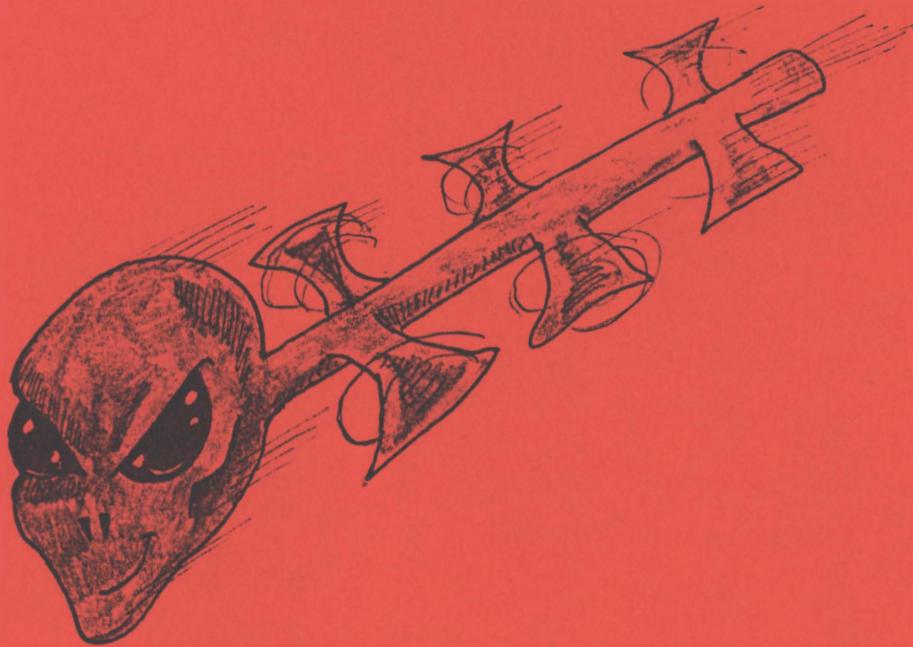


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YORKSHIRE UFO SOCIETY

PROJECT RED BOOK

(Vol 6, # 1, July / August 2002)



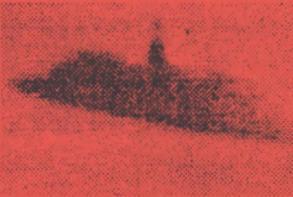
inside this document

UFOs RETURN TO WASHINGTON?
MULTIPLE-WITNESS UFO SIGHTING OVER SHEFFIELD
"RODS" EXPLAINED?

And much more...

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Vol 6 # 1, July / August 2002)

CONTENTS

1) EDITORIAL

Read Dave Baker's attempts to explain why there wasn't an issue of PRB last month...

2) THE VIEW FROM BRITAIN -the Jenny Randles Column

Jenny Randles looks at the British Governments' investigations into UFOs

6) SCOTLAND'S OUT OF THIS WORLD FOR UFO SIGHTINGS

According to the Scottish tourist board anyhow...

7) RETURN TO D.C.

F-16s were scrambled to intercept an unknown radar return over the U.S. Capital on July 26th...but was it to shoot down a UFO? Watch this space.

9) "RODS" EXPLAINED?

The "Rods" phenomenon...are they super-fast UFOs, unknown living creatures, or something a bit more boring? Make your own mind up in this rebuttal to the latest Fox TV Opus.

11) FROM AROUND THE WORLD...

*Thunderbirds up a tree
Farmer tries to trap Big Cat
Big Jon Downes hunts The Mere Monster
Good Ol' Monkey Man is back!
Girl struck by ball lightning
Sea Monster attacks!*

15) MULTIPLE WITNESS "NL" CASE OVER SHEFFIELD

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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...and remember to give us a reference now, y'hear?

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The articles and views expressed in this magazine, particularly those of Tom Bolloxinski, do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or YUFOS members.

"You... shall not...PASS!"

EDITORIAL

First of all, for those of you who noticed the "July / August" date on the cover of this issue of *Project Red Book* and who did not receive a copy in the mail last month - don't worry; *PRB* is not going bi-monthly. For reasons beyond our control, we just couldn't put together an issue we were happy with in enough time. Rather than produce a sub-standard issue, we decided to delay publication until we were all happy with the product.

Considering that over the last five years we have published 60 issues of *PRB* (including its earlier incarnation of *YUFOS Magazine*), and only missed one, I don't think we've done too badly. I certainly don't know of any other 'local' UFO group which produces a *monthly* journal, let alone one containing 20 A4 pages.

I should also stress that this 'missing issue' does not affect anyone's subscription, and under similar circumstances, a subscription will always cover a number of *issues* (12 or 7), not a period of time (a '1 year', or '6-month' subscription).

So what do we have in this month's issue?

Many readers of *PRB* will no doubt have seen the Fox-TV special on the 'Rods' phenomenon. Are 'rods' super-fast alien invaders, a hitherto-undiscovered terrestrial creature, or robotic extra-terrestrial spies, as suggested by Jose Escamilla and others...or is there a more mundane answer to this phenomenon?

*The article "*Rods Explained?*" in this issue is a re-formatted web-page which offers an alternative explanation for the 'rods', and one which I find extremely relevant. The article has been slightly edited to suit the format of a magazine rather than the web-site it was designed for, with the express permission and approval of the original author. See what *you* think.

*We also present a "stop-press" story which may or may not turn out to be UFO-related, or even a 'story' at all.

On Friday 26th July, 2002, F-16 jets were scrambled to investigate an unidentified radar source over Washington D.C. Details were still coming in as we went to press, so consider this one "on-going"...

*Best-selling author Jenny Randles continues her regular column, re-printed here from America's *MUFON Journal*. *PRB* is the only place other than *MJ* that you can catch this fascinating series, and YUFOS is honoured to present this column each and every month. In this issue, Jenny discusses the manner in which the British Government investigates UFO reports, and why it is sometimes so difficult to penetrate their apparent secrecy.

*We also present a revised "Case from the Files", a multiple-witness Nocturnal Lights case which has a number of unusual features and which is still unexplained.

**From Around The World* includes sea-monsters, big cats, and the return of India's "Monkey-Man". I love that guy.

Finally, for YUFOS members who attend our monthly meetings, we have had to change our venue yet again.

Last month, The Mosley's Arms public house - home to YUFOS' meetings since December last year - was unceremoniously closed down by The Brewery, and our July meeting was abruptly cancelled.

The official reason is that the pub was not doing enough business to warrant it remaining open. However, only a month before, celebrated authors and *Discovery Channel* Superstars Dr. David Clarke and Mr. Andrew Roberts had entertained us with their investigations into *Britain's Secret UFO Hunters*, and this fact has to be taken into consideration. Will the Government stop at nothing to silence them? Even more pointedly, maverick U.S. ufologist and *PRB* scribe Tom Bolloxinski was about to unveil secret NASA video footage of "UFOs disguised as ice-crystals" at the July meeting...coincidence? Tom doesn't think so.

Anyway, from August onwards, our new meeting place will be The Old Queen's Head, Pond Street, Sheffield City Centre. In quite a fortan twist, this pub is apparently 'The Oldest Pub in Sheffield', has secret tunnels leading from it's cellars, links to Mary Queen of Scots, and at least one resident ghost...so we should be right at home.

Hope you enjoy the issue...

THE VIEW FROM BRITAIN

THE JENNY RANGLES COLUMN

(Originally published in The MUFON JOURNAL, May 2001)

(Editor's note :Please bear in mind the original date of publication. YUFOS extends its thanks to Jenny & to Dwight Connely, editor of *The MUFON Journal*, for permission to reproduce this work.)

