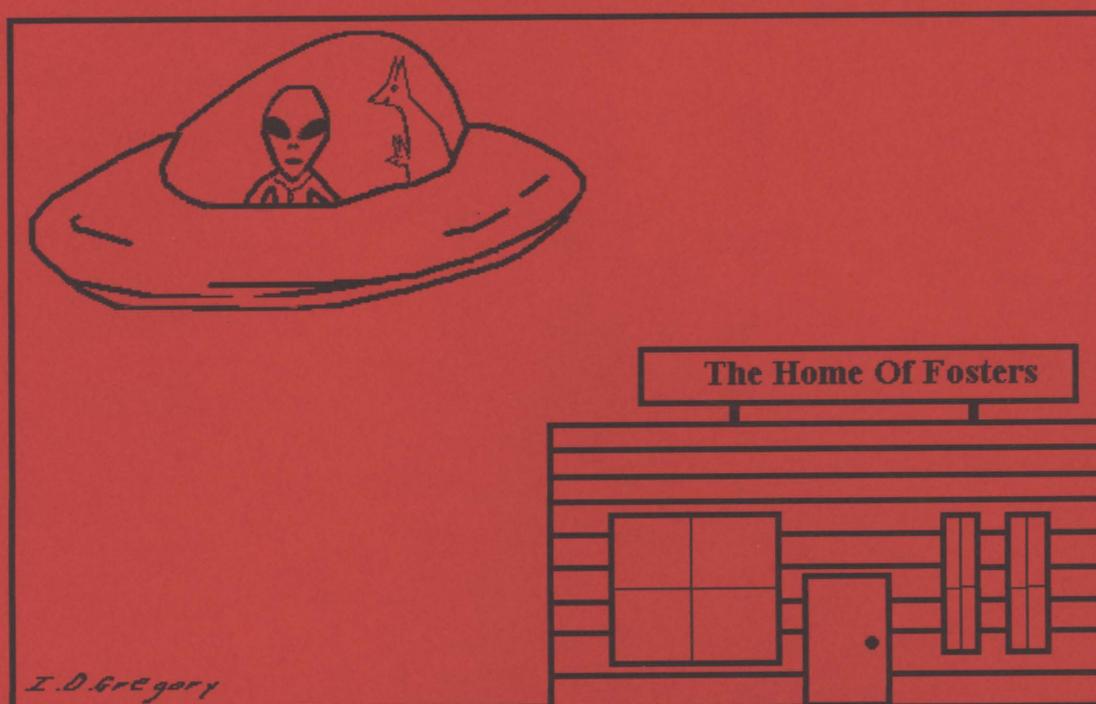


YUFOS

YORKSHIRE UFO SOCIETY

PROJECT RED BOOK

(Vol 3 #8 February 2000)



I've abducted Chalker, I couldn't find a picture of him but he's still chatting on about something
I've also got his kid, there really different these Australians!!!!

inside this document

BILL CHALKER: CROP CIRCLES
AND FREDERICK VALENTICH
HOWDEN MOOR UPDATE
BRUCE MACCABEE ON KENNETH ARNOLD

And much more...

£1:50



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To re-print articles in this magazine please enquire at the above address- that means me, Dave. I'm sure to say "yes", but it is nice to ask first, y'know?

The articles and views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, YUFOS members, or Papa Lazarou

"You're my wife now..."

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL CHALKER (pt.2)

Born in Grafton, New South Wales (NSW), Australia, Bill Chalker is his country's premier ufologist. He was educated at the University of New England, and graduated with an Honours Science Degree (B.Sc.Hons.) with majors in Chemistry and Mathematics. Since 1975 he has worked in the food industry as an industrial chemist, laboratory manager and quality manager. He is the author of "The Oz Files - the Australian UFO Story" published in 1996, and is a contributing editor of the acclaimed International UFO Reporter (IUR), the journal of the Centre for UFO Studies Bill also co-ordinates the NSW UFO INVESTIGATION CENTRE (UFOIC). He was the Australian representative for the Aerial Phenomena Research Organisation (APRO) from 1978 to 1986, and NSW state representative for the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) from 1976 to 1993. His articles on UFOs have appeared in IUR, Flying Saucer Review, The Australiasian Ufologist and he contributed "Physical traces" to BUFORA's "UFOs: 1947 - 1987 - the 40-year search for an explanation."

In the last issue, Bill talked about the classic CE2 physical trace case, the Tully Saucer 'Nest'...

Dave Baker: Some people have attempted to link the Tully Saucer 'Nest' to 'crop circles'...It's said that circle-makers Doug & Dave even cited the case as one of their inspirations...do you agree?

Bill Chalker: No I do not! The crop circle controversy is a very recent phenomenon on the unusual ground effects stage, with specific and limited physical and social dimensions. My "physical traces" review in *UFOS 1947 - 1987* highlighted the rich tradition of UFO related ground traces. The English crop circle controversy is a belated aberration which was done more damage than good for the credibility of the physical dimensions of the UFO phenomenon.

The crop circle controversy has also been embraced by the new age community, some of whom view the striking complex patterns as vindication of obscurely expressed signs that "Mother Earth" is in trouble and this is her way of alerting us to wake up and "do the right thing" - noble thoughts, but in this context more a tribute to woolly thinking and gullible belief in very dubious crop circles.

I took an early interest in the English crop circle saga as it unfolded in the early 1980s, for any potential implications for the UFO mystery. However it quickly became evident that the English crop circle milieu was a startling example of a modern myth in the making. In the majority of cases no clear correlation exists with apparent physical unidentified flying objects, whereas in the better documented UFO landing events substantial correlations exist. The Tully incident is a clear example. The 1980 Rosedale (Australia) landing, the 1974 Landenberg (Canada) encounter and the 1981

Trans-en-Provence (France) event are further strong examples of impressive UFO physical trace cases.

It was indeed puzzling that where a very dubious connection exists between the UK crop circles and UFOs, that a theoretical mechanism emerged that sought to explain both, namely the Meaden 'plasma vortex' hypothesis. However the mechanism was on very shaky ground in its patently flawed attempts to explain the more provocative UFO landing cases.

I initially gave a guarded endorsement of the possible utility of the early versions of the hypothesis, in the BUFORA booklet *Controversy of the Circles* (1989): "It appears to be a possible explanation for many of the circle formations, that fit the topographic restrictions of the theory.... Providing researchers understand the limitations of the vortex theory, then I see it as a reasonable hypothesis." It seems that advocates of the theory have gone way beyond its limitations, and by so doing have critically damaged the credibility of a hypothesis, which may still have a place in explaining some cases.

In *The UFO conspiracy* (1987) Jenny Randles suggested that the Tully 'nest' affair may be explained by meteorologist Terence Meaden's developing 'vortex' theory. In *Controversy of the Circles* (1989) I was quoted as indicating, "I have spent some considerable time assessing the evidence of the 1966 Tully 'UFO landing nest' ... I have to state that the vortex model does not apply here for many reasons. The RAAF suggested this as an explanation at the time. It did not fit the facts then, nor does it fit the 'vortex' model as it is currently understood." The theory was to evolve into

the 'plasma vortex' hypothesis, but my reasons (which were omitted from the BUFORA report) are equally valid, namely:

“1. The topography does not fit the theory. The Horseshoe lagoon is part of an extensive flat coastal area. The nearest hill /mountain/highground is literally miles away.

2. There was no prevailing wind conditions. In fact the weather had been fine and sunny.

3. The witness saw a UFO described as 2 saucers end on end - in broad daylight at close proximity for some 10 to 15 seconds. To argue that he saw a 'vortex' is to categorically reject his evidence and the physical evidence at the site. The reeds did not disappear from the site. They were floating on the surface. There was no evidence that a sufficient quantity of reeds were lifted up to create the impression of the UFO Pedley saw. He saw it directly above the 'nest'. It then rose up and then moved off at speed rotating as it went. I think it is extremely difficult to reconcile this to an observation of a 'vortex'."

While the evolved 'plasma vortex' theory moves closer it was still untenable.

In *Crop Circles - A Mystery Solved* (1990) Jenny Randles made an untenable attempt at suggesting the striking 1980 Rosedale Australia UFO landing (see below) was an example of "the Meaden Vortex Theory in action". The duration alone makes this an unrealistic explanation. Also where Jenny Randles interpreted in the Rosedale witness's description of a "tube", "a vortex funnel", in reality he was describing an expanding annulus like a black inner tyre tube, situated on the base of the object, something significantly different to a 'vortex'. Suggestions that the Tully "nest" and "UFO" were similar to a 'vortex' incident at Marple in 1988 are strained at best. While the flying hay "vortex disc" at Marple is intriguing it should be pointed out that the hay body was clearly recognised as such by witnesses. Light hay had clearly been lifted up by midday summer vortex thermals and was drifting. In the Tully incident we are dealing with water laden reeds, a fast moving "object" and an apparent lack of absent reeds from the lagoon. In other words the RAAF's suggestion of a Willy Willy "vortex" of reeds from the lagoon cannot be sustained.

