiplicity of spaces in place of the simple three-dimensional space to which evolution has finely tuned our senses and within which most of our daily experience is confined. The 'reality' of the ghost has long been placed far beyond doubt for anybody who bothers to read the vast literature (the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, for example): but the attempts to explain it have foundered again and again because we limit our frame of reference to that over-simple three-dimensional. This has forced us to be too literal: 'Was it really there?' we ask, giving ourselves nowhere to place that 'there' except in the living room or the gardens of Versailles or the ruined castle. But there is never a wholly convincing physical trace in our little local space. Non-believers are only too free to reject the whole thing; and believers are forced into a variety of ingenious but hopeless hypotheses. But we are half a century behind the times if we still confine our thinking to the three-dimensional: that hard-headed bunch, the physicists, have long given up that absurdly confining limitation; some of them are demanding as many as ten or eleven dimensions in order to make sense of the behaviour of mere matter at the atomic and sub-atomic level. Psychical researchers - and dare I say ufologists - are more than entitled to throw away their three-dimensional corsets.

The consequences of thinking in these broader terms are far beyond the scope of a short article. The 'flavour' of the new thinking can be picked up from a recent paper by Professor John Poynton in a recent issue of the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (5). A couple of quotes may indicate the exciting nature of what is going on:

'Since the seventeenth century, the view has been dominant in science that 'reality' can be credited only to phenomena in a single, all-inclusive spatial frame, the field of ordinary perception...Once it is recognised [however] that the actual physical universe, as we experience it [is part of a manifold] then the next step is to realise that other universes may also be manifested..

These quotations are wrenched out of context, and they greatly over-simplify what John Poynton and his various sources are saying. But the message for all of us who are concerned with 'anomalous' phenomena is that a new framework of understanding is coming into place, and that it looks

like giving us the elbow room for a new and properly phenomenological study of our various rainbows. And it won't be a New Age mish-mash of occult imaginings, it will be as precise and hard-headed as the framework of that epoch-making book, Newton's *Opticks*.

Ghosts, UFOs and other rainbows are mirages. Stuart Campbell has always been right in saying so. His main mistake has been to assume that calling something a mirage is to dismiss it as illusory. Ufologists and psychical researchers know better. Mirages are entirely 'real'; it's just that they need a bit more thought than tigers and bananas.

I can't close without acknowledging that my title owes much to a considerable philosopher, Professor H.H. Price, professor of philosophy at Oxford and a sometime President of the SPR. In his classic text, *Thinking and Experience* (6), he says: 'I have often thought that if rainbows, reflections, mirages and the like had been less common than they are, philosophers would have denied their existence on a priori grounds.'

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ALL IN THE BRAIN:

Can electromagnetic influences on the brain cause UFO sightings and alien abductions?

Craig Roberts

This critique forms part of a dissertation for an honours degree in psychology.

Michael Persinger is a psychologist. Curiously, however, his initial work within the UFO/abduction field involved geology and geophysics. His overall theory could be classed as geopsychological.

Persinger (1976) analysed 7,000 reports of unusual events and experiences spanning a period of 160 years. Patterns emerged which seemingly linked UFO reports with geophysical processes.

Persinger's interpretation of these results was that luminous phenomena observed on or near the ground before, during, and after seismic activity (earth tremors) were being reported as UFOs. The predicted behaviour of these lights was strikingly similar to that described by many UFO witnesses: for example, both maintaining a stationary position for a time then moving upwards and vanishing.

Descriptions of these lights would naturally be influenced by factors such as the emotional state of the percipient and his/her visual memory of the event. For instance, if the light form approached the percipient it might be labelled 'an attack' whereas a stable light could be seen as conducting 'surveillance'.

Could the influence of the lights' electrical activity on the brains of percipients explain UFO/abduction reports? A human being is a complex biosystem which produces weak electrical and magnetic fields. Persinger (1976) theorised that the luminous phenomena generated by seismic activity, being electrically charged, could interact with the percipients' electrical make-up.

According to Persinger, at close proximity to these luminosities, the percipient would experience 'tingling' and 'prickly' sensations, along with feelings of apprehension. Closer still, the electromagnetic energy emitted by the phenomenon would begin to alter brain function. Vivid imagery indistinguishable from reality would flood into

consciousness. Amnesia could occur, and this would allow confabulation in the form of individual-specific fantasies, which would again be indistinguishable from reality. There might be exposure after-effects which would include skin burns, nausea and sleep disturbance. All of these effects appear to be consistent with accounts of UFO perception and alien abduction (Nagaitis and Mantle 1994; Stone 1993; UFO Casebook 1991).