This month I thought that I would describe something about the way that the British government investigates UFO reports and why it has been so difficult to find out the truth. There has been a lot of progress in unravelling this matter recently.

We have long known that the UK was one of the first countries to debate UFOs in its parliament. In fact this happened as long ago as 1913. This was a time just before the outbreak of World War I when fears of a German invasion were high. Then admiralty lord Winston Churchill (three decades before he led the country against the Nazi threat) became intrigued and concerned by sightings of strange lights in the sky that in retrospect we can recognise as very similar to the US airship wave of 1896/7. As a result he posed questions and demanded answers from ministers.

Because these lights were often seen in vulnerable locations (channel ports and the eastern coast) there were inevitable fears that they might be Zeppelins that were spying as a prelude to invasion. After the war it became clear that no such threat from Germany was then possible and Churchill's warnings were probably as much a political manipulation of the UFO scare as they were a genuine belief that the Kaiser was using air power and might bomb London (an idea being popularised by political science fiction stories from people like HG Wells).

Indeed, the truth is likely to be that many of these sightings were misperceptions of the planet Venus - very bright and easy to see from coastal towns and the flat East Anglian landscape at the time and readily triggering social panic given the prevailing circumstances. But this at least demonstrates that the British government were willing to take a UFO threat seriously long ago.

SECRECY RULES

Britain's obsession with secrecy (as it must seem from an American perspective) needs to be seen in context. For the past 100 years this

island has lived under the constant fear of invasion. Between 1940 and 1942 in particular it stood alone facing a Europe overrun by Hitler with the expectation of a massed sea borne landing and constant aerial attack as an everyday occurrence. Even after the war a vast array of radar, front line air bases and nuclear missiles were lined up along the east facing the Soviet Union and this expectation of imminent attack from over the water was still a constant undercurrent.

Even today, in a post cold war era, much of this technology is still there - at places like the Fylingdales radar base and the Menwith Hill complex in Yorkshire (operated by the NSA) as well as the still active air bases of East Anglia such as Lakenheath.

It is inevitable that major security precautions were necessary and this instilled a mentality into the population as a whole (not to mention the military). So a 'cover-up to protect oneself' way of life has simply become so engrained into British society that it shows only slow signs of eroding - despite growing protestations about civil liberties.

Britain has no freedom of information laws on the same level as the US (although this is a position that has changed under the Blair government to provide signs of free flowing information at all). It does have a very strict Official Secrets Act that actively prevents information from being shared with the public. All service personnel (and many others in none active posts) have to sign this to prevent them sharing data that the powers-that-be feel would be unwise to let out.

This has pervaded life so much that there have been several foolish attempts to ban memoirs written by former government workers - despite the fact that these books can easily be published outside the UK and brought back into the country quite legally (!) and with the internet era meaning that they can also be on line in moments.

Restrictions such as banning the release of inventories from government canteens

(presumably in case the enemy blockade supplies of a particular brand of tea!) have occurred. And more disturbing civil liberties issues (such as patients not even having automatic right of access to their own medical records). These have ensured that much hope of getting the kind of information from the British government about UFOs that is now commonplace in other nations has been a long time in coming.

But the pressure of membership of the EC (the European Union) and the sheer inevitability that some kind of FOI act had to come about has gradually eased the situation. Now, for the first time, we have a genuine burst of knowledge as to British government interest in UFOs. Data is flowing onto the public record. And the end of the cover up as we know it is certainly in sight.

POWER GAMES

In the not too distant past the only thing we knew about the MoD (Ministry of Defence) interest in UFOs was what they chose to tell us. They had a department - run basically by a middle rank civil servant - that spent a very limited amount of time collating reports from the public. This had existed since the early 1960s at least (the earliest date to which records were kept - the MoD claiming they had routinely destroyed them at 5 year intervals prior to a 1967 wave that saw the government order their retention).

This department, variously known as 'DS 8' (Defence Secretariat) and - more recently - Air Staff 2 A - had an officer who did a lot of paper work and interacted with the public on issues like low flying aircraft complaints and funny lights in the sky. UFOlogists got to know these people (who generally stayed a couple of years then moved up - this was not seen as a prestigious job). I have exchanged letters over the years with maybe 10 of these people and met one (Pam Titchmarsh) when in August 1983 she was caught off guard and agreed to discuss the Rendlesham Forest case after myself and two colleagues turned up at her door waving the then not publicly disclosed (and banned) Halt memo.

From these discussions the MoD position on UFOs was trotted out (as it still is by the present incumbent) almost like a litany. The words are virtually copied from 30 years ago in fact! The MoD investigates UFOs to discover if they have any defence potential. They have

never found cases that do but cannot presume none ever will appear. They do not investigate beyond ruling out the defence potential to a point where any identification behind a UFO is proven. Although sometimes they 'guess' at answers in figures released (suggesting in the release these are more than guesses when in truth they rarely are).

Most people in this posting have no interest in UFOs. The job is a chore and they probably find it pretty awful having to answer letters from fervent UFO enthusiasts convinced they are engaging in a cover up of major alien contacts when they never get that kind of case. I once asked the person in charge why they never release information on cases like Lakenheath in 1956 (an alleged multiwitness radar-visual during which RAF planes were sent on an intercept) - and was told, following a denial that the Air Staff had even heard of the story - 'You tell us about cases like this - we never get them.'

All of which certainly left me curious. And that curiosity was further aroused when the man who ran this office between 1991 and 1994 decided two years later to write his exploits as a book and enter the UFO lecture circuit. That man was Nick Pope - now well known as a UFOlogist and still working with the MoD (in another capacity).

I had exchanged letters with Nick during his time at the Air Staff as I was Director of Investigations with Britain's primary national group (BUFORA). Whilst he offered the usual platitudes in his written replies, his personal interest in UFOs shone through from day one and he often went the extra mile and assisted on cases and even was happy to have personal discussions with investigators about ongoing cases. His opinions about the subject are no sham. He was a rarity - a genuinely interested person in a job to which most others never gave much thought.

But in his own way Nick affirmed to me the real problem with the MoDs position on UFOs.

THE DICHOTOMY

The problem is - if the MoD tell the truth (and I think the Air Staff do tell the truth as they see it) - then how can they justify keeping open this department? A department that takes up money and yet appears never to get any really interesting cases, never has any that actually impinge on the MoDs responsibility (defence)

and - so far as their records go - are nearly all explained away as misperceptions?

Imagine you set up a government office 40 years ago to determine whether any government minister ever grew two heads. You quickly established that this idea is rather silly and that none ever did so. In fact reports to this effect usually have no hard evidence to support them. Nor did the issue of government ministers having two heads ever remotely effect national security since it never really happened. How long do you think that department would survive cost cutting measures and a media determined to root out frivolity?

So - in effect - the MoD could only really justify still pursuing UFO investigations if this work was in some way useful. But according to the statements it makes it is hard to see in what ways it can be useful if it never finds what it is looking for! (One possible caveat I have heard is that UFO data is like a ground observer corps for possible aircraft flying over us from a foreign power - so the sightings serve that purpose of logging data. But given the lethargy of MoD investigation - send out a letter - wait for a reply - etc, etc - and the instantaneous radar and other coverage long available it is absurd to think that the MoD would rely on reports from ordinary citizens to tell them anything they did not already know by better means).

When Nick Pope published his first book *Open Skies, Closed Minds* in 1996 it rather made the same point. I had hoped he would reveal startling cases that the MoD preferred not to talk about - but he would (!) - the sort that made it necessary to be prudent and keep open the Air Staff office. The kind of case that all UFO groups get now and again that makes us realise that amidst the stars and aircraft and meteor misperceptions 'something' is clearly going on.