As you say, the RAAF again became involved. What did they conclude?

In response to an enquiry, dated 2nd February, 1966, from the Commonwealth Aerial Phenomena Investigation Organisation (CAPIO), the Secretary, Department of Air, Mr. A.B. McFarlane, wrote on 11th February, 1966:

"Investigations of the area surrounding the reported 'nests', testing of samples taken from around them and interrogation of persons involved in the report failed to reveal anything of significance.

"However, during enquiries a number of local residents stated that the reported 'nests' are fairly common during the onset of the 'wet'. Furthermore, the University of Queensland stated that there was nothing unnatural in the samples submitted and assessed that the 'nests' could have been the result of severe turbulence, which normally accompany line squalls and thunderstorms prevalent in NORTH QUEENSLAND at the time of the year.

"There is no explanation for the visible phenomena reported but it could have been associated with or the result of 'down draughts', 'willy willies' or 'water spouts' that are known to occur in the area.

".. for informationin January of this year from an airfield in the tropics (a number of photographs taken give) a fine example of the type and growth of a cloud formation occurring with a severe 'down draught'. This whirling mass of tropical air associated with thunderstorm activity, on reaching the earth's surface may dissipate and subside or persist giving rise to dust eddies, water spouts, etc, and leaving a telltale circular pattern on the ground.

"Should it occur over a swampy reed bed the effect would be to flatten the reeds with a circular pattern. resultant photographs and investigations of the 'nests' seem to fit in with this theory and is accepted as a possible cause of the phenomena."

It is fascinating to note how Secretary McFarlane's cursory explanatory exposition, no doubt inspired by "the tornado-like meteorological phenomena" infested skies over Willow Grove, Victoria (Charles Brews famous 1963 close encounter) and Vacluse Beach, NSW (Dennis Crowe's striking suburb encounter in 1965), anticipated by almost 2 decades Dr. Terence Meaden's early theoretical attempts to explain the English "crop circles"

of the 1980s. Dr. Meaden would mistakenly assume that George Pedley saw his "vortex" at 9 pm, not 9 am, which was a fatal flaw in the mechanism he originally put forth to explain the report.

I found another significant official statement on the Tully sighting in the RAAF files. A letter by Mr. G.J. Odgers, Director of Public Relations, Department of Defence (Air Office), dated 17th December, 1973, was directed to Charles Wright, a journalist working on a article for the national newspaper, *The Australian*.

George Odgers' Air Office public relations department had clearly gleaned from the 1966 DAFI files details of an explanation of what George Pedley seen that the original RAAF officers and Department officers back in 1966 had not determined:

"Although a conclusive determination could not be made, the most probable explanation was that the sighting was of a 'willy willy' or circular wind phenomenon which flattened the reeds and sucked up debris to a height of about 30 feet, thus forming what appeared to be a 'flying saucer', before moving off and dissipating. Hissing noises are known to be associated with 'willy willies' and the theory is also substantiated by the clockwise configuration of the depression."

Mr. Odgers further added, more generally,

"All too often unusual occurrences are reported in sensational terms with little or no attempt made at rational assessment. The general subject is 'newsworthy' and lends itself to sensationalism and guesswork, but in most cases logical explanations follow from careful investigation. You will appreciate that there is nothing to be gained from reopening old cases." (a sentiment I would not agree with - B.C.)

The 1966 Tully UFO physical trace case still stands as a classic example of the impressive physical dimensions of the UFO phenomenon. We should continue with our efforts focused on the physical reality of UFOs and use this as a basis of understanding the phenomenon rather than anchoring much of our speculations on less credible dimensions of the phenomenon.

The BBC 1 series '*Mysteries*' recently reviewed the famous Kaikoura case. What is your opinion on the film?

There is a lot about this affair that has been hopelessly messed up. Some aspects are explainable, but much of it still seems difficult to reconcile totally with prosaic explanations.

For example when, the Argosy took off for the final leg to Blenheim. At about 2.20 am, a few minutes after climbing out off Christchurch airspace, the crew observed an anomolous object, likened to a featureless moon, travelling parallel to their NE track. It was described as a bright yellow white orange light. Captain Startup turned on the planes own radar and after a warm up period, a strong return was obtained, while the unit was in mapping mode. The radar blip gave an estimate of the target size as being 3 to 5 times larger than the blip size of a fishing boat.

Grant, Startup and Guard, all had a clear view of the radar screen and the object, and were able to satisfy themselves that the radar target and the anomolous object outside the aircraft correlated. The radar distance was initially 18 to 20 miles, but decreased as the plane reached cruising altitude. At about 32 miles out of Christchurch, at 11,500 feet, the light was SE of the aircraft at a distance of about 12 miles. It had by then moved to below the detectable depression angles of the planes radar (3 to 15 degrees).

The decision was made to turn towards the UFO. It made an "abrupt change in course" and moved away. During this action most of the film was taken. David Crockett indicated that the light source was moving most of the time, which made hand held filming difficult. He was able to get one extended "static" portion by dropping the camera onto the co-pilot's seat.

Startup described the anomolous object as like "a sphere all lit up". Guard stated, "It was a rich orange light, not so intense as the others." Startup summed up the inexplicable nature of the object, saying, "It appeared to stay still until we got within 10 miles, then it turned with us as I changed course. It then went above us and circled and came down beneath us. It was making definite movements in relation to us ... It was big enough to show up on our aircraft radar."

The UFO disappeared towards the south. They did not see the bright object again, after they regained their original flight path. When the plane was east of Kaikoura, Wellington radar again indicated there were targets around the plane. Several of these were apparently

seen by the Argosy passengers and crew, and one brightly flashing light was filmed. Quentin Fogarty flew to Melbourne with the film. Australian TV Channel 0-10 broadcast the 'UFO film' on January 1st, 1979, unleashing a media sensation around the world.

On January 25th the Ministry of Defence released the RNZAF report on the affair. It stated that "atmospheric and ionospheric conditions over New Zealand in December and early January were conducive to light waves and freak effects on radar. The visual sightings were attributed to lights from surface objects or bright planets affected by atmospheric refraction and distortion."

The RNZAF dismissed the radar returns as 'spurious returns' and stated, "It was significant that on the occasions a large light was being filmed by a television team on board an Argosy Freighter, neither Christchurch nor Wellington radars reported any related sightings on their screens." The RNZAF report ignored the Argosy radar and neglected to indicate that the area involved around Banks Peninsula is normally a blind spot for Wellington radar.

Dr. (Bruce) Maccabee's investigations in New Zealand and Australia, provided a detailed chronology of events. His findings were reviewed by a number of scientists in the United States. His findings were presented at a press conference in New York, on March 27th, 1979. In summary, they were that "the UFO, solid and brightly lit on the bottom and with what appeared to be a dimmer translucent or transparent dome, gave off light and was known to flying because it registered movement on radar. Estimates of its size in photographs taken from 8 kilometres away indicated that it was about 30.5 metres wide."

It seemed that every "expert" in the world was coming forward with explanations...

A number of these explanations were ruled out on the following grounds:

Venus - not visible and in the wrong position

Other planets - not bright enough and in the wrong direction

Stars - too dim, wrong directions

meteors - lights filmed were in view too long and in the wrong direction

Balloons - none known in the area and light too bright for balloon

Other aircraft - none in the area

Ground lights - too dim, wrong direction. Other suggestions, including secret manoeuvres, squid fleet or a hoax, were ruled out.

Maccabee's report, *What Really Happened in New Zealand*, was a solid rebuff to the, at best, premature findings of the RNZAF and the DSIR (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research) issued soon after the initial media circus had subsided. The DSIR released another take on the affair in December, 1979, with Bill Ireland's report, *Unfamiliar Observations of Lights in the Night Sky*. It indicates:

"The unusual atmospheric conditions prevailing at the time are ... shown to be a significant factor to be considered in attempts to explain the observations. The unusual radar echoes should not have been unexpected ... It is suggested that the lights were generally unusual views of either terrestrial sources, such as lighthouses, navigation beacons and city lights, or of the planets Venus and Jupiter, seen through an unusually clear atmosphere. In the most widely publicised case the most likely source was a squid boat seen under quite normal viewing conditions."

Dr. Maccabee's research contradicts the squid boat hypothesis on a number of grounds, including the lack of a known squid boat at the location involved, and the brightness of the squid boating lighting was insufficient to account for what was seen and recorded on film. These and other problems appear to "blow Ireland's squid boat out of the water." The debate continued, without a definitive conclusion.