The content of the UFO experience should be largely determined by three variables: i) the portion of the brain/body affected; ii) the verbal label applied to the event before stimulation; and iii) the percipient's past reinforcement history. It should be noted, however, that Michael Persinger has never looked into these three variables, choosing instead to focus on temporal lobe activity.

What evidence is there to support Persinger's theory? There has been some research done which has shown a tentative correlation between temporal lobe activity and paranormal beliefs (Persinger 1984a,b; Persinger & Valliant 1985). Enhanced temporal lobe neuronal firing has been shown to produce feelings which can be attributed to paranormal phenomena, including UFO/abduction experiences. This is due to enhanced access to vivid imagery which can be manipulated by pre-situation verbal labelling (e.g. 'Is that a UFO?'). Extending these ideas, DeSano and Persinger (1987) have demonstrated that a magnetic field generated around the individual's head give grandiose imagings and vestibular experiences.

Blackmore (1994) decided to test Persinger's belief that he could induce an alien abduction in the laboratory. In a *Horizon* programme for the BBC (broadcast November 1994), Blackmore was taken into a dimly lit laboratory. When sitting comfortably, a special helmet which specifically stimulated the temporal lobe area with magnetic fields was fitted and ping pong balls placed over the eyes. Blackmore was wide awake throughout the laboratory experiment and after ten minutes '...it felt for all the world as though two hands had grabbed my shoulders and were bodily yanking me upright...something seemed to get hold of my leg and pull it, distort it, and drag it up the ceiling...' (p.31). Blackmore admittedly knew that her experience had occurred as a result of the magnetic stimulation, but what if people did not know the cause? Wouldn't they try to find an explanation for their experience?

It is puzzling that Blackmore did not report a vision of an 'alien entity'. Blackmore (1994) only reported feeling a presence but never described an actual figure. One of the common traits of an alleged abduction is the 'short grey entity with large black eyes', (Cassirer 1994; Nagaitis & Mantle 1994). Persinger has never reported that a percipient saw any figure at all. Nagaitis and Mantle (1994) reviewed UK abduction cases and common themes emerged. These included sexual encounters and medical examinations especially of the gynaecological kind. Yet in none of his mock abduction experiments, did Persinger receive reports of these types of encounter. In fact, Blackmore's (1994) account is fairly typical: there is no reporting of anything specific, only a sensation.

There is another problem linked to the alien entities. Persinger believes that verbal labels prior to stimulation affect the overall outcome of the experience (Persinger 1976,1983c). However, verbal labels are culture-specific. The many varied myths and legends of the world testify to this. Why are these entities therefore extremely similar in height, stature etc., when verbal labels would most likely be different from culture to culture?

Might UFO percipients be specially prone to temporal lobe stimulation? It would seem unlikely. Studies have been done (Spanos et al. 1993) which have shown that percipients could not be differentiated from non-percipients in terms of temporal lobe lability. Further, Jacobs (1994) found no difference in temporal lobe lability in the abductees he examined.

Persinger and Richards (1991) have suggested that partial temporal lobe epilepsy could cause belief in alien abduction following a UFO sighting. Yet one of Jacob's subjects was taking medication which enhanced temporal lobe epilepsy. In one day she reported 125 such seizures, yet not once did she claim being abducted by aliens. While it is accepted that temporal lobe epileptic traits do include hallucinations and perceptual distortions (Laze 1976), most neuropsychologists believe that temporal lobe lability (instability) is a long term condition and is linked to psychiatric deviance (e.g. Diamond 1980)

This raises an ethical question. As Persinger uses normal populations to test his theory, has he considered that his epileptic-type induction may

precipitate future lability in the individual? Has he assessed possible side effects of his experimental stimulation?

There is considerable doubt about whether these 'earthquake lights' have a long enough life-span to produce the suggested effect. According to Blackmore (1994) it took more than ten minutes of exposure before she began to feel a sensed presence. If, as reported, these earthquake lights only last a few seconds, how can they affect temporal lobe structures long enough for an abduction-type experience to occur? Furthermore, there is not always a UFO involved in an abduction account, making these are difficult to explain.

Swords (1990) notes that Persinger rarely references the specific effects of clinically stimulating temporal lobe structures. Swords also contends that it is not at all obvious that earth-produced, low strength electromagnetic fields can influence any human brain to hallucinate.

Whilst reading through the bulk of Persinger's work, it became apparent that his samples of individuals were usually rather small in number and consist of a 'normal population'. He has never assessed individuals who believe they had experienced an alien abduction. So he is basing a theory around a sample population who have never reported a UFO experience. Further, Rutkowski (1984, 1990) noted that UFO figures Persinger has used could be up to 90% mis-identified and not unidentified. Therefore Persinger is not dealing with true UFOs.