Yet - whilst I have no doubt that Nick really does believe in UFOs and the ETH from the accumulation of data he has seen - it cannot really be as a consequence of what he is telling us is in the MoD files. Since these barely reflect any UFO reality - let alone alien presence - most are trivia and even the best often have possible resolutions. His view seems to depend more on the wider consensus of UFO evidence - the sort of case that impresses many UFOlogists. But the sort of case that apparently the Air Staff don't much

see.

His book revealed very little that was not known to UFOlogy and no stunning cases during his time at the Air Staff. I suspect BUFORA probably got a few better cases during the same three years. So - as noted - his revelations (honest as I am sure they are) did not explain to me why this Air Staff department actually survives. Yet survive it still does - five years after Nick's book.

IN SEARCH OF SECRET FILES

In my conversations with Nick he has made clear that he thinks his department 'was' essentially the MoD UFO team and there was no secret department somewhere getting the better cases. I am sure he believes that. But I do suspect that he may not be correct.

Why not? Many reasons. For one I spoke at length to a man - Ralph Noyes - in fact he gave me an on camera interview (as did Nick Pope) for a documentary that I made in 1996 for BBC television and it proved a swansong as he died soon afterwards.

Noyes was (in the 1960s and 1970s) head of an entire MoD division that included the Air Staff Unit that Pope later ran. Although Ralph was no ETH supporter he was certain that there were real UFOs and believed that the MoD were baffled as to their true nature (hence the ongoing monitor). He told me that he had seen gun camera film taken from RAF jets in pursuit of these objects. I asked Nick Pope but he was never shown this footage. To me that (along with other things Noyes told me) implies that there may be UFO data that exists in places that the people who run the Air Staff team never get to see. Presumably the reason is obvious. They don't have a high enough clearance.

Then there are the high level military witnesses - such as Wing Commander Cyril George Townsend Withers (a wonderfully old style British name!) He had a remarkable daylight encounter whilst on board an experimental RAF jet engaged in secret radar experiments. And he was never debriefed. Puzzled as to why the MoD were so disinterested he pushed and could only discover that beyond the official Air Staff that acted as an interface with the public there was a more covert research centre that was coming to the conclusion that UFOs might indeed be alien craft. They were so secretly they relied on methods other than witness interview so as to not alert the public

to their presence. But he never found out more than that. Despite his high rank he had no need to know.

Then there were the mysterious Men in Black. In 1997 I published a book on my research into this area (The truth behind the MIB - St Martins Press) and reported that witness after witness in the UK had alleged to me (and others) visitation by figures from the MoD who had effectively persuaded them into silence. There was no way these people were all making this story up. It was too consistent. And there was a clear pattern to the kind of case that brought this response (only a small percentage of all sightings did).

I asked Nick Pope to comment. He said that the Air Staff did not send people out whom these witnesses could be describing (although possibly as a personal interest in the past a few such visits may have occurred from air base commanders). But these witnesses were not seeing uniformed officers or people correctly identifying themselves as 'Lt A from the local base'. They were being visited by government agents with some kind of research unit.

So Nick suggested to me that these witnesses were mistakenly describing encounters with what he termed 'Walter Mitty' characters - basically screwball UFOlogists that had pretended to be from a secret government agency to get their kicks. Once or twice maybe. Often over the years - I doubt it!

I am sure Nick thought this the best answer to this dilemma. But I don't buy it. These witnesses that I have met have in my view been visited by just who they say they have - some government agency sufficiently interested to try to silence them. These people are not threatened (Al Bender style). They are cojoused and persuaded in diplomatic fashion that it is in their best interests not to talk. Crackpot UFOlogists would not be that subtle!

Moreover, the gradual trickle of information from the MoD in recent times adds to the evidence for this secret department. The UFO documentation has gone onto the Public Record Office in Kew and myself and others have haunted the place perusing its dusty shelves. Although most of the data released is 30 years old (as the MoD have a policy to retain information from public view for at least that long - sometimes much longer) The workshop gets the high grade cases direct from other sources (eg jet intercepts) and

there is now a trend to give up more and more and old rules can bend. The picture that has been emerging is very clear from these hard documents.

There 'are' other agencies beyond the Air Staff that pursue UFO reports. One of these is the DSTI (Directorate of Scientific and Technical Intelligence) - where intelligence officers and MoD scientists study interesting cases. Often they take over the best cases from the Air Staff. And whilst there is some feedback to the Air Staff it seems limited and the DSTI records themselves are much more elusive. If - for example - the high grade cases went direct to DSTI and by passed the Air Staff (as they may do in some way) then it might be difficult to find out.

The other agency involved is a Defence Intelligence Unit - whose identity was accidentally revealed when it was not properly censored off a few released files. This covert intelligence agency unit is probably from where the visits to witnesses originate - indeed there is mounting evidence of this from a careful piecing together of the files at the Public Record Office.

SO WHERE NOW?

Where does this leave us? It is increasingly apparent that the Air Staff team is a bit like a shop window. The MoD put a clerk there to deal with the awkward customers (noisy UFOlogists, for instance) and to field the largely unwanted trivia from the public - all the aircraft and stars they misreport as UFOs. It serves a useful purpose of showing to the nation that they are doing something about UFOs and the officer put in charge has no awareness of anything much beyond this (other than realising that DSTI exists as they sometimes consult with them on UFO issues).

But in so far as these civil service clerical officers are concerned they are running the UFO shop and can honestly answer questions - like do you get any alien abductions or car stops reported - by saying - no we don't 'you tell us about these but we never see them'.

However, there is a secret workshop that exists somewhere at the back of the store. The public don't see it - only the shop window with this poor clerk trying to be truthful and facing the wrath of the public who think they are involved in a cover up (when they are not). possibly also seeks to prevent any publicly reported cases of importance from getting

too widely discussed by meeting and dissuading the witness. The civil servant in the shop window may well not know how he or she is being used.

So where is this covert location? The quest has been on to use Britain's allegedly new found interest in freedom of information to hunt for it and to access these previously unseen files. Quite a few people are now convinced it does exist. Just before his death Ralph Noyes told me he had found it and spoken to the place and they were stunned that he bluffed through with his UFO knowledge and high level of MoD clearance. A few people know where it is.

Efforts are ongoing to test the resolve of the British government to withhold this information at the same time as making public statements about accountability. Things are happening and I am quite hopeful that we might learn if there is such a secret repository of UFO data and if so what exists there.

We may be closer than ever before to finally resolving the question - why does the MoD investigate a phenomenon that publicly it seems to be saying has no apparent relevance to national security?

SCOTLAND 'OUT OF THIS WORLD' FOR UFO SIGHTINGS

By Kevin Schofield, PA News Sun 23 Jun 2002

Scotland was today dubbed "the Costa Del Sol for aliens" after coming top of a league table of the world's UFO hotspots. Researchers have discovered that Scotland has the highest concentration of UFO sightings of any country in the world.

The results, published to coincide with International UFO Day, show that there are 300 reported UFO sightings in Scotland a year four times as many per square kilometre than France and Italy, who come joint second in the rankings.

Scotland also records the highest number of UFO sightings per head of population, with the figure once again four times higher than second placed Canada.

The research was commissioned by VisitScotland, the country's national tourist body, and a spokesman said: "This confirms that Scotland is the nearest thing there is to the Costa del Sol for aliens."

Scotland's reputation as a UFO hotspot stems from the early 1990s, when there were dozens of sightings in and around the village of Bonnybridge in Stirlingshire. The area quickly became known as the 'Falkirk triangle' and there were also more sightings in nearby West Lothian.