Even if the case can be explained in conventional terms, some of the 'explanations' from some of the 'experts' are more ludicrous than the idea that a controlled craft may be involved. My favourites are 'Moonlight reflected via holes in cabbage leaves' and 'owls covered in luminous fungi.' What's your favourite?

I would have to opt for a local amateur astronomer's attempts to put it all down to Jupiter. I examined his lengthy analyses. At first he suggested an exotic "atmospheric lens" system to explain what he perceived was on the TV footage. He subsequently concluded,

based on what seemed to be flawed digital analysis of multiple generation copies, that the TV film was attributable to a hoax perpetrated over 3 separate days, all featuring the planet Jupiter as the main 'UFO' image. The earliest timing of his hoax scenario, dates the deed as taking place at about the time Quentin Fogarty and his family were stepping off their plane in New Zealand at the beginning of their holiday! All this was due to 'analysis' of 'artifacts' the fellow had found on his digital analysis. He did not seem to appreciate my suggestion that the features of Jupiter and its primary moons he thought he could pick up on his poor copy of the TV film were just "noise artifacts". Nor did he seem to appreciate the dubious irony of a hoax having its initial phases carried out without the main principles not even aware that were going to be involved in the affair that was about to unfold - some hoax.

Peter Brookesmith covers the case briefly in his *Catalogue of UFO Sightings*, in which he mentions that there are problems with the radar evidence. As much of the case rests on the strength of the radar / visual evidence, what are your thoughts?

Dr. Bruce Maccabee, working at that time on behalf of NICAP - the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, put forward some credible radar data. After obtaining a complete tape of the Wellington radar record for the evening of December 30th, he was able to indicate with some confidence that correlations with visual sightings did apparently exist. Further to this, separate evidence suggests that Christchurch radar control tracked the action out over Banks Peninsula, but that record was erased despite attempts to secure the tape. It appeared that despite claims to the contrary, the evidence for a positive correlation between visual sightings of anomolous objects and anomolous radar targets was available.

In studying about 28 seperable incidents involving the Wellington radar, Dr. Maccabee concluded that there were 4 discrete events during the December 31st sightings that qualify as apparent radar-visual events, i.e. apparent coincident temporal and spatial correlations of nocturnal lights and radar returns. Another apparent radar/visual event, this time involving the aircraft's own weather radar for about 4 minutes continuously, occurred as the Argosy left Christchurch:

Maccabee indicated,

"... the object was picked up on radar as soon as the radar was warmed up, and the sighting line to the object was in the direction of the radar azimuth until the object was so far to the right of the plane that it went off the radar scope. The object was not detected on radar when the plane turned toward it, but at that time the depression angle (angle below horizontal) was quite large, so the object may have been below the radar beam."

I'm no radar expert, but some of this information appears suggestive of strong correlations. Dr. J. Allen Hynek of the Centre for UFO Studies, Dr. Richard Haines, an optical physiologist, Mr. Neil Davis, electronics consultant, Dr. Gilbert Levin, biophysicist, Dr. Peter Sturrock, plasma physicist and other scientists supported Dr. Maccabee's findings.

The disappearance of pilot Frederick Valentich in 1978 is considered another "classic"- if tragic -mystery that has become enshrined in UFO lore. His disappearance has been blamed in some quarters as the result of a direct encounter with a UFO...is there any truth in this?

The Valentich mystery has endured as an insoluble enigma. The crux of the mystery is just what happened to the young pilot and his 182 Cessna light aircraft - VH - DSJ (*Delta Sierra Juliet*) - during that October evening. The circumstances behind the total disappearance of both pilot and plane have since been elevated into one of the premier mysteries of aviation and for many one of the most intriguing elements of the UFO phenomenon.

The fact that the mystery has lasted so long is a direct result of the incredible aspects at the heart of the affair. Twenty year-old Frederick Valentich, 47 minutes into what should have been a routine 69 minute flight from Moorabin, Victoria, to King Island, reported in a radio conversation with Melbourne Flight Service Unit controller, Steve Robey, of seeing an unidentified 'aircraft' near him.

Steve Robey, the FSU or Flight Service Unit radio controller, who spoke with Valentich during those 6 minutes leading up to his disappearance, said in a *Melbourne Herald* interview:

"I think at first he was a little concerned about this other aircraft flying around him, and of course I had to assume that it was another

aircraft until it developed and became a little mysterious. Towards the end I think he was definitely concerned for his safety; I considered that he would have had to have been a good actor to have put it all together the way he did."

Robey did not believe he had talked to a disorientated pilot,

"It was as though he was looking around for this thing as he was speaking on the radio ... a young fellow with little experience; it was getting dark, and visual reference to the ground is fading. In a situation like this, if this is what happened, it is understandable he is getting a little bit uptight.

"It was a kind of rushed communication ... it was as if he was startled ... he was definitely concerned ... it sounded as though it was rattling him."

Robey recently confirmed to me that he felt there was a UFO connection involved in the disappearance of Valentich.

One explanation was that he had somehow flipped his plane over and that the lights of the UFO were really his own aircraft's lights reflected in the sea below him. Is this likely?

This is just not tenable given the nature of the fuel feed system in an upside down Cessna would have shorten the 6 minute conversation to less than a minute before the aircraft engine would have stopped functioning. In addition even to a less experienced pilot it would have been apparent he was flying upside down.

There has been some supposition that Valentich faked his own disappearance. Have you found any evidence to support this?

None that was at all credible.

Were there any other witnesses to the event? I remember something on the U.S. TV series SIGHTINGS about a series of photographs?

Many people reported seeing UFOs on the same day and during the night of Valentich's disappearance. A number of these reports are difficult to reconcile with the hysteria and publicity that escalated rapidly over the affair, elevating it to an international sensation. Some 15 or more distinct sightings survived

the gauntlet of civilian group investigations. They all occurred between midday and 9 pm, on October 21st. Six occurred in Victoria, one on King Island, and the rest in New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia. These reports seemed to confirm that something quite unusual was abroad that extraordinary day.

A strange series of photos taken out over Bass Strait, by Roy Manifold, a plumber on holidays at Crayfish bay, near Apollo Bay, only some 20 minutes before Valentich began describing his encounter, revealed something unusual.

He had taken 6 photos of the setting sun. He saw nothing untoward, with the camera set to automatically take the photo series, but upon development the fourth and sixth photos revealed apparent anomalies. The fourth photo showed what looked like a dense "black lump" in the water, giving the impression of something rising from the water. The fifth photo appeared normal. The sixth shows a strange mass situated in the sky directly over the position of the anomaly in the fourth photo, which looked like an object caught in flight with a possible exhaust or trail of material. Film faults and processing defects were ruled out. The RAAF suggested a cumulus cloud breaking up, but the timing of the exposures would have required the "cloud" to have moved into view at a considerable speed. Now that's some cloud for what was a calm day!

The areas that feature prominently in the Valentich incident - Cape Otway (his last land call), Bass Strait (the apparent location of his disappearance) and King Island (his apparent destination), all have extensive precedents for UFO activity. During a two month period centred around January, 1978, holiday makers, fishermen, school teachers, local police and lighthouse keepers in the Cape Otway area reported seeing UFOs. During July, 1977, local residents and the lighthouse keeper at Cape Otway, saw an inexplicable brilliant light source, that hovered out to sea for half an hour. We have seen in our history that Bass Strait figured in UFO mysteries particularly in 1920 and 1944. The Melbourne *Argus* newspaper even described many people seeing "cigar-shaped" objects flying over Bass Strait as far back as 1896. King Island's 425 square miles played host to a wave of unidentified nocturnal aerial lights for at least three months prior to Frederick Valentich's disappearance. Oval shaped lights followed cars and mystified local residents. Strange lights or flares appeared off the north of the island.

One of the most spectacular close encounters with a UFO in the area, occurred at a wild and uninhabited part of the King Island coast, near Whistler Point, just before dawn, on April 10th, 1976. "A beam of light" emanating from "a cross-shaped object" approached a duck-shooters car, in a direct line. The light display, eventually receded directly along its line of approach, ending a silent inspection, when it disappeared over the distant skyline.

There is much that suggests a UFO connection but unfortunately a final answer alludes us, preventing the comfort of certainty. Despite the provocative nature of the taped conversation Valentich had with Melbourne Flight Control prior to his disappearance, that refers to a possible UFO presence, the affair still remains a mystery.