Finally, all of Persinger's research has dealt with post hoc data with areas notorious for lying on fault lines (e.g. San Francisco) never being assessed. Rutkowski (1990) discussed the problems of post-hoc data analysis whilst Little (1987) challenged Persinger regarding how many non-significant correlational studies he has carried out. Persinger has never actually predicted a UFO flap, but only retrospectively analysed UFO abduction seismic activity data. Theories are supposed to have some predictive power but Persinger has never attempted this.

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ERRATA

We would like to apologise to Dr Serena Roney-Dougal for the following errors in her article The Pineal Connection printed last issue:

p.5 col.2 line 8 and col.3 line 37: *anthropomorphic* should read *anthropological*.

p.5 col.3 line 43: *harmala* should read *harmaline*.

p.6 col.1 line 2: *pinolene* should read *pinoline*.

p.6 col.1 line 23: *or* should read *of*.

p.6 col.1 line 36: *5-Hydro-Tetramine* should read *5-Hydroxy-Tryptamine*.

p.6 col.2 line 29: *under these conditions* should follow *readily*.

p.7 col.1 line 7: *psi-inducive* should read *psi-conducive*.

p.7 col.2 line 3: *first* should read *last*.

p.9 The paragraph after the sub-heading should begin: *The second way is connected with Canadian researcher Michael Persinger who has done... etc.*

p.10 col.3 lines 7 and 30: *automatic* should read *autonomic*.

p.11 col.1 line 17: *secluded* should read *occluded*.

RIGHT TO REPLY

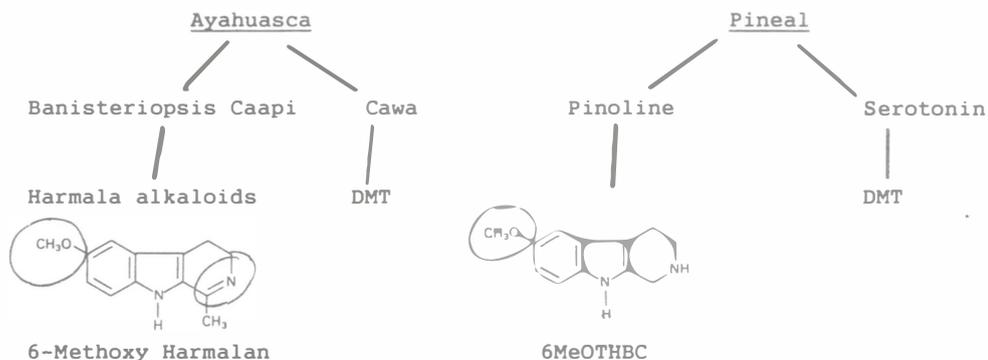
Gloria Dixon

To the Editor:

I would like to congratulate the editorial team of *The New UFOlogist* for an excellent magazine, particularly when so many new UFO/paranormal issues are hitting our newsstands. They are all certainly visually stunning, but I find the content sadly lacking in any real feasible theories, and so often it appears to me that they are based on second hand reports with very little research. However, I guess sensationalism sells magazines and newspapers, so what is new ! I was impressed with Dr Serena Roney-Dougal's article on The Pineal Connection. I believe there is little doubt we have to

The correct chemical structures for Pinoline and 6-Methoxy Harmalan are:

The Shamanic - Pineal Link



look within rather than 'out there' to try and understand the close encounter experience, which after all has been occurring to people since time began. It is just being interpreted in the way our imagery has allowed us to in this technologically advanced age. As so many researchers are aware, the links between the close encounter experience, the near death experience and all paranormal events are compelling and need to be looked at, but all organisations studying these phenomena need to relate their findings to each other and work together in order to focus far more accurately than we can at the moment.

Jenny Randles

To the Editor:

I wish to comment on the letter from Albert Budden (issue 4, p.27). In general I agree with his point that ball lightning can have extreme properties and am sure that these are often reported not as BL but as a UFO. I have discussed this matter with some of the world's leading experts in the field as long ago as 1978 when we assessed the possibility that the Peter Day movie film depicted BL during a private seminar set up by Kodak at their north London HQ. Peter Warrington was also in attendance, as discussed in *Fire in the Sky* - the case history on this incident that I published through BUFORA. In that case it was not BL. More recently Professor Paul Davies, one of the few specialists in the area who take UFOs seriously, appears to agree, based on what he has told me and from reading his papers on the subject in the scientific literature.