Bonnybridge councillor Billy Buchanan even called for a UFO visitors' centre to be built in the village to cash in on the phenomenon. Stirling-based UFO expert Ron Halliday,

author of the books *UFO Scotland* and *UFOs: The Scottish Dimension*, said: "When you think of the number of sightings in Scotland compared to the size of its population, it is phenomenal." Mr Halliday also explained why he thought there were so many strange sightings in the Bonnybridge area in particular. He said: "One theory is that the area around Bonnybridge is some kind of window into another dimension.

"That would explain why some people see a UFO and others don't because a UFO is some kind of paranormal phenomenon rather than a nuts and bolts spaceship."

Graham Birdsall, editor of *UFO Magazine*, offered another explanation as to why Scotland has become a UFO hotspot.

He said: "UFOs tend to be attracted to regions that are fairly remote. Plus, if you have a remote area, look out for airbases Scotland is littered with airbases. In 90% of UFO reports, a bit of diligent research will produce a simple explanation, but that still leaves 10% remaining unexplained."

According to the research, Scotland has 0.004 UFO sightings per square kilometre and one sighting per 17,000 inhabitants. By contrast, France has just 0.001 sightings per square kilometre and one sighting for every 86,857 of its citizens. And although the USA has 2,000 sightings a year, that works out at just 0.0002 per square kilometre and one sighting for every 136,450 people.

RETURN TO D.C.

F-16's SCRAMBLED OVER WASHINGTON: BUT WAS IT TO INTERCEPT UFOs?

By Dave Baker

BREAKING NEWS: As this issue was in it's final stages of production, a story hit American TV news channels, and subsequently the world wide web, which could prove to be either the biggest UFO story of the year, or the biggest let-down since Jeffrey Archer escaped the death penalty.

On Friday, 26th July, rumours began to spread over the internet and the airways that at least one UFO had been seen over Washington D.C., and that Andrews Air Force Base had scrambled F-16's to intercept it.

US. UFO researcher Kenny Young posted the following transcript of the *FOX News Channel* report to internet discussion forum *UFO Updates* on Friday 26 July:

The following transcript is a word-for-word rundown of their report, as I caught on video as it was broadcast. Note the clear emphasis the reportage placed on the discrepancies from ground witness testimony vs. (alleged) pilot testimony. Again, thanks to FOX News for some cutting edge journalism here.

Transcript of FOX NEWScast, dated JULY 26, 2002 around 7:40 p.m. E.D.T.

SHEPARD SMITH: The night time skies over the nation's capital alive with blue and orange lights streaking across the sky, so say a lot of panicked people who called in to a radio station, no joke here. American fighter jets in hot pursuit..

NORAD confirmed to FOX News that 2 F-16s did scramble, but found nothing! A mystery in the sky above Andrews Air Force Base... that's the one The President uses. Fox report now from Brian Wilson live in our D.C. newsroom. Brian?

BRIAN WILSON: Fair to say, Shepard. A lot more questions than answers at this point, but something strange was going on in the Maryland night sky.

Here is what we know; 1:00 a.m. the folks at NORAD saw something they couldn't identify in Maryland airspace, not far from the nation's capitol. The track it was taking caused them some concern so they scrambled 2 DC Air National Guard jets to check things out.

Now, DC Air National Guard confirms that 2 F-16s from the 113th Wing were vectored to intercept whatever it was that NORAD was worried about. However, when the pilots got where they were

supposed to be, they said they didn't see anything when they arrived on the scene.

Now the folks at NORAD would not provide details about the exact location, direction or speed of the object they were tracking.

Now independently, a number of folks who live in Waldorf, Maryland, which is not far from Andrews Air Force Base and not far from the nation's capitol, called local radio station WTOP to say that about the same, they witnessed a fast moving, bright blue light in the sky. They go on to claim that the light was being chased by military jets.

One witness tells the radio station that the jets were right on its tail. Quote: "as the thing would move, a jet was right behind it..." end of quote.

An investigation is underway. But National Guard spokesman Captain Sheldon Smith says, and this is another quote, "We don't have any information about funny lights."

By the way, this just happens to be the 50th anniversary of a series of still-unexplained sightings over the nation's capitol, a story that made banner-headline news in 1952. Shepard, we'll continue to watch for this.

SHEPARD SMITH: And now it can be told... Brian Wilson, live in Washington.

END OF TRANSCRIPT. Typed from videotape of FOX NEWS 7:00 p.m. E.D.T. newscast

Filed, Kenny Young, 7-27-02

The following day, Saturday 27 July, *The Washington Post* carried the following story:

F-16s Pursue Unknown Craft Over Region By Steve Vogel

For Renny Rogers, it was strange enough that military jets were flying low over his home in Waldorf in the middle of the night. It was what

he thinks he saw when he headed outside to look early yesterday that floored him.

"It was this object, this light-blue object, travelling at a phenomenal rate of speed," Rogers said. "This Air Force jet was right behind it, chasing it, but the object was just leaving him in the dust. I told my neighbour, 'I think those jets are chasing a UFO.' "

Military officials confirm that two F-16 jets from Andrews Air Force Base were scrambled early yesterday after radar detected an unknown aircraft in area airspace. But they scoff at the idea that the jets were chasing a strange and speedy, blue unidentified flying object.

"We had a track of interest, so we sent up some aircraft," said Maj. Douglas Martin, a spokesman for the North American Aerospace Defence Command in Colorado, which has responsibility for defending U.S. airspace. "Everything was fine in the sky, so they returned home."

At the same time, military officials say they do not know just what the jets were chasing, because whatever it was disappeared. "There are any number of scenarios, but we don't know what it was," said Maj. Barry Venable, another spokesman for NORAD.

Radar detected a low, slow-flying aircraft about 1 a.m. yesterday, according to a military official. Controllers were unable to establish radio communication with the unidentified aircraft, and NORAD was notified. When the F-16s carrying air-to-air missiles were launched from Andrews, the unidentified aircraft's track faded from the radar, the military official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Pilots with the D.C. Air National Guard's 113th Air Wing, which flew the F-16s from Andrews, reported nothing out of the ordinary, NORAD officials said.

"It was a routine launch," said Lt. Col. Steve Chase, a senior officer with the wing, which keeps pilots and armed jets on 24-hour alert at Andrews to respond to incidents as part of an air defence system protecting Washington after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Rogers remains convinced that what he saw was not routine. "It looked like a shooting star

with no trailing mist," he said. "I've never seen anything like it."

An all news station in Washington, DC (WTOP-AM) reported that "several people" called the station to report "a bright blue or orange ball moving very fast, being chased by jets."

On Saturday, researcher Kenny Young contacted the Charles County Sheriff's headquarters in Waldorf, Maryland and spoke with the duty officer. The officer said that he was not on-duty the previous evening and had not been advised of any such reports. He did undertake a brief search of the records but did not see reference to any reports of unusual lights in his logs.

A Charles County office of the Maryland State Police was called next, and Young was informed by the dispatcher who had been on duty the previous night that she had received no reports of unusual lights, and had no knowledge of any police officers reporting anything similar.

Some people have speculated that the 'blue light / orange ball' reported by witnesses such as Renny Rogers was nothing more than the afterburner's of a leading F-16, and that the jets "chasing" it were merely following it in formation. Certainly, the description does tally.

Others have argued that there would be no reason for one jet to use its afterburners while the others didn't, that the aircraft would have to be very low in order for the afterburner to be visible, and that the burst of speed produced would be such that by the time residents had heard the roar of the jets and gone outside to look, the F-16s would have been well out of sight.