The Valentich mystery is punctuated with haunting, or rather more appropriately, taunting clues, that sets one off in all sorts of conflicting directions. Many have come up with all sorts of final solutions, that vary from the bizarre to the sublime. Did a UFO abduct Valentich? Did Valentich contrive the whole affair? Did he, as many think, crash into Bass Strait, leaving no trace? Or are other prosaic explanations involved? A multitude of various lines of enquiry radiate out in all sorts of directions. Most take us away from the facts of the matter, namely that no trace of pilot or plane have yet been found. The mystery resonates in the Australian consciousness in a place reserved for more mythic episodes like the haunting fiction of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. It has inspired dramatic works like the profound and confronting play *Sky* and the bizarre and striking TV mini-series, *Locusts and Wild Honey*. We must remind ourselves that a family waits for an answer that so far has never come. I hope that some day they will find that answer.

Whether UFOs were involved or not, the case is still a mystery, isn't it, which I think some people forget...I read somewhere that you were very unsatisfied with the official investigation into the disappearance....

Apart from a very early attempt to suggest that Frederick Valentich may have been flying upside down, totally disorientated, with lighthouse lights producing his perception of an "unidentified aircraft", the Australian Department of Aviation has never officially addressed the question of what Valentich may

have been observing prior to his disappearance.

I tried to extract from the Department their opinion.

At first the then Assistant Secretary (Air Safety Investigation), Mr. G.V. Hughes, advised me that he was not clear as to what was meant by my expression, "...the stimulus of Valentich's apparent UFO observation..."

"However, a great deal of consideration has been given to what Mr. Valentich might have been looking at when he described his observations. A considerable number of suggestions have been put forward by persons inside and outside this Department. All have been examined. The Department is not aware of any other official body having undertaken such an investigation into this occurrence," Mr. Hughes wrote.

However, when it came to an official investigation of a possible UFO connection, a veritable bureaucratic "Catch-22" loomed large. Mr. Hughes advised me,

"As you correctly state ..., the RAAF is responsible for the investigation of reports concerning 'UFO' sightings, and liaison was established with the RAAF on these aspects of the investigation. The decision as to whether or not the 'UFO' report is to be investigated rests with the RAAF and not with this Department."

At the time I was fortunately in a position to get a clearer picture of the RAAF role in the Valentich case. I had been given unprecedented direct access to the RAAF files. During my detailed explorations of the files in a number of visits to the Department of Defence in Canberra, I did not come across any documentation on the Valentich affair. The RAAF Intelligence Liaison Officer - DAFI told me that the RAAF did not investigate the affair because they were not asked to by the Department of Aviation! The RAAF saw it as more appropriately in the domain of an "air accident/air safety" enquiry. The Intelligence officer also volunteered that his personal opinion was that pilot disorientation was involved.

In November, 1982, I was finally given official permission to examine the Department of Aviation UFO files, but was specifically denied access to the Valentich files on the grounds that they were Air Accident

Investigation files and not UFO files. Mr. Hughes of Air Safety elaborated,

"the file concerning this occurrence is no more or less restricted than any other accident investigation file. As a signatory to the International Convention on Civil Aviation, we subscribe to the Standards and Recommended Practices contained in Annex 13 to the Convention, in respect of aircraft accident investigation, specifically, when it is considered that the disclosure of records, for the purposes other than accident prevention, might have an adverse effect on the availability of information in that or any future investigation, such records are considered privileged."

While in Melbourne examining the Aviation Department's UFO files, I was able to have a lengthy discussion on the Valentich affair with Mr. A. Woodward, the signatory on the official Aircraft Accident Investigation Summary Report, dated May 27th, 1982. He largely reiterated the official department line, emphasising that they were treating the matter as only an "air accident" investigation. He dwelt on a long list of prosaic explanations ranging from disorientation, suicide, to the unlikely prospect of the plane being struck by a meteorite, but conceded that the affair was still unresolved.

(In part three of this exclusive interview – the Alien Hair DNA case... and more!)

MISSING TIME ON THE YORKSHIRE MOORS- THE CASE THAT WASN'T BY MARK P. MARTIN

About a week prior to Christmas 1998 A friend of mine told me about a rather disturbing incident that was suffered by a couple of people he knew.

A few minutes after midnight on a date in the middle of winter the two people in question, I'll give them the pseudonyms A and B (names which are as practical as they are unimaginative) were driving, high up on the bleak and frozen Yorkshire Moors, along a deserted road on a journey from a location in Derbyshire to their home in the South Yorkshire suburbs. As they approached the outskirts of Sheffield they were astounded by the sight of several bright, white lights in the icy night sky, above the road ahead.

That is as detailed as the account gets, because the next thing that A and B can remember is arriving home one and a half hours later than they should have!

When I was first told of this encounter I was, as you might expect, highly interested. I was most grateful when my "Informant" (during this article I will refer to this particular person in this way) offered to get in touch with A and B and ask them if they would like to cooperate with me regarding an investigation and report of their experience. Needless to say I

fell over myself to take him up on his offer. I was brimming with anticipation.

My informant quickly got back in touch, with the phone number of witness A and to say that they were happy to discuss the strange events.

I wasted no time and was soon tapping the number into my telephone key pad. A answered, I introduced myself, thanked her for taking the time to talk to me and explained that my informant had given me her number. A told me that she was expecting my call, we then got down to the nitty-gritty of our conversation, which went something like this:-

MARK- So, [informant's name] has told me that you and B had a, errr, well interesting experience, can you tell me what happened?

A then gave me the story that I related at the beginning of this article, so I won't repeat those details. I quizzed A on the "missing time" element. She was adamant that her and B had not simply made mistakes about the times of their journey's start and finish. The day after the incident A checked the times of their departure and arrival with people at both locations.

The conversation continued:-

MARK-Have you ever had any interest in the paranormal, have you read any books or seen any TV programmes on the subject?

A-Oh no, I'm not bothered about anything like that, but I once saw a UFO before, it was years ago. I was with [person's name] they told me lots of other people saw it and it was in the paper. Oh and I once saw that Panther thing.

MARK-Do you mean the big cats that some people have reported seeing, that look like Pumas or Panthers?

A-Yeah, I've seen about them on the news [§]

MARK-Oh Yes, I know what you mean, I've read a lot about them. You seeing one of them, that's very interesting. I'm interested in all sorts of strange phenomena, perhaps I could get your story about that another time?

A-Yes, all right.

MARK-But getting back to this thing with the lights in the sky, you say you can't remember anything about the missing hour and a half?

A-Yes, we can only remember stopping the car at home, we can't remember driving after we saw the lights.

[Up until this point in our conversation A was fairly forthright and in reasonably high spirits, but when I asked my next question A's voice lowered and she seemed to become more guarded and reserved.]

MARK-So, well, err, what do you think happened during this missing period of time?

A-Oh. . . Well. . . *I don't know, and I don't want to know.* But [person's name] they think it is great, she always watches that "X-Files" programme, she calls me Scully.

MARK-Scully [†]? Do you know why she calls you that?

[§]A was referring to the mysterious, out of place big cats that have been reported in various parts of this country, including this area. Items have appeared on news programmes such as "Calendar" and "Look North" as well as in the documentary series "Strange but True." The particular spate of sightings A mentioned has been dubbed "The Todwick Wildcat." For more details see Liz Linahan's excellent books "Pit Ghosts Padfeet & Poltergeists" and "More Pit Ghosts, Padfeet and Poltergeists"

[†]You probably already know, but if you don't Scully

A-Well, she. . . like. . . tells me stuff but I ignore her and tell her to shut up. *I don't know and don't want to know!*

MARK-Well, OK, that's fair enough.

A-She goes on about the marks on our necks.

MARK-Marks? What type of marks?

A-We both had two big red marks on the backs of our necks, both of us the same.

MARK-Both the same, what exactly exactly the same place?

A-Yeah, right on the back of our necks, two big red spots, the same on both of us, they were damn sore. I remember they used to bleed sometimes, they started to bleed one night in April.

MARK-So that was, what. . . four months later?

A-Yes that's right, about four months. Errrm. . . listen, right, errm. . . [informant's name] told me that you know all about this stuff, this what [X-Files fan's name] has been saying, is it right?

MARK-Well, umm. . . This thing you've described, when a period of time goes missing, it is actually been reported by thousands of people from all over the world. I've never heard of any one coming to any real harm from it. [Possibly a bit of a white lie, that last sentence, certainly not serious physical harm, but psychological, that's a whole different ball game.] I don't think you have anything to worry about. This experience is more common than people realise. Now. . . the people who study it, they come up with different explanations. It is true that a lot of people think it is like what you see in the "X-Files", but a lot of other people are sure it is absolutely nothing to do with stuff like that. If you want I could lend you some books about

it ⁺

is a character in the X-Files who went through an abduction experience.

⁺The books I was thinking of were "Dark White" by Jim Schnable (Sceptical, non-ET explanation of missing time) and "The Uninvited" by Nick Pope (Sympathetic to the witness, balanced view point, ET explanation quite probable.)