I suspect what happens is that reports of BL that fall within the normal parameters are readily reported to physicists and meteorologists. In other words, if there is a storm around then a witness reports a light as a BL. If there is not, or if it seems to be too large or an odd colour, they almost certainly will interpret it more supernaturally - probably as a UFO. Extreme cases go by that very different route and so by-pass physics and meteorology to reach UFOlogists. Science then, of course, ignores them. This means that UFOlogy interprets its evidence in alien terms by not seeing these UAP in their proper physical context and science wrongly estimates the boundaries of BL because they form their conclusions on the matter from only a percentage of the data and this is biased because they are unaware of the extreme cases which define the true nature of

BL. That is why BL appears to be a paradox to most physicists. They don't see the cases that would help resolve their problems.

Those interested in this debate will find a much fuller discussion - with various case histories to emphasise the point - in my chapter on BL in my book (with Peter Hough) entitled *Spontaneous Human Combustion* (Robert Hale, 1990, Bantam paperback 1991, US edition, Berkley, 1992). While from the book's title you might not expect it to be very relevant to UFOs, as this BL chapter shows, it certainly does offer some connection.

However, I should correct Albert with regards to his cited example: 24 February 1979, Bacup to Blackpool. Much as I would like to agree that this was case of BL, or even a UAP, it was neither. I have extensively investigated this report and, unlike Albert I suspect, spoken with several of the key witnesses and visited the sites involved. It is a very important encounter - possibly one of the most important in the UK. But it has two components: the object that was seen to land in the disused Bacup quarry at around 02.00; and the object that sped westwards across Lancashire around 02.35/02.45 and was witnessed from mid Lancashire and North Merseyside to the Ribble Estuary. These two objects were very different. The first was a series of rotating/spiralling lights, allegedly on a domed craft. The latter was an orange ball of flame. The first was utterly silent. The latter made a loud roar and actually shook doors and windows on a caravan park near Southport, awakening most of the residents. The final sighting on the westward path was by the security guard on the Central Pier in Blackpool. He felt the pier shake as the orange fireball sped over. He also smelt what I suspect was aviation fuel, but he describes it as ozone. As the orange ball sped out to the Irish Sea he then became the only witness to see what I suspect were both of the objects involved in this case - observing, a few minutes later, lights spiralling upwards from under the sea and climbing vertically into cloud.

What do you think went on here? My assessment is given in detail in my book *UFO Retrievals* (Blandford, 1995). But in essence, via pressing the MOD and the USAF, I think it is apparent that the orange ball was not a UFO but was the afterburner on a military jet sent in pursuit of something and tracking west presumably on an intercept course. It broke low flying rules and traversed restricted air

space probably because its mission was considered more important. What was it chasing? My guess is the UFO (whatever that was) seen over Bacup and - one might assume - now being pursued westward. Did this object then hide under the ocean until the jet had passed - re-emerging when it was safe to do so ?

I agree that there is an element of speculation in this evaluation. But not a great deal. This case is very heavy on facts and, unlike most others, relies on a series of independent, interlocking stories from witnesses unaware of what one another had reported. I can see why superficially it seems like a UAP linked to the quarry - indeed, at first this was my suspicion. But the bald facts of the case once you dig deeply into them suggest very strongly something more than that.

I am prepared to be persuaded otherwise, but I find it very significant, knowing the Rossendale Valley and that disused quarry as well as I do (I was brought up in Stacksteads less than a mile away), that the following morning, more or less as soon as it was light, two military jets traversed the valley at low height and passed over the spot where the encounter had begun at 02.00. This is not a common occurrence and one might conjecture that they were taking aerial photographs / infra-red or other measurements for some investigation department somewhere - and certainly not Nick Pope's dear old Secretariat Air Staff 2A!

Philip Klass

To the Editor

This is prompted by your speculation/comment in issue 4 that 'if the UFO phenomenon had been around during the Industrial Revolution, the aliens might have crossed the galaxy in steam-driven spaceships. Your speculation/comment is confirmed by a rash of 'Mysterious Airships' reported in the US in the 1890s, which included a few 'CEIII' type reports. The 'craft' were described as being giant airships, which reportedly travelled several hundred miles an hour, whose crews were Earthlings. At the time, there were only two small experimental airships in the US, both powered by steam engines, whose top speed was about 20 mph. There was even one 'abduction' report by a farmer in Kansas who claimed that one of his cows was taken aboard one of the craft where it was 'skinned' by the crew which threw part of the carcass overboard. More recently,

one of the farmer's descendants admitted the tale was a hoax.

Steuart Campbell

To the Editor

If Jenny Randles wanted to continue debating the Godfrey UFO report with me, she should have done so in some other organ. It was not my fault that JTAP ceased publication. Her silence indicated acceptance.