In later press releases, Major Snyder said that the 'radar data' indicated the 'object' was a private plane. He also suggested that some of the radar data concerning the simultaneous track of the F-16's and the 'object' may not be releasable due to 'operational policy'.

More, if and when it happens...

“RODS” EXPLAINED?

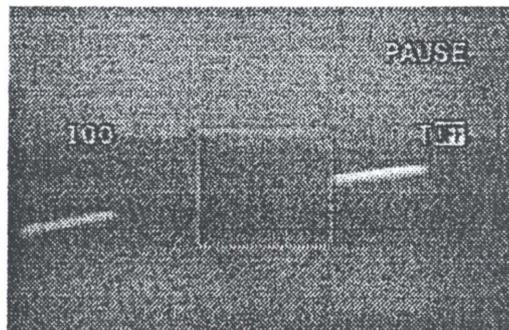
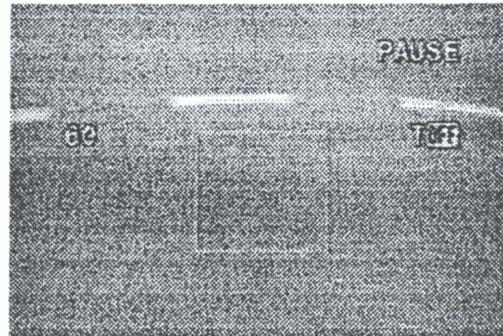
According to Jose Escamilla, the (phenomenon known as) “rods” in the pictures are cylindrical animals moving at incredibly high speed, “frozen” in the pictures by high-speed exposures. But one implication of the “two rod lengths per frame” correlation shown in the pictures on Escamilla’s website and on the Fox video, is that, since the NTSC video is about 30 frames per second, a one-foot-long “rod” would only fly at a speed of about 41 MPH, which makes it hard to understand why they are never seen with the naked eye.

An alternative explanation is that a more-or-less spherical object videographed at 1/60 second exposure (the slowest shutter setting on standard CCD cameras) will show motion blur with exactly this same pattern. For example, at 1/60 second exposure, an insect flying at 41 MPH can look like a foot-long “rod”, with one foot gaps between successive frames. Each “rod” is simply a continuous blur captured in one field during the 1/60 exposure (i.e. the field capture time is always 1/60 second, so a 1/60 exposure means that the “shutter is open” for the entire field capture time), and each gap is a section of that same continuous blur that was captured by the alternate field in the same frame.

Moreover, at 1/100 second exposure, which is the next step up in most CCD cameras, the “rod” produced by the motion blur will appear to be moving precisely 3-1/3 “rod lengths” per frame, exactly like the last picture shown above! (In this case, part of the continuous blur during each 1/60 second field capture time has been discarded by the camera to produce a shorter exposure time of 1/100 second.)

The following pictures were composited from tests in which I tossed small balls of aluminium foil in front of the camera. (The balls are about 1/8 inch in diameter and they are tossed about a foot in front of the lens.)

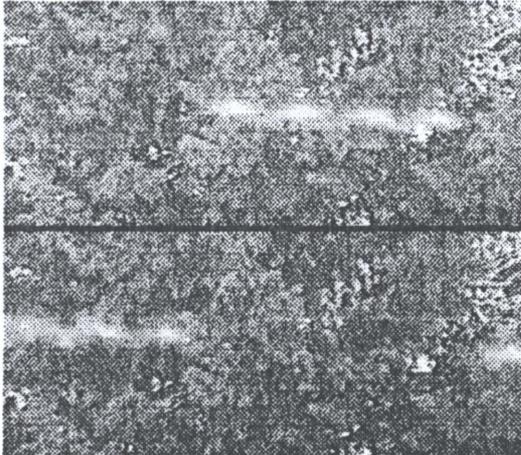
The exposure was forced to 1/60 second in the first picture, and to 1/100 in the second picture. (The box in the centre is an “aiming” box generated in the camera.)



For a better comparison to Escamilla’s “rod” pictures above, the following two pictures are of a white bug shot outdoors at 1/60. Both pictures were made from the same set of frames, but one was composited using just the first field from each frame, and the other is just the second field. (Notice that if the two sets of fields were composited together, the bug would be making a continuous streak.) Again we see the “two lengths per frame” and in this picture we can also see an undulating or “sinusoidal” pattern of the beating wings, which is also seen in many “rod” pictures.



In this set of pictures, which were again composited from the two sets of fields for the same frames, a large bug flew by within a few feet of the camera, and the large beating wings have been captured fairly well in the setting sunlight. (In this picture and the one above, the sun is behind the bug to the left of the frame, and it is being blocked from directly entering the camera lens, which is a technique commonly used for "rod" pictures, e.g. the top picture on this page).



"THE INCREDIBLE SKYDIVING ROD"

Escamilla's site also has a "rod" that was videographed by Fox TV. (and shown in the TV special - DB) In this series, the camera was following a skydiver, so the images show the cliff face behind the skydiver as blurred. (Although Escamilla calls this a "high speed" shot, apparently he is referring to the estimated 95 MPH speed of the skydiver, since the cliff face blurring implies a slow shutter setting.)

The picture below is an attempt to composite the "rod" relative to identifiable features on the cliff face.

Using the cliff as a reference, the "rod" appears to be falling like a bomb, slowly rotating downward as it falls, but after the "rod" turns (which is not shown) it would appear to rotate upward as it flew back toward the skydiver.



The picture below is an attempt to composite the "rod" relative to the skydiver's helmet. Using the skydiver as a reference, the "rod" appears to "skid" unnaturally across the frame before making the turn.



In the following picture, the "rod" images have been composited relative to the frame itself, specifically the lower corners of each frame. Using the frame (i.e. the camera) as a reference, the "rod" appears to follow a smooth flight path, and once again we see the "rod" moving two lengths per frame!



It would seem that the most reasonable explanation for this picture is a very small bug that is not only flying near the camera lens, but is flying relative to the lens, possibly inside of (or contemplating a landing on?) the lens shield. (Cameras such as the Betacam, which was likely used for this shot, usually have a large shield or hood extending beyond the lens face.)

FROM AROUND THE WORLD...AND BEYOND!!!

UFOs, conspiracies, fortune and paranormal events compiled by Dave Baker

POSSIBLE THUNDERBIRD PAIR REPORTED IN NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

From Researcher Stan Gordon - July 2 2002

I have received a sighting report of two huge black birds on June 26, 2002.

The sighting reportedly occurred in a mountainous area between the towns of Tunkhannock and Nicholson, PA in Wyoming County. The primary witness had stepped out on his back porch at about 9:05 P.M., when his attention was drawn to two huge black birds which were approaching from the north. His first impression was that they were Herons, but soon realized that the color was wrong, and "they were huge, much larger than any bird I have ever seen."

The two huge birds landed at the top of a very tall coniferous tree. The witness stated that the wingspan appeared to be wider than the branches, just below where they had landed. The body size was estimated to be about six feet from head to tail. The witness also mentioned that the legs were not long like a Heron, or Crane. The oddest feature was the shape of the wings, which according to the witness "Their wings looked bat-like."

The tree where the birds landed, seemed as though it would break from their weight. The witness yelled for others in the house to come outside to look. Another family member was able to see the huge black birds as they passed overhead, and headed for some woods. The witness looked in a bird book, and said that the closest species that he could find in shape, was a Black Cormorant, although the size of the birds he saw is out of the range of the Cormorant. The witness looked at the tree, and checked the size of the branches in the tree where the odd birds had rested. He estimated that the wingspan would have been close to 12 feet or somewhat larger.