A-Oh No, it's all right I just want to forget about it. So what [X-Files fan's name] has been saying it's all rubbish then?

MARK-Yes, it could well be, no one knows for certain, but I really don't think that you have anything to worry about, it has happened to a lot of people and they've not come to any real harm.

That was the gist of the conversation. I also asked A if she and B would fill in YUFOS sighting report forms. I assured her that they would be able to remain completely anonymous and that they could check any article that I might write for accuracy before it was printed. A agreed to fill the forms in and said she had no objections to me writing about her experiences, provided she could remain anonymous.

When I was satisfied that I had given A enough reassurance we said our goodbyes. I pressed the little thing on the phone and without replacing the receiver quickly dialled Dave Baker's number. I excitedly told Dave the story and asked him if he would send me some report forms, which he promptly did.

Perhaps at this stage you are wondering why I've entitled this article "The Case that Wasn't. . ." (Or you could be thinking "why am I reading this drivel, I think I'll go down the pub.") Maybe you are expecting me to tell you that it was all a big wind up - a hoax. The fact of the matter is that I'm perfectly satisfied that both A and my original informant were both perfectly sincere. The crux of it, the reason it is "The Case that Wasn't. . ." is the fact that I never got the YUFOS forms back or heard from A, or B ever again.

I've thought about the possible reason for this. Perhaps the X-Files fan "got at" A with lurid tales of Greys and implants and thus scared A away from any further involvement. Possibly subconscious memories of the missing one and a half hour's became terrifying conscious ones. Then again it might well be that she and B simply could not be bothered to fill the forms in. Who knows why? We can only guess.

I've related this eerie tale to you because firstly, I thought you might be interested and I would also like to use the story to illustrate a few points that I'd like to discuss.

1. Strength of Evidence.

The bottom line is that this case amounts to nothing more than the words that are printed on these pages.

We have no signatures on the bottom of report forms, no one else from YUFOS (or any other organisation) has ever spoken to A or B, no photographs of, or Doctor's opinions about the red marks on the necks and none of A's testimony was recorded on video or audio tape.

You could shoot accusations of fabrication and invention at me, and I would have no ammunition with which to fight back, (although I most certainly did not invent it!)

This strange episode can never be classed as Hard Evidence because it is merely heresy. That is to say it is just a story that someone has told to someone else. If anyone said to me "OK prove it!" My only possible response would be to admit that I could not. It would be a case of "You either believe or you don't."

I would never dream of presenting these events as some sort of proof of extraterrestrial activity. I could not reasonably expect sceptically minded people to believe this story. There is simply no good reason for them to do so. I have nothing solid to back up what is printed here.

In a previous article I used the analogy of a court case to describe the sceptic versus Believer UFO debate, well folks the unavoidable fact is that heresy (and remember that's all this case is) is inadmissible in court.

I do not, however, consider this case to have no worth, especially if you are prepared to take A's account of the events at face value. It's useful to us because it fits into the established pattern of missing time phenomena and therefore strengthens the case for the reality of it (and by association the events which take place during that lost period.) The testimony of A corroborates, independent unrelated cases (and vice-versa.) So, although A's story can never stand alone as definite proof, it adds to the pile of material with which we can work.

Unfortunately many Ufologists do take such cases of heresy and present them as hard evidence. I don't think they are doing themselves and the subject in general any favours. They only leave themselves open to attack from sceptics. As I've already said such heresy evidence has its place and uses, but not as the core of our arguments.

Now, perhaps at this stage of the article you are wondering why I did not try to "chase it up" and pursue the matter further. (Or perhaps you're not wondering anything because you did go down the pub.)

I'll explain my reason's for not attempting to take the case further during the discussion of my second point.

2. Witness Confidentiality/Respect for the Witness

Where would the world of UFO research be without the witnesses? This group of usually gutsy, sometimes quite brave and occasionally down-right heroic people who speak their truth against a tirade of derision, accusations of lies and fraud or just plain insults.

I'll get to the answer of my own question by describing my immediate surroundings:-

I'm communicating my thoughts to you by clicking the buttons on my computer keyboard. At the side of this is a pint glass of NETTO's own brand of strong dry cider (a two litre bottle for £1.69 and it's 5.6% alcohol - marvellous stuff, but I can't remember which pub I pinched the glass from.) On my left is a big hard back copy of the book "*Cosmic Crashes*" by Nick Redfern, (you can only get this from bookshops though, not from NETTO or pubs.) This book is at least an inch thick a girth which equates to three hundred and twenty eight pages. Now, I'm getting to the punchline - without the aforementioned courageous set of folk (the witnesses) how thick would this tome be? How many pages would it have. I think it would be about six!

I think you've got my point. Without witnesses Ufology would not exist.

We must always treat witnesses with courtesy and respect their wishes. And that's what I tried to do in the above case. A certainly seemed uneasy about the missing time, I purposely avoided using the words "UFO", "aliens" and most importantly of all "abduction". (infact that is the first time I've used that word in this article, but I'll bet my pilfered pint pot, that you with your wide knowledge of the UFO phenomenon started thinking about abduction when I first described the events, the details of the case (missing time, marks on body) strongly implied that this could be an abduction scenario. Obviously when I first heard the details I thought the

same, and like you was perfectly aware of the "standard" abduction experience - in other words what might have occurred during A and B's missing one-and-a-half hours. A however did not have such knowledge (although I don't know how much the X-files fan did actually tell her) and, you'll remember, told me "I don't know, and I don't want to know."

When A asked me the question "... this what [X-Files fan's name] has been saying is it right?" I felt that I had no choice but to ignore my own burning desire to get to the bottom of the case and reassure her that she had nothing to worry about (let's hope I'm correct and she really hasn't got any thing to worry about.) I could have said "Yes! You have been abducted by aliens, I'll get you some hypnotic regression and I'll write a book about it. Do you know what they did? They stuck a probe up your rectum and an implant up your nose and they've made you pregnant with a hybrid. Do you want to be in UFO Magazine? You could be on the telly with Paul McKenna and Michael Aspel! and...! and...!" I think you get the picture.

And of course there's the subject of witness anonymity. If a witness says to a writer/researcher "I'll tell you my story if you promise that I can always remain anonymous," and the researcher/writer says "Yes." Then what right does anyone have to demand that the witness be named? What about the possible scenario where a Ufologist promises anonymity to a witness but then goes back on their word and publishes their name. For a start, any one else who had experienced anything strange would want to tell this member of the JIUFORA[©] about them, anonymously or otherwise (although the baseball bat wielding friends and family of the now beleaguered and traumatised witness might want a bit of a chat, up a dark alley.)

The history of UFOs is strewn with accounts of serious suffering endured by witnesses as a result of their encounters. Someone who springs to mind (just one of the many possible examples) is former USAF Security Policeman Lawrence P Warren. This man, more commonly referred to as plain Larry Warren, was on duty on 28 December 1980 at a certain air base in Suffolk. Mysterious lights were seen, and Larry along with numerous colleagues went into the forest that bordered their base to investigate. The name of that

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particular forest is now firmly established in UFO legend- Rendlesham. Larry's awesome experiences that momentous night changed his life forever and *not for the better*.

Those of you who were at the Jenny Randles lecture on 24 July 1999 may recall that I had a few questions (actually I had a lot of questions, but only had chance to ask a few) for Jenny about the Rendlesham affair and Larry Warren, you may also recall that Jenny was less than impressed with his status as a reliable witness and referred to him as a "good raconteur." I'm planning to write an article in the near future in which I will address the evidence of the case. In particular I will describe how the career, personal life, and health of this "good raconteur" were completely and utterly destroyed.

3. Undiscovered Evidence

This story only found its way into our magazine because I was lucky enough to become acquainted with my informant. If we had never met, and if they had never met any other interested ufologist and A had forgotten all about it, this tale would have been lost forever.

Think for a while about all the UFO evidence that is undoubtedly out there, yet lies, completely undiscovered, what about the possibility of an old black and white photo, that shows something incredible, but is only gathering dust in someone's attic or shed, ignored because no one has realised its importance.

Or the perfectly focused, close quarters video film taken by an airline crew of a silver disc shadowing their Jetliner, that they erased for fear of stirring up controversy and losing their jobs.

Then again, three-hundred years ago an extraterrestrial space craft may have plunged into the Amazonian Jungle and the remains of it and its crew could be discovered by loggers at any minute.

Well, now we are coming to the end of this article. It's just after midnight (the same time A and B sighted the lights) and it's an icy cold night, I'll fill my pilfered pint pot (I really can't remember where it came from) with NETTO cider and go and stand on my balcony for a while (the balcony from which I photographed a UFO) and contemplate the

endless possibilities for undiscovered evidence.