In her argumentative review of my book (The Skeptic 8/2), she repeated her credulous view of the incident (certainly not displaying scepticism), even claiming that what Godfrey saw was a 'rotating vortex'. I find that explanation as difficult to accept as she does mine. Moreover, she appears to have had no meteorological support for the idea. Now she seems to have changed her mind and is espousing the idea that earth energies (?) created mind distortions(!) Is this simpler than a mirage of Venus ?

Jenny (again) draws attention to the fact that my hypothesis requires Godfrey to have been travelling 'towards' Todmorden, not away from it (as he now claims). Yet she ignores the evidence I evinced that pointed to the probability that Godfrey had in fact been facing Todmorden. Because it supports my hypothesis, she ignores it.

Godfrey made it plain that, after seeing the object, he was further down the road, past the point where the object had been seen (my emphasis because the road slopes down toward Todmorden. He then looked back to where he thought the object had been. He was then looking away from Todmorden, but only because he thought the object was located at a particular point on the road. He does not remember turning the car around because he didn't do so ! One is not inclined to prefer a memory of turning the car subsequently revealed under hypnosis (although it is not clear that he did remember turning the car). Since BUFORA forbids the use of hypnosis, it is odd that she should prefer a memory obtained by that method to one obtained without it.

She also chides me for not mentioning our difference of opinion in my book. Well, I'm not inclined to give her any publicity, especially when her view is irrational. As for my 'incompetent investigation',

Jenny knows full well that I have not investigated the case (any more than she has investigated the Livingstone case). I have merely commented on it - something anyone is entitled to do. Has Jenny undertaken a competent investigation? Has she, for example, checked meteorological reports to see whether or not there was a wind that night that could have blown trees about, or created a vortex? Apparently not.

Steuart Campbell

To the Editor

Albert Budden has been misled by the *Guinness book of Weather Facts and Feats* (1977). The damage to the window of the University of Edinburgh was not caused by ball lightning. An investigation by me showed that it was almost certainly mechanical damage (see Not Lightning Damage, *Weather*, March 1981). The hole is typical of circular cracks known to be caused by glass being hit by a softball or tapped by a hard object. Pilkington Flat Glass Ltd have several examples in their museum at St Helens, and I possess another.

I found that children from a nearby school were in the habit of abusing the University servitors, whose window was just above the damaged window, by throwing gravel at their window during their lunchtime break (this is when the damage occurred). Because it is unlikely that gravel could be the cause, I searched the shrubbery below the window and found a chipped glass marble lying exactly opposite. It seems likely that the marble was the cause and that it had been thrown by a child. Falling short of the servitor's window it hit the window below and bounced back into the shrubbery. I still have the marble.

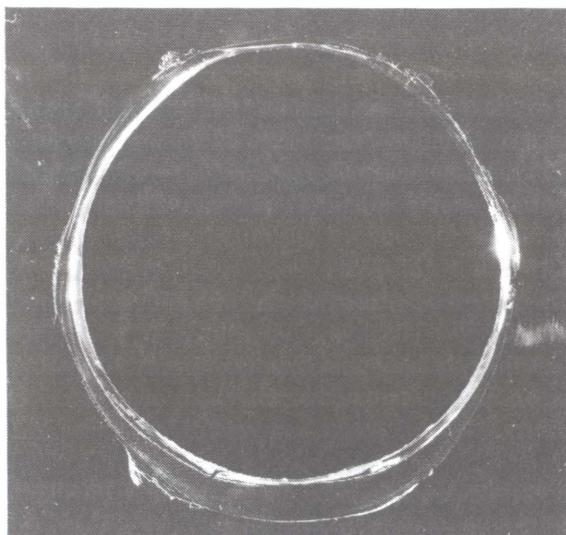
The Aberdeen window damage almost certainly had a similar cause, but the pane could not be found and the circumstances are not known.

[Editor's note: Steuart does not mention in his letter, though he does in his *Weather* article, that he found the marble eight years after the event. However, Dr Keith Weston, Head of the Meteorological Department of Edinburgh University tells me that Steuart is correct in maintaining that the damage to the Met. Dept. window was sustained during the school children's lunch break.