Investigation note:

June, 2002-Greensburg, PA

I went out to interview several members of a family who live in a rural area outside of Greensburg. They report a number of strange incidents around their home in early June. For

example at about 2:45 A.M. on the morning of June 7, 2002, one person heard an odd sound like a "swoosh," giving the impression that a huge bird had just past over. It is interesting to note that this location is not far from South Greensburg, where the possible Thunderbird was reported last September. This family was apparently unaware of the previous alleged incident.

SOMERSET BIG CAT

A farmer has built a trap in the hope of snaring a beast which he says has savaged his sheep. Robert Harding has also taken video footage of the carnage left behind by the mystery animal which attacked three of his herd last week.

They were ripped apart by what appears to be a large animal as they grazed in a field in Somerset.

Mr Harding, who has farmed at Valley View Farm, Dundry, near Bristol, for 40 years, described the damage inflicted to the sheep as "unbelievable" and said he had never seen injuries like them.

He said: "There's a tremendous amount of flesh taken which points to something really big."

Mr Harding has constructed a mesh-type trap which will be baited in the hope of catching the creature. But he said the true impact of the deaths on his flock might not be known until next spring.

"If the remaining ewes are so stressed they might not be able to conceive," he said.

Mr Harding has videoed the dead animals in the hope of attracting expert interest in the Somerset big cat.

"The first thing you think is that it's a neighbour's dog. But the amount of flesh which has gone from the carcasses is colossal." A statement from Avon and Somerset police said there was not "substantial" evidence to warrant police taking action.

Mr Harding said that foot-and-mouth disease had caused added difficulties in attempting to keep livestock away from the beast.

"The government wants us to keep livestock movements to a minimum so we're really relying on the public to help out," he said.

RETURN OF 'THE MERE MONSTER' (news.bbc.co.uk) (See PRB Vol.5 # 9, March 2002)

A giant fish which has attacked swans at a bird sanctuary has been spotted by wildlife experts. At least two swans have been hurt by the underwater creature nicknamed the Monster of Martin Mere which hides in a lake in West Lancashire.

Now a four-man team says it has located the attacker which they think could be a Wels Catfish from eastern Europe.

Although the biggest ever caught was 16-feet long, Jonathan Downes, one of the team from the Centre for Fortean Zoology in Exeter, thinks this one is a tiddler by comparison - perhaps seven feet long and weighing 24 stone.

The mere is home to scores of swans

He said: "If it is a Wels, it is almost certainly a British record."

The team is spending four days at the Wildfowl Trust at Martin Mere using infra-red cameras, military-style night lights and sonar equipment to find out more about the mystery beast.

The giant fish was first spotted on Thursday by team member Richard Freeman who is hoping to capture the creature on film.

He said: "I have seen something black and shiny snaking around in the water in almost the same place as the original sighting several months ago.

"It certainly looked like a Wels catfish

"However we will be carrying out further investigations over the weekend in hope of obtaining photographic proof"

Mr Freeman said the fish had no scales, had a "rubbery" appearance, was oily-black in colour and moved quickly through the water.

"I can't say for sure that it was a Wels catfish. But if a pike had attacked the swans there would have been wounds.

"This thing seems to come up underneath and drag its prey down under the water."

Reports of a larger-than-life creature living in the 17-acre lake were first voiced four years ago and the Martin Mere monster has since become a talking point among people living near the 380-acre reserve which regularly attracts Hooper and Bewick swans.

HE'S BACK! MONKEY MAN SCARE GRIPS EASTERN INDIA

(Agence France-Presse Patna, July 21)

Almost a year after residents of Delhi were terrorised by the alleged attacks of an elusive monkey-like creature, the eastern city of Patna says it too is facing similar attacks from an ape-like animal.

Local newspapers here are full of reports of "mysterious monkey attacks" but police have scotched the stories and warned of strict action against those spreading rumours.

"There are rumours of a monkey-like machine, referred to as monkey-man that attacks those sleeping on rooftops and in open places at night," ON Bhaskar, Patna's police chief said.

"But it is a pure rumour as no one has actually lodged a case in any police station. There has not been any recognized case of injury. We have warned the public at large to be on guard against any rumour and help cops arrest those who spread such rumours."

Residents of Patna however were not reassured, with local newspapers headlining quotes from eyewitnesses and victims of the "monkey man".

"The monkey-man attacked and injured my son-in-law Joginder Singh Friday night when he was sleeping on the rooftop of my house," a newspaper quoted Bhagwat Sharan Singh of Patna's Mainpura colony as saying.

"He (the attacker) looked like a monkey." Some even alleged the creature "jumps and sparkles red and blue lights". Others described it as resembling a machine, operated by a remote control and "handled by anti-social elements to terrorise people".

Police chief Bhaskar said hospitals and doctors had been asked to report any case of injury attributed to the mysterious creature. Meanwhile, fear of the "monkey man" took an

ugly turn when a group of people beat up a Hindu Sadhu (saint) with a flowing beard, on suspicion that he was the creature.

The incidents reported in Patna seemed almost identical to the attacks reported in the Indian capital last May, when for more than a month, a "mysterious monkey-like creature" besieged New Delhi.

Descriptions agreed the creature was "black" and "ape-like" with "sharp claws," but varied on its height, with some reporting it was over six feet tall with red eyes, while others said it was about two feet tall.

GIRL STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

(Philip Whiteside, Leicester Mercury, 31 July 2002)

An 11-year-old girl was struck by lightning as she sat on the sofa of her living room.

Jade Greenwood was sitting with her grandmother, great grandmother and sister when the glowing red ball of lightning struck her on the head.

Jade said she was left with a faint red mark and felt as though someone had pinched her hard on the forehead and then on the leg.

The lightning struck at the Wigston home of Jade's grandmother, Jacqui, during the height of Monday's storms at 6.30pm.

Jacqui said: We were all sat on the couch. The patio doors were open and we had the front door open as well.

"Suddenly this red ball, with what looked like sparks coming from it, came in and went through the house. The charger for my electric wheelchair came on, a battery operated electrical game came on and a bouncy ball with a flashing spark inside started lighting up. It was gone within a couple of seconds and there was this almighty bang. Afterwards, there was a slight burning smell and we saw Jade was left with a red mark on her head."

Jade added: "It was just a massive shock. I felt like someone had pinched me really hard. I felt a slight burn on my head and then it felt like someone had set my leg on fire. I had two metal clips in my hair and was the only one of us wearing metal, so I think that is why it was attracted to me."

Mr Greenwood treated the singe with ice and took her grand-daughter to the doctor yesterday.

Professor David Llewellyn-Jones, an expert in atmospheric physics at Leicester University's Earth Observation Sciences department, said what the family had seen appeared consistent with ball lightning.

He said: "You get a build-up of electrical field around various objects, often just before a lightning strike. It's capable of ionizing the atmosphere which can result in a glow. It's relatively rare and it is often known as St Elmo's Fire."

SEA CREATURE SPOOKS SWIMMERS *(Herald News)*

PORTSMOUTH, Rhode Island USA -- A fun-filled day of swimming and fishing for one local group of friends and family turned into a nightmare that most only witness in the movies.

Fall River residents Dennis Vasconcellos, Rachel Carney, Joey Mailloux, Tracy Roberts, a young child and another woman were at Teddy's Beach in the Island Park section of Portsmouth Tuesday afternoon when things got a little scary.

Half the group was fishing, while the other half were either swimming or playing in the sand. But what seemed to be the perfect summer afternoon got turned upside down the moment Vasconcellos heard his fiancé, Carney, scream.

Carney was screaming for help, yelling that something was after her. An unknown ominous sea creature seemed to be toying with Carney, who was swimming beyond the 'Danger' sign posted at the quiet beach.