Post Script

I've purposely been quite vague regarding certain aspects of A and B's experience. This is to afford them maximum anonymity. I could not avoid letting on that A is female (otherwise the references to Scully would be nonsensical.) I know a lot more details than I've written down (specific times and places, names of corroborating witnesses etc.) for example I know the particular road where the lights were sighted, I won't tell you its name or its exact location, but I will tell you that it is not very far from the spot where YUFOS holds its sky watches.

Mark P Martin, January 2000.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 14th March 2000

7:00pm – 10:00pm

**THE THREE
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PROSAIC EXPLANATIONS: THE FAILURE OF UFO SKEPTICISM (Part 2)

by Bruce Maccabee

(brumac@compuserve.com)

c B. Maccabee, 1999

"In over 30 years of UFO investigation I have not studied a single sighting for which I could not find a prosaic explanation."

-Paraphrase of a statement

by Philip J. Klass

The "First" Sighting

The June 24, 1947 sighting by private pilot Kenneth Arnold was not really the first recorded UFO sighting. However, it was the first sighting to be publicly reported and it attracted world-wide interest. It also attracted more than its share of explanations. One of the scientists with an excessive urge to explain was Dr. Howard Menzel. In his first book, *Flying Saucers* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1953), Menzel offered a blanket explanation for sightings that occurred within the first five years of modern UFO sightings, (1947-1952): misidentified atmospheric phenomena including the effects of the atmosphere on sunlight, unusual clouds caused by particular wind patterns, and mirage effects (light ray bending in the atmosphere).

He suggested several different atmospheric and cloud effects to account for the Kenneth Arnold's sighting. In later books (*The World of Flying Saucers*, Menzel and Boyd, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, NY, 1963; *The UFO Enigma, The Definitive Explanation of the UFO Phenomenon*, Menzel and Taves, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, NY, 1977) he offered other atmosphere-related explanations and one non-atmospheric explanation (water drops on the windshield of the airplane).

Mr. Arnold, a businessman and private pilot with over 4,000 hours of flying experience, had reported seeing nine semicircular, thin (compared to the length), shiny objects in a line flying southward past the western flank of Mt. Rainier and "swerved in and out" of a chain of mountain peaks south of Rainier. The objects were therefore about twenty miles east of him (he was about twenty miles west and ten miles south of Mt. Rainier and flying east at the time). He timed their flight from Rainier, southward, to Mt. Adams, a distance

of about fifty miles. They crossed this distance in 102 seconds. Hence, the direct interpretation of Arnold's sighting is that these objects were travelling at about 1,700 mph. (This was about four months before Yaeger exceeded the speed of sound in a test aircraft, in October, 1947). In reporting the speed calculation, Arnold arbitrarily reduced the speed considerably to account for possible errors in his measurements. He publicly stated that the objects were travelling at about 1,200 mph. Arnold reported that he first saw the objects as they flashed or reflected the bright afternoon sunlight when they were north of Mt. Rainier and last saw them (by their flashes) as they passed Mt. Adams. The total sighting duration was two and a half to three minutes.

Dr. Hynek was the first scientist to try to explain Arnold's sighting. Hynek used some details of the observation and an assumption about Arnold's visual acuity to calculate an approximate size of the objects. He obtained a large size (two thousand feet long, one hundred feet thick). He could not accept this size as reasonable so he decided to ignore Arnold's claim that the objects went in and out of the mountain peaks south of Mt. Rainier. By ignoring this statement (essentially implying Arnold had made a mistake in the observation) Hynek was able to assume that the objects were much closer. Hynek decided that Arnold saw large airplanes and he then estimated that the distance was only about six miles. This shorter distance reduced the calculated speed to about 400 mph. Since this speed was within the capability of military aircraft Hynek identified the objects as "aircraft," thereby also ignoring Arnold's description of the objects. Recent analysis of the Arnold sighting shows that Hynek made an incorrect assumption about Arnold's visual acuity. Had he made the correct assumption he would have obtained a much smaller size (under one hundred ft long and ten or so feet

thick) and then, perhaps, would not have rejected Arnold's distance estimate, in which case he would have had to accept the speed estimate. Had he accepted the speed estimate the history of the UFO subject might have been different.

Hynek's work was done secretly for the Air Force in 1948 under "Project Sign"(1948). (This was the first of three projects for UFO sighting analysis. The other two were Project Grudge [1949-1952] and Project Blue Book [1952-1969]). About four years later Dr. Menzel tackled Arnold's sighting. In his first book, *Flying Saucers*, Menzel summarised the sighting and then criticized the Air Force for accepting Hynek's explanation and went on to propose a much more "obvious" solution. Menzel wrote, "(Arnold) clocked the speed at about 1,200 miles an hour, although this figure seems inconsistent with the length of time that he estimated them to be in view. From his previous statement they could scarcely have travelled more than 25 miles during the three minutes that he watched. This gives about 500 miles an hour, which is still a figure large enough to be startling." Note that Menzel did not tell the reader that Arnold had timed the flight of the objects between two points. Instead, Menzel invented a travel distance of twenty-five miles, and implied that this distance was covered in three minutes (180 seconds). Hence he was able to assign a much lower, although "startling," speed of 500 mph.

Menzel went on to "solve" the mystery of Arnold's sighting: "Although what Arnold saw has remained a mystery until this day (1953), I simply cannot understand why the simplest and most obvious explanation of all has been overlooked... the association of the saucers with the hogback (of the mountain range south of Mt. Rainier)... serves to fix their distance and approximate size and roughly confirms Arnold's estimate of the speed." (Note that Menzel, unlike Hynek, accepted Arnold's distance estimate). Menzel then went on to suggest that Arnold saw "billowing blasts of snow, ballooning up from the tops of the ridges" caused by highly turbulent air along the mountain range. According to Menzel, "These rapidly shifting, tilting clouds of snow would reflect the sun like a mirror...and the rocking surfaces would make the chain sweep along something like a wave, with only a momentary reflection from crest to crest."

This first explanation by a scientist with the reputation of Dr. Menzel may seem slightly convincing, but only until one realizes that (a)

blowing clouds of snow cannot reflect light rays from the sun (60 deg elevation angle) into a horizontal direction toward Arnold's airplane and thereby create the very bright flashes that Arnold reported in the same way that a polished metal surface or mirror would,

(b) there are no 1,200 mph or even 500 mph winds on the surface of the earth to transport clouds of snow (fortunately!),

(c) there are no winds that would carry clouds of snow all the way from Mt. Rainier to Mt. Adams (Arnold saw the objects pass Mt. Adams before they were lost to his view),

(d) Arnold flew eastward along a path that took him south of Mt. Rainier minutes later and surely his plane would have been strongly buffeted (and perhaps destroyed!) by such high winds, but he reported, instead, very calm conditions,

(e) an atmospheric oscillation wave can't bend or reflect light over an angle of nearly 60 degrees, which would be necessary to make it appear as if the sun had been reflected by objects nearly at Arnold's altitude, and

(f) an atmospheric oscillation wave with a "phase velocity" of 1,200 mph is unlikely, but in any case, when traveling southward its crests would be oriented east-west, so if it reflected any sunlight at all (highly unlikely), the reflection would be in the north-south direction and not westward toward Arnold's plane. Furthermore, even if such amazing atmospheric phenomena had occurred, it is difficult to imagine how Arnold could have failed to realize that he was just seeing light reflected from snow blowing from the top of Mt. Rainier, especially since, only minutes later, he flew along a path that took him about twelve miles south of Mt. Rainier as he continued his trip east to Yakima, Washington.

In case the first explanation wasn't sufficiently convincing, Menzel offered "another possibility": he suggested that perhaps there was a thin layer of fog, haze or dust just above or just below Arnold's altitude which was caused to move violently by air circulation and which reflected the sunlight. Menzel claimed that such layers can "reflect the sun in almost mirror fashion." Menzel offered no substantiation for this claim. Perhaps he was thinking in terms of a "forward reflection" from an atmospheric layer when the Sun is so low on the horizon (and nearly along the line of sight to the reflection) that the light rays

make a "grazing angle" with the layer. If so, then that explanation as applied to the Arnold sighting makes no sense, since the Sun was at an elevation of 60 degrees and southwest of Arnold, who was looking east. Furthermore, layers form under stable conditions and violent air circulation would tend to break them up so there would be no "reflections" of sunlight. Again, one wonders how Arnold could have failed to notice that he was just seeing strange effects of the atmosphere.