Dr Weston also kindly supplied the following information:

Dear Mr Dormer

Thank you for your letter...about the glass with the hole. You seem to have seen the article and correspondence in *Weather* magazine. The reader, Steuart Campbell, who concluded that it was caused by a missile, had talked with a glass specialist, who said that when glass panes are manufactured, stress patterns are produced which can cause a round hole if the glass is given a sharp knock. I personally found this persuasive, but Dr McIntosh, who wrote the original article, was not convinced because of the

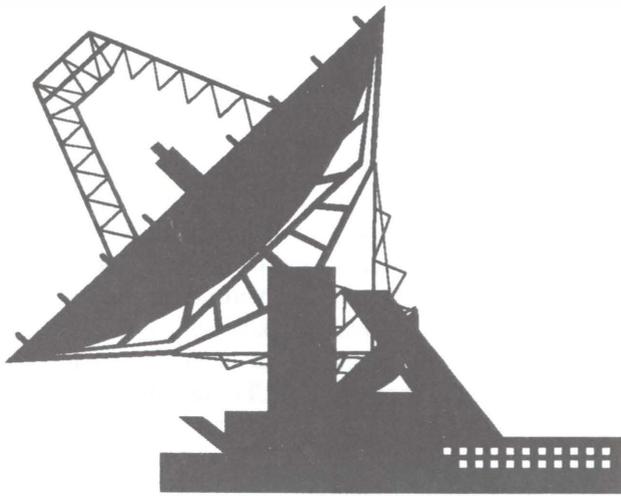


amazing coincidence of a thunderstorm occurring at the time and a very close strike. In 1994 the glass was borrowed by Dr David Turner of the Interface Analysis Centre at Bristol University, who carried out tests on the glass. Your enquiry made me realise that I had not been told his findings, so I phoned him up. He is now permanently in the States, so I am trying to contact someone else in the Centre to ask about conclusions. The person is currently away, but I will make contact on his return.

So that is the current position. I will contact you when I have further information.

Yours sincerely

Dr Keith Weston]



SKYWATCH

Joe Dormer

The Planets

October

Mercury is easier to see with the naked eye during the early part of this month than it will be again until the spring equinox. This is because the ecliptic is most steeply inclined to the horizon at these times of the year. This elusive planet appears just before sunrise, its greatest angular distance from the sun (elongation) being 18 degrees on the 3rd. Its brightness increases to -1 magnitude around mid-month.

Venus is a brilliant morning 'star' of magnitude -4.1, moving from Leo into Virgo. It is above the horizon by 2 am at the beginning of the month, then gradually later each day until it is rising by 3.30 am at the end.

Mars, in Cancer, is also a morning star though much fainter at magnitude 1.4.

Jupiter, in Sagittarius, is the brightest star in the evening sky, at magnitude -2.1, and setting at 8 pm at the end of the month. Saturn has just past opposition at the beginning of the month and therefore is almost due south at midnight.

November

Mercury is at superior conjunction on the 2nd, and too close to the sun throughout this month to be seen.

Venus is still a bright morning star in Virgo.

Mars increases in brightness to 1.0 magnitude. It is now in Leo.

Jupiter is still the brightest star in the evening sky at magnitude -2.0 though its brightness is fading.

Saturn is in Pisces and sets by 2.00 am at the end of the month.

December

Mercury is never easy to see, being so close to the sun, but it may be visible low in the south-west after sunset mid-month when it reaches greatest eastern elongation (20 degree).

Venus rises about two hours before the sun and is still a very bright object in the south-east at magnitude -4.0.

Mars has been steadily increasing in brightness and is now at magnitude 0.5. It rises around midnight as the month ends.

Jupiter sets only an hour after the sun at the end of the month.

Saturn at magnitude 1.0 is now as bright as Mars was last month. It is stationary on the 4th, so is to be seen in exactly the same position in the sky as it was at the same sidereal time the night before (almost!). It sets before midnight as the month and the year end.

SOLAR ECLIPSE

A partial eclipse of the sun occurs on 12 October. It begins about 1.00 pm and ends about 3.00 pm (times a little earlier in the north and west). Don't forget that observing with the naked eye can damage the retina!

METEOR SHOWERS

The Orionids radiate from between Betelgeuse and Gemini. Maximum activity, about twenty or so per hour, occurs around 20-22 October. The position of the moon, however, does not favour good viewing.

The Taurids radiate from below the Pleiades. Observable from late October to end of November

with peak activity, about ten per hour, around 3 November. The Geminids, radiating from near the star Castor, have their peak activity 12-14 December, with about one per minute on average streaking across the sky.

THE MOON

The moon is new on the 10th and therefore below the horizon for most of the night so, given a clear night, conditions will be exceptionally favourable.