The sea creature -- described as being about 15-feet long, with four-inch teeth, greenish-black skin and a white belly -- was swimming around Carney and popping its head out of the water to expose its teeth and hiss in a manner that could not soon be forgotten, Carney said.

"I was deep out in the water and kept hearing this hissing sound. Then I saw its head come up showing me its big teeth," Carney said. "It kept rolling while it was swimming and knocking into my feet. I just froze."

In the meantime, Vasconcellos said he swam

out to her aide and just grabbed her from the backside and told her "don't look back."

"This thing was big. I mean it's head was almost the size of a basketball," Vasconcellos said. "I just kept backing in to shore, but it was looking at me and hissing. The other people around there were pulling their kids out of the water."

Within minutes, the pair was back near the beach and safe again.

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Centre for Marine Science and Technology in New Bedford, one of the leading marine science research centres in the region, has its lead aquaculturist baffled by the description of the serpent-like creature.

Ed Baker, the centre's lead aquaculturist, said Wednesday that the description given is unlike any animal he knows. He said it is conceivable that a tropical animal was swept northward through a strong and warm gulf current.

He said a piranha was recently found in Coventry, R.I., and an alligator is on the run in Lincoln, R.I.

Therefore, the mystery animal may have been placed in the water by a local resident or it may have been carried into Rhode Island waters from the south.

While the drama was playing out, Mailloux, who was nursing a badly wounded leg in the brackish water said he witnessed the whole thing.

"I just saw (Carney) swimming as fast as I've ever seen anyone go," Mailloux said. "Then I saw this big, big thing spinning around the two of them.

"It kind of looked like a giant eel to me, but I'm sure it wasn't because it was so big and had that white belly."

Mailloux and the others said it was difficult to get to sleep Tuesday night. He said he felt partly responsible because the sea creature may have been attracted to the blood pouring out from his leg into the water.

Mailloux, just minutes before, had caught a fish and slipped on the rocks near the beach, cutting his legs.

"I don't know if it was a shark or what. All I know is that (Carney and Vasconcellos) were

both hysterical when they got out of the water," Mailloux said. "I've lived near water for years and have never seen an animal like that, ever."

Vasconcellos is also a somewhat experienced fisherman and also stated that he has no idea what the creature was.

"My heart is still pounding. I don't want to seem scared but people should know to keep their children close, because that thing was definitely big enough to kill us," Vasconcellos said. "I thought I was dead."

Portsmouth police said Wednesday that they have not received any calls about the large animal. But Vasconcellos said he would be calling the police to report what he and the rest of his group saw.

Mailloux said he thinks the animal is nesting under the unusually warm waters of the protected cove. He said he saw the animal disappear near one of six broken-down piers in the area, which could be used as a nesting area.

"That thing was not from around here," Mailloux said. "I think it might have come up with the tropical stream of water and found a good place to breed this summer."

Baker said Mailloux's hypothesis about the animal breeding in the area is "somewhat of a stretch," and believes that the mysterious sea creature is probably in distress and is using the pier structure as a place to hide.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 10 September 2001

7:00pm – 10:00 pm

*THE OLD
QUEEN'S HEAD*

POND STREET

SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE

FROM THE FILES

MULTIPLE "NL" CASE OVER SHEFFIELD

By Dave Baker

The following case is re-printed here in a revised and expanded form from previous issues of *YUFOS Magazine*¹ (Vol.2#1 and Vol.2 #2) which newer subscribers will be unaware of.

It was one of my very first cases on forming the Yorkshire UFO Society, and fell right upon my doorstep. So much so that, had I looked out of my window at the right time on that particular night, I would almost certainly have witnessed the phenomenon myself. Under the ancient parameters of 'Sod's Law', though, I was on actually on my fourth can of lager, full of Chinese food, and watching a late-night re-run of a Clint Eastwood movie, with UFOs the furthest thing from my mind.

It was gone midnight, and when the telephone rang, my initial thought was to wonder who had died. Happily enough though, it was no bearer of bad news but an excited young man calling to report a UFO sighting he had experienced earlier that night. This single report would later become a multiple witness case, and this initial caller would become not only a leading member of YUFOS² but a good friend as well. Isn't ufology just warm and cuddly sometimes?

Anyway, I decided to review this case not only for newer members and readers of PRB, but in an attempt to gather all the information into one place, and in a more professional form than in those first stumbling issues of *YUFOS Magazine*.

On Saturday, 6th June 1998, a number of people saw unusual lights manoeuvring over the Parsons Cross / Longley/ Shiregreen area of Sheffield.

Although the sightings – little more than typical "Nocturnal Lights" - were in no way spectacular, it was the number of independent witnesses who thought these lights unusual enough to report them, which makes the case interesting.

I became aware of the sightings initially from a single report only an hour or so after the sighting. Deciding to report the sighting to *someone*, Jonathan Slater called the *UFO Magazine (UK)* "24-hour Hot-Line", but found instead a rather luke-warm recording. Not wanting to buy numerous posters, supplements, videos and books, Jon put down the phone and looked through the magazine's "groups" section, where he found my number.

At work the next day, a friend and work colleague reported seeing the same thing.

Two more witnesses were traced after one of them telephoned the *Sheffield Star* and spoke

to journalist David Clarke, who passed the report on to me, and another was found after she reported her own sighting to YUFOS member Mark Martin.

I will cover the individual reports in the order they apparently happened as opposed to how I received them from the witnesses involved.

It should be noted though that only two sets of independent witnesses knew each other.

WITNESS # 1

Anita Thorseby was driving along Elm Lane towards Hillsborough (*see fig 1.*) when she caught sight of bright lights in the sky ahead. They were so unusual that she pulled in and stopped outside Elm Lane Fire Station, and wound down her window for a better look. She glanced down and saw that, according to the dashboard clock at least, it was 11:15pm.

She described the objects as three vivid orange lights moving in a westerly direction (on her right) across the sky. They were circular or elliptical in shape and very sharply defined,

¹ The original title of this publication.

² One of YUFOS' own "Lone Gunmen"- or to judge by our bulging waistlines. "The Lone *Bun*-men"

about the size of a 5p held at arm's length. They appeared to be as bright as a street-lamp and made no sound as far as Anita could discern although there was little traffic at that time of night and so very little noise.

"They were moving too slow and were too low in the sky to be a plane, well below cloud level." Anita told me. "As I watched them, they were to my right, heading (East) towards Ecclesfield."

"Their movements were strange. They changed direction numerous times, but the turn was not like that of a plane, like a slow curve. If these objects turned, it was with a definite sharp angle turn."

As the lights moved into the distance, Anita turned to re-start her car, and noticed two more lights, identical to the first three, moving in the opposite direction, but in the same manner, west towards Hillsborough.

Altogether, Anita watched the lights for about ten minutes, until all had vanished from sight.

Anita's case was actually the last one I received, after she reported her sighting to a friend, YUFOS member Mark Martin. She had not heard of the sightings, nor read the report which appeared in *YUFOS Magazine*, and only mentioned it to Mark because she knew of his interest in UFOs.

WITNESSES # 2 & 3

The next witnesses in the time scale was actually my second contact. Ken Dickinson is a very good friend and work colleague, and he told me of his sighting on the following Monday morning. Knowing that I was interested in UFOs and of my formation of YUFOS, he excitedly told me of the event as soon as I entered work.

Ken and Linda Dickinson were returning home from visiting friends, and were driving along High Greave when Linda caught sight of the strange lights. The time was about 11:10 – 11:15 pm.