Ten years after his first book, Dr. Menzel offered his third, fourth and fifth explanations in his second book, (*The World of Flying Saucers*): mountain top mirages, "orographic clouds" and "wave clouds in motion." To support the third explanation, he presented a photograph of mountain top mirages taken by a photographer many years earlier, and proposed by the photographer as the explanation for Arnold's sighting. (This is the "official" Air Force explanation. It appears in the files of Projects Sign/Grudge/Blue Book along with Hynek's explanation. These files are available to be reviewed on microfilm at the National Archives.) The mirages appear as vague images above the tops of the mountains. (Actually the mirage is an inverted image of the top of the mountain.) These mirages can be seen under proper atmospheric conditions (requiring a stable atmosphere) when the line of sight from the observer to the mountain top is tilted by less than one half a degree above or below horizontal. Unintentionally (or intentionally?) Menzel failed to report in his book the following information in Arnold's report: as the objects traveled southward, he saw them silhouetted against the side of Mt. Rainier which is 14,400 feet high, much higher than the altitude of the saucers. Since mountain top mirages occur above the mountain peaks, these objects were far below any mirage of Mt. Rainier. Of course, mountain top mirages stay above the tops of the mountains, so the mirage theory cannot explain the lateral high speed movement of the objects reported by Arnold. Nor can a mirage explain the bright flashes of light from the objects.

Menzel's fourth explanation was that Arnold saw orographic clouds, which can assume circular shapes and often form in the lees (i.e., downwind of) mountain peaks. The clouds would, of course, be large but, as Menzel notes in his book, they "appear to stand more or less motionless." The lack of motion, as well as the lack of bright reflections, rules them out, so why did he even mention them? Also, Arnold

would have realized they were just clouds as he flew past Mt. Rainier only minutes later.

Menzel's fifth explanation, wave clouds, is comparable to his first suggestion of "billowing blasts" of snow, except that this time he proposed clouds of water vapor instead of snow. In his second book, this explanation was supported by a photograph of such a cloud taken by a newspaper photographer. However, this explanation, too, fails to account for the very bright reflections reported by Arnold, for distinct semi-circular shapes, and for the high lateral speed. Again, Arnold surely would have recognized a cloud as he flew past Mt. Rainier.

In his third and last UFO book, *The UFO Enigma, The Definitive Explanation of UFO Phenomenon*, written in the early 1970's, (just before Menzel died), he again discussed Arnold's sighting and offered his sixth (and last) explanation: Arnold saw water drops on the window of his aircraft.

To support this explanation, Menzel appealed to his own sighting of "UFOs" that turned out to be water drops that had condensed on the outside of the window of an aircraft in which he was flying. They moved slowly backwards from the front of the window. They were so close to his eyes as he looked out the window that they were out of focus and he thought they were distant objects moving at a great speed until, after a few seconds, he refocused his eyes and discovered what they were. In comparing his "sighting" with Arnold's, Menzel writes: "I cannot, of course, say definitely that what Arnold saw were merely raindrops on the window of this plane. He would doubtless insist that there was no rain at the altitude at which he was flying. But many queer things happen at different levels in the earth's atmosphere."

Although no one would argue with Menzel's claim that "queer things" happen at different levels of the atmosphere, this fact is irrelevant. Had Menzel bothered to carefully read Arnold's letter to the Air Force, he would have seen Arnold's statement that he turned his plane sideways and viewed the objects through an open window to be sure that he was getting no reflections from window glass. (Fortunately, Menzel did not propose water drops on Arnold's eyes!)

The "bottom line" is that neither Hynek nor Menzel proposed reasonable explanations for Arnold's sighting, but that didn't stop the Air

Force from accepting one of the explanations (mirage).

In 1947, shortly after Arnold's sighting and during the massive wave of sightings that occurred between late June and the middle of July, numerous explanations for the sightings of Arnold and other witnesses were proposed. The first explanation was that proposed by Arnold himself, namely that saucers were some new secret aircraft of the United States Army Air Force (the Air Force was still part of the Army).

However, very quickly (within days) after Arnold's sighting the U.S. government publicly denied having any secret aircraft that could account for saucer sightings. This denial was also privately made to J. Edgar Hoover, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) by General George Schulgen of the Army Air Force. (The denial is in the FBI's file on flying discs, the "real X file.") On the other hand, the Air Force began to be worried over the possibility that the Soviet Union had developed flying saucers to threaten the United States, but this worry was not conveyed to the public.

Howard Blakeslee, the Associated Press Science Editor, wrote an article that suggested "quirks of eyesight" could explain the saucer mystery. He pointed out that anything looks round if it is too far away to see details. "This law covers small things seen nearby and large ones at great distances." He described his own sightings of "flying saucers" which were bright reflections from distant aircraft. "Planes at great distances tend to look round when light is reflected from their sides," he wrote. He rejected the daytime meteor hypothesis (see below) and the hypothesis that upper altitude ice crystals formed "little round clouds." According to Blakeslee, "Nothing published in science or atomic studies gives the slightest clue to flying saucers unless the objects are aircraft."

Although I cannot now cite the reference, it is this author's recollection that someone claimed that flying saucers were actually "motes in the eye" which are small particles such as blood cells which float in the fluid within each person's eyeball. Motes are only visible when they move to an area between the lens and the fovea; when they move out of this area they "disappear." These particles, when viewed against a bright sky, can appear to be dark objects far away and thus may be mistaken for large objects at a great distance. Of course,

they move whenever the eye does and this can impart "unearthly speeds" to the apparently distant, large objects. (Note: one can be temporarily fooled by motes, but a simple test is to turn the eye and stare in another direction. If the "object" moves with the eye, then it was a mote.)

Dan Nelson, an attorney in Oklahoma City, published his explanation in the "Daily Oklahoman" newspaper, July 29, 1947. On July 30 the FBI contacted him to learn more about his solution to the mystery. (Yes, the FBI did investigate sightings in 1947, so, in a small sense the "X" files are real!)

According to Nelson all sightings from inside vehicles, including airplanes, that had windows were reflections of sunlight from shiny objects onto the windows. The light reflected from these shiny objects was then re-reflected toward the eye of the observer who was looking through a window and could thus see the reflection silhouetted against the background as if there were a shiny object "out there", far outside the vehicle.

Naturally reflections such as this could do unnatural things such as pace a vehicle or suddenly accelerate, make fast turns and even suddenly disappear. According to Nelson, the vibration of a car, for example, would give the objects "an appearance of rotating" and "reflections (in the windows) caused them to appear flat or saucer shaped." Moreover, "...any number of objects might be seen according to the direction that the car is traveling and the number of bright objects being reflected onto the window. He further stated that these objects might be seen in an ordinary window in a house according to the lighting conditions..."

Mr. Nelson told the FBI that he had not actually talked to saucer witnesses but "he believed that these reflections plus the excitement and hysteria caused by other reports has been the basis for most flying saucer reports." (Classic armchair theorist!!) Obviously Nelson's explanation could not apply to Arnold's sighting, but Nelson didn't know that since Arnold's full report was not published until many years later.

(Next issue: the problem with pelicans... and more)

BOOM BOOM

Howden Moor update

by Dr. Dave Clarke

Mysterious aerial explosions have been reported for centuries and a number of examples are recorded in the Books of Charles Fort dating back more than a century, long before the invention of supersonic aircraft.

Booms in the upper atmosphere can be generated by space junk such as fireball meteors and parts of man-made satellites burning up as they re-enter the atmosphere. As recently as November 1999 people in County Carlow in the Irish republic saw a fireball light up the sky and heard a series of 'booming explosions' as a meteor crashed to earth.

US test pilot Chuck Yeager first breached the sound barrier in October 1947 in his Bell X-1 rocket plane, causing a noise like a thunderclap as he exceeded the crucial speed of 760 mph/1,220 kph. Since that time aircraft technology has progressed in leaps and bounds and today most military jets used by the RAF and USAF, such as the Tornado or the F-15E, are capable of supersonic flight. This is reflected in the number of anomalous sonic booms which are reported on an increasingly frequent level every year. Civil aircraft such as Concorde now regularly fly at supersonic speed above the ocean, and the Space Shuttle creates a unique "double sonic boom" with a 30 second interval between peaks, produced by the nose and tail of the space ship.

Sonic booms are pressure waves generated by objects travelling faster than the speed of sound, much like the way a boat pushes up a bow wave as it travels through water. Sonic booms are often reported as an ear-splitting explosion in the air. The intensity of the noise is affected by a number of factors such as altitude, weather conditions and local geography.

The vast majority of sonic events recorded today by the equipment of the US and British Geological Surveys are produced by military aircraft. A number of sonic explosions recorded by the BGS above the North Sea and Irish Sea have been traced to RAF Tornados operating in agreed training areas. There are occasions however, when these operations *must* stray into restricted zones, causing sonic events to be

recorded overland. Often these kind of aerial explosions have remained unexplained as Governments are reluctant to admit they are test-flying new types of advanced aircraft such as the SR-71 Blackbird and Aurora, the hypersonic spyplane which still does not officially exist. As a result anomalous sonic events are often linked with UFOs and provide a convenient cover for the covert testing of secret 'black project' aircraft.