BOOK REVIEWS

Contacts with the Gods from Space

George King and Richard Lawrence,
(The Aetherius Society, 160pp, 1996, hbk £10.95)

The general perception of The Aetherius Society suggests that they are a bunch of well meaning eccentrics with a sometimes laughable view of UFOs. If they are mentioned at all in the mainstream UFO literature they are usually given a credit for their views on the planets in the solar system being inhabited and for the origin of Sir George King's knighthood. To give King and his co-author Richard Lawrence their due, this book sees them come out fighting. Contact with the Gods from Space delivers a potted and accessible account of Aetherian beliefs. It discusses the history and future of the planet as seen by the Society and provides an outline of major Aetherian projects. Roughly speaking the message is one that combines ancient astronaut theory, Eastern philosophy, ecology and spiritual development. This book puts the more

celebrated aspects of the society in context and presents their own arguments about other religions and UFO investigations. It is to the credit of both authors that, despite sincerely held beliefs, they have set out to inform and explain rather than to preach. This approach makes Contact with the Gods from Space more rational and balanced than many critics of the society might expect. Richard Lawrence recently told me that he has noticed an upsurge of interest in the spiritual message of the Aetherius Society. It can't have escaped the notice of many involved at the sharp end of UFO investigation that spirituality appears to be playing an ever increasing part in reported experiences. Given this situation, the release of an Aetherian book in 1996 is timely. Open UFOlogical minds will find plenty of food for thought in these pages. One final point: the society is printing and distributing the book almost unaided in this country. You'll find copies in major book shops, but you can also order directly from The Aetherius Society, 757 Fulham Road, Fulham, London SW6 5UU. Reviewed by Neil Nixon.

Open Skies Closed Minds

Nick Pope and Mei Trow,
(Simon & Shuster, 270pp, 1996, hbk £14.99)

So what did go on at the Ministry of Defence's only department of UFO studies during Nick Pope's three year tenure? Anything we didn't know about? We follow Nick down the corridors of power, hoping for enlightenment. But all we really get to find out about is where spoof writers get their material from ('Nothing could have prepared me for the three years ahead. Nothing!'). The book does raise some interesting questions, though. Is von Daniken's theory 'fascinating'? Did viewers of the Santilli footage really head 'ashen-faced...to the toilet'? How bright are the authors? Which direction are they coming from? What is the apparent size of Nick Pope compared with a 2 pence coin held at arm's length? But the most puzzling question of all isn't even discussed: Why do the MoD have such bog standard report forms? I must confess there were moments during the reading of this book when I wondered whether the whole thing was a wind-up. One of these moments came on page 141. Nick is describing a wave of reports that came flooding in during the early hours of 30/31 March 1993. Recalling a similar wave exactly three years previous to the day, he realises the significance of the date. Anything reported during these hours are going to appear in the paper on 1 April, and nobody's going

to take a blind bit of notice ! It's an important clue to what's going on. But instead of making the obvious connection that you or I would, Nick asks whether the aliens might not have capitalised on the April Fool tradition ! It cannot have been an easy task suspending one's critical faculties for two hundred and odd pages, but Nick Pope seems to have managed it. Here's what he has to say on Gulf Breeze: '[It] is either a brilliant hoax on a scale never before attempted or Walter's alien craft are real.' Quite - and this book is either the most brilliant and perceptive evaluation of the UFO phenomenon ever, or it's a bit of a hoot. Buy it, you'll love it ! Review by Joe Dormer.

SIGHTINGS UPDATE

Date: 23 February 1996

Location: Southport, Lancashire

Investigator: Mark Rosney,
UFOTALK (Halton FM)

My colleague and I have interviewed two witnesses so far. Both saw something on the night of 23 February, independently of each other. The descriptions, however, do not seem to be of the same thing.

The first encounter was at around 6.00-6.30 pm and the witness described the object as an illuminated crystal lattice with a bright tail. It was seen to dart across the sky in a rough west-east track.

The second encounter was at approx. 2.45 am the same night. The witness and his parents were awoken by a very penetrating, booming sound which was shaking the whole house. Once they had established that the sound was coming from outside, they looked out of the lads' bedroom window to see a massive Dark Triangle hovering approx. 500 ft away over a nearby field. They said the sound was 'brain numbing'. The description of the Triangle was typical, complete with a white light in each corner and a central green light. The object remained static for approx. 15 minutes and then moved off suddenly at an incredible speed.

Sightings over Torrisholme Barrow

Report by Gordon Barraclough (NLUFORG)

Many UFOs have been reported over the years in the Morecambe Bay area. They have been observed from Barrow in the north round to Ulterston-Grange-Morecambe/Heysham in the south. However in the last two years the location of many sightings has shifted to practically on our doorstep. A number of our group members live in the Barc/Torrisholme area of Morecambe, which is situated east of the town. Dividing these districts, visible to most of the immediate area, is Torrisholme Barrow, a long barrow with a triangular pillar at its summit. Legend tells that a Celtic Chieftain was buried there in the distant past.

Jan. 95. I photographed a triangular craft stationary over the Barrow from the bedroom window of our flat which faces directly over the Barrow. The same object had been observed there weeks before I was able to take the photograph.