In the UK pilots are bound by the MOD's Military Flying Regulations which stipulate that aircraft can only make supersonic flights above sea, and only

after notification has been sent to radar stations beforehand. Of course pilots frequently breach these regulations especially during training exercises during the build-up to conflicts such as the Gulf Crisis. The Regulations stipulate that any breaches should immediately be notified to the base commanding officer upon landing. Failure to do so could result in an investigation by the RAF Police and the possibility of a court martial or a 'black mark' upon the career of a top gun pilot.

It remains to be proven if a 'black project' was involved in the events of March 24, 1997, above the Peak District which involved a double 'sonic boom' whose source remains a mystery. In this case, a classic 'N-wave' - which is characteristic of the cone-shaped pressure wave caused by an aircraft reaching supersonic speed - was recorded by two seismographs and one low-frequency microphone, according to the British Geological Survey. The first 'sonic boom' was recorded from the Sheffield area at 9.52pm, with the second (picked up by three stations, including Leeds) happened at 10.06pm. The second event coincided with the gamekeeper and his wife at Strines reporting "a loud explosion" above the moors, and the reports of a light aircraft diving from the sky in the Bolsterstone area of Sheffield. As everyone will remember, these events resulted in 15-hour search operation on the Howden Moors, which found no evidence of a crash but has led to many wild claims such as those spread by Max Burns.

The day following the Howden Moor case, the British Geological Survey contacted the RAF Flying Complaints division at Whitehall with details of the sonic events they had detected. At that time the RAF said they could not confirm that military aircraft were involved. Now it has emerged that the MOD were sufficiently concerned by the reports that the RAF Military Police were asked to launch an investigation into the incident. It cannot be a coincidence that the booms recorded from Sheffield followed a similar unexplained sonic event over North Wales on March 12. All these events occurred one month after a major military exercise over the North Sea, codenamed "Northern Adventure" which preceded the Gulf crisis later that year.

Behind the scenes of the controversy over what caused the Howden Moor incident I have continued to question the MOD over the one part of this case which continues to remain puzzling: ie. what caused the sonic booms recorded by the BGS?

For those who have read my IUN status report on this case, I remain convinced that a military jet or jets involved in the covert operation was responsible for these two breaches of Military Flying Regulations. In fact, Martin Jeffrey sent me a news cutting from an East Anglian newspaper at the end of last year which notes a very similar aerial explosion being traced to another breach of regulations by a naughty RAF pilot over land. Max Burn's view is that the first explosion recorded on March 24, 1997, was caused by an ET flying triangle firing its "EM weapon" and causing the pursuing RAF Tornado jet to explode, while the second explosion (14 minutes later!) was the dastardly greys making good their escape at supersonic speed!!!

Glenn Ford of the British Geological Survey has stated the recordings made that might were characteristic of sonic booms created in the wake of a military aircraft breaking the sound barrier. His word, as an experience seismologist specialising in sonic events, should be taken as conclusive as to the source. He believes the readings are most likely those produced by "a military jet reaching supersonic speed over land, possibly while performing a mid-air turn."

It wasn't until March 1998 - one year later - that the Defence Minister was forced to admit that a low-flying exercise had taken place above the Peak District, when he was

questioned in Parliament by MP Helen Jackson. In this case the MOD avoided direct responsibility by claiming the exercise was over by 9.30pm that night, when the explosions occurred at 9.52 and 10.06pm. But initially, they had denied any kind of exercise had taken place at all!

The situation was muddled by the presence of a low-flying light aircraft (which Mountain rescue suspected was involved in a drugs-drop) at precisely the time the booms occurred. These events, which may or may not be unconnected, in turn triggered all the nonsense about crashed Tornados and UFO cover-ups. A summary of the case up to October 1999 will appear as a chapter in the *UFOs that Never Were*, co-authored by Jenny Randles, Andy Roberts and myself, published on February 28.

In the meantime, questions addressed to the MOD Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a have led the ministry to admit that an investigation into the incident was launched by the Military Police in 1997, but the conclusions remain classified. I have also received a categorical denial that the MOD received any reports of UFOs from either military or civilian sources for 24 or 25 March, which is a pretty definite on the record position.

A letter from Gaynor South, Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a, dated 1 October 1999 read:

"On the matter of the alleged sonic boom on 24 March 1997, you are correct in stating that military aircraft may only fly at supersonic speeds over the sea and to fly supersonic overland is in breach of flying regulations. We take reports of sonic booms overland very seriously and you will be reassured to learn that the RAF Police did investigate the incident. Their investigation found that no RAF or NATO aircraft were operating in the area at the time and that civil aircraft in the area were travelling too slow to have generated a sonic boom."

Another response, from S. Fowle of AS (2) and dated 4 January 2000 reads:

"I can confirm that the RAF police tasked to investigate the incident concentrated their enquiries on whether a military aircraft had been in the area concerned on the date in question. Once they had established that military activity was not involved they made no further enquiries to determine what might have caused the noise.

The MOD is satisfied that on the date in question, there was no threat to the UK Air Defence Region from hostile military activity."

So there we have it. Hidden away inside these bland statements lie the answers, and it seems to me that Mr Fowle's latest reply suggests the MOD are well aware what DID create those aerial booms. If this was not an RAF/NATO

aircraft, and was not a 'hostile' intruder into UK Air Defence Region, what does that leave us with?

To paraphrase Sherlock Holmes, once you have eliminated the impossible, what remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

Dave Clarke, 3 February 2000.

WAS IT A BIRD? WAS IT A PLANE?

By Andy Ashmore

Most of you will by now have read my articles which appear regularly in our humble little mag. Well at least I hope you have. You may just skim past my page as you are browsing, in which case "Goodbye!" But if you have ever bothered to take in my contributions you will have, by now, found that I usually write pages on various topics which invariably include my own thoughts or opinions on them.

I don't usually get that philosophical about things until I've had a bit to drink- like your average pub bore. But hey, this time it is a report of a strange sighting that I had recently, which is quite handy as I have just about run out of topics to talk about in my usual articles!

I have had one (at least) encounter with a bizarre light source in the sky before¹ but I consider this latest event to be somewhat better in certain ways.

As you may or may not know, I am not a person who hallucinates, except when I've had a skin-full and talk to my invisible friend Roger! Otherwise I can see quite well and am not prone to much in the way on misidentifying common objects unless they happen to be distant nocturnal lights, as in this case.

DATE: Sunday, 23rd January, 2000

TIME: Approx: 17:20pm

PLACE: Blackburn Meadows/Tinsley area of Sheffield

THE INCIDENT

Having had my tea and retiring to my bedroom for a smoke, I saw a flash of light over the aforementioned area. I turned my head to look but saw nothing more and assumed it was just a reflection, probably from the street-lights.

It wasn't until at least five to ten minutes later that I saw the same thing again in the same place. So now I just stared at the area of the flash, above a hillside lined with trees and waited...

After around a minute, two flashes appeared slightly lower to the left. "A-ha! A plane!" I thought, but then the flash immediately jumped significantly to the right at 90 degrees and then again back to its original position with four evenly spaced blinks.

Just when I had gone back to my first idea of the aircraft, the strangest vision was yet to come...

¹ And scribed in this very magazine, methinks - DB)

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All of a sudden, only some five to ten seconds after the last event, the light-source returned to its original position and cascaded a type of strobe rope-light effect with at least six flashes of pure white light in quick succession, almost like a lightning strike but with dots of luminosity almost joined together by the speed at which they happened. And then.....nothing. Not a sausage. Fifteen minutes later...nothing. Where had it gone and why the big gap in between the first and second glints? (Some five minutes and still in the same place.)

What about the big leap to the right and then back again? And what about the weird cascading of illumination that surely did not belong to an aircraft as I first thought?

The fast-strobing light effect reminded me of a UFO programme on TV a couple of years ago called "We Are Not Alone", or "Are We Alone?" or something like that. In this investigation, the camera crew were interviewing Steven Greer of CSETI fame when someone shouted.

The camera panned the skyline and picked up a flashing white light which danced around randomly and then disappeared. This is the nearest that I can get to comparing the last part of my sighting with anything I have seen before.

Contact the CAA? No point. Within one minute of the end of the escapade an aircraft passed overhead in the direction of the lights, not *from* the territory. So if they told me I had seen an aircraft, then I had, but surely not anything to do with the light-show I saw.

Just to complete the article I have enclosed a sketch of what I saw early that Sunday evening.

Any suggestions as to what I saw are most welcome. But please, if you are sure of your presumptions give me your proof - 'cos frankly my friends, I'm confounded.