Feb. 96. Approximately a year later, through our network of investigators, a triangular craft was captured on video from Heysham after it was observed in the Torrisholme Barrow area.

July 96. One of our investigators observed four large red flattened globes stacked vertically upon one another for approximately three minutes before they disappeared in the Barrow area.

Aug. 96. We observed a slow moving white/orange light just above the Barrow at 10 pm on 28 August. Many LITS have been observed here over the last year, colours ranging from white to orange.

Sept. 96. An orange globe with lights dancing within the centre was observed in this area on 3 September. Another case now under investigation involves a newsagent, Mr S.P. who preparing to open his shop at 4.45 am on 18 August when he observed a very bright white object about the size of the full moon in the eastern sky (angle of elevation 70 degrees) directly over Torrisholme Barrow. Mr S.P.'s shop is located with a good view of the surrounding area. The object had a number of small lights strung around its centre. He observed it for approximately one and a half minutes when it moved swiftly (within two seconds) out of sight toward Lancaster (east). Mr S.P. has no interest at all in the subject and has never experienced any kind of paranormal event. He observed the same object again on 28 August when it was present in the same area of the sky for approximately fifteen minutes

(5.15-5.30) after which it swiftly moved toward Heysham (south). This case and others are still under investigation.

Date of Sighting : Tuesday 14th May 1996

Time of Sighting : 3.00 pm Approx.

Area of Sighting : Westbury Park, Clayton, Newcastle-Under-Lyme

Shape of object : Black boomerang

On this particular day, I decided that I would go to Hanchurch Woods to read a book, because I had a spare hour free before teaching again in the afternoon (I am a musician & teacher).

So I decided to visit the local shops to take a few things with me to drink, etc ... when as I got out of the car I had a very strong feeling to look up, and there it was. A black boomerang shaped craft. It was just below the clouds. That day was a very hot day with just a few clouds around. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. At first I thought I was looking at an extremely large kind of bird, but the wings were not moving, then I thought that I was possibly looking at the stealth bomber, but I'm aware what the stealth bomber looks like, so at this point I grabbed a couple of witnesses.

The first witness was a lady. I said to her that I hoped she didn't mind me asking but, could she see the same thing as me. She said Yes. But didn't know what it was. I then asked a gentleman getting out of his car could he also see it and he said yes but didn't know either. When I initially stood with the woman it moved straight ahead silent, and then started to circle as if it was looking for something. As it did this, it also appeared to change shape. It seemed to change into a small black ball, then changed itself back into the boomerang, but then it also suddenly displayed a black appendage in the middle of it. (please see drawing attached)

I was almost jumping up and down with excitement as this thing changed itself, and I asked the woman could she see it changing, to which she replied .. Well it looks like its getting bigger. So it was obvious she was not seeing the same thing as I.

I then decided I would go to follow it. I thought that it was moving towards the direction of the wood, where I was initially going. But when I arrived there nothing happened so I went back to the spot where I had seen it. But again nothing happened. So I

realised that I should report this to one of the local UFO groups. I spoke with a friend of mine Gary Cartlidge, who suggested that he would call the CAA; and then he would get back to me later that evening. Well in the meantime at 4.20 PM I was standing by the lounge window writing everything down, when I had another feeling to look up and there it was again flying over my house !

I ran outside and stood there transfixed to this thing. Cars were driving past but they never stopped to look at what I was looking at. I watched it for roundabout 10 minutes doing the same kind of circling movement that it had done before. At 4.30PM my student arrived so I had to start teaching.

Later that night, my friend Gary called me with some news. Apparently, the CAA said that there were no light aircraft in the area at the time of the sighting, there were no gliders, and it was not tracked on radar. But there had been a low flying black helicopter in the area that day and another again at midnight. My fiance had seen it at midnight.

3 days later a man in the area of Packmoor (about 5 miles away) had rang my friend Gary and suggested that he did not want to leave his name, and that he didn't believe in UFOs but he just wanted to report what he had seen flying over his house that day. Which was 3 boomerang objects flying in formation over his house ! The reason why this gentleman had called Gary was that Gary had initially rang the local newspaper to report my sighting. But he did not use my name or address. It just read Lady from Clayton sees boomerang shaped UFO. So it inspired this witness to come forward, thank goodness.

The whole experience was strange. The way it was just there in the sky. It looked almost magical. I do believe that this sighting was intended for me due to the feeling that I got from it. What do you think Joe? This is my second daylight UFO sighting. But I'll tell you about this one at some other point.

P.S. I was also informed by Gary Cartlidge on Monday 23rd September, that there is another witness or so, to another boomerang sighting in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, about 3 weeks ago. I think there was more than one object, and Gary said the witness had also seen it change shape as it was 'banking' !