As he was driving, Ken was unable to look directly at the lights for too long, but agreed with Linda that initially there were five of the objects. They stopped the car on Lindsay Avenue, and both got out of the car for a closer look.

They could now see that there were four bright orange lights moving high in the sky, three in the front in a rough triangular formation, with another "trailing some distance behind". They travelled steadily in a north-easterly direction, moving with an "...up and down bobbing motion, like a yo-yo"

The fourth light followed the others for a distance, then abruptly dipped downwards, "...as though it was coming down to earth",

As it lost altitude, the couple thought that they could see something dark trailing behind it, which "flapped up and down." They thought with alarm that it was a hot-air balloon crashing, and it then vanished from sight, appearing to "come down" around Colley Road some distance away. (The following morning, Ken actually drove to the area to see if there was any trace of the "crashing" object, but found nothing.)

The other three lights continued on their original course and seemed to pick up speed, one of them making a sharp turn to the right. It appeared to be about to collide with one of the others, but they passed each other safely and continued onwards.

Concerned, Ken looked around for other witnesses, and caught the attention of a man hurrying past. Ken asked the man if he had seen the lights, but he seemed only vaguely interested and said he had not seen anything, and suggested they rang the police.

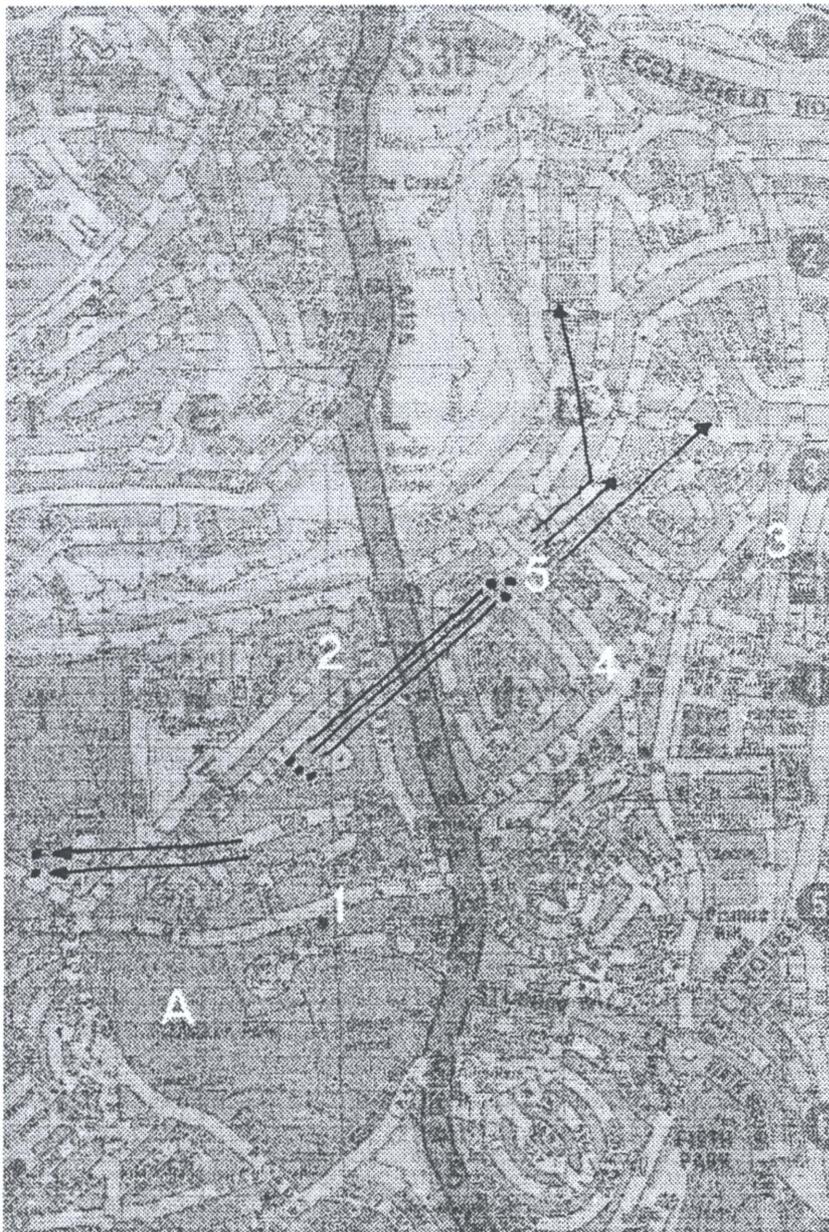
A moment later, as Ken & Linda were about to return to their car, a police cruiser drew alongside them, with the policeman in the passenger seat looking curiously at Ken, as if wondering what the couple were doing. Before Ken could speak to them though, the car picked up speed and took off, seemingly in the direction of the lights.

WITNESSES # 4, 5 & 6

Stephen Matthews, 15, and his brother Chris, 12, were exercising their dogs in their garden in Fircroft Road, Shiregreen, when they saw the lights.

At around 11:10 pm, their attention was drawn to a single gold-coloured light in the sky. As they watched, two similar lights joined it, arranging themselves to form a triangle, 'point'

WITNESS LOCATION MAP



- 1) Elm Lane Fire Station (Anita Thorlsbey, wit # 1)
- 2) Lindsay Avenue (Ken & Linda Dickinson, wit # 2, 3)
- 3) Fircroft Avenue (Matthews Family, wit # 4, 5, 6)
- 4) Molineaux Road (Ritchie Family, wit # 7, 8)
- 5) Molineaux Road (Slater Family, wit # 9, 10)

A: LONGLEY PARK

forwards. The lights were moving fast, on a straight course, and were described as being the size of a 10p held at arms length.

Stephen shouted his mother, who looked out of the window and saw the lights too. She then telephoned family friend Kathryn Ritchie (witness #7, below) as the objects were heading in the general direction of her home.

The Matthew's family watched as the lights moved out of sight. Stephen thought that he saw two of the objects "drop something black", but it was too dark to know for certain.

The lights were in sight for about 5 minutes.

Stephen added that afterwards the dogs "barked for a long period of time", but as the animals were quiet as the lights were present, this is probably not relevant.

WITNESSES # 7 & 8

Mrs. Ritchie received the telephone call from Mrs. Matthews at around 11:10pm as mentioned above. She immediately looked out of her front room window in an effort to see what all the fuss was about. She was unable to see anything unusual in the sky from her position, but she did see a number of people in the street, gazing upwards and talking excitedly. Even though she had just been speaking of UFOs, for a moment, she thought that these people were looking up at her house, but then realised that they were looking up and past the Ritchie house at the night sky.

She went to a window at the top of the stairs, which looks out onto the rear of their house, and saw the lights apparently described by Mrs. Matthews.

Mrs. Ritchie called her daughter Kathryn, and together they watched the three lights crossing the sky.

Kathryn, whom I spoke with in the most detail, described three gold or orange coloured lights moving at a high rate of speed in a triangular formation. They were very clearly defined, not fuzzy or pulsating, which Kathryn estimated were about the size of a match-head at arm's length.

Kathryn was sure that they were separate lights, and not all part of one object such as an aircraft.

The two women watched the lights for around a minute before they passed beyond the angle of the house.

Kathryn was so impressed by the unusual nature of the objects that she telephoned Sheffield Airport moments later, and was put straight through to Air Traffic Control. They confirmed that there was no known air traffic in the area at the time. Sheffield Airport is very small, and they have no actual radar and consequently could not confirm or deny Kathryn's story by radar.

They did, however, call major airports including Leeds/Bradford and Manchester, but they could not explain the sighting, and nothing anomalous was detected on their radars in the area at that time.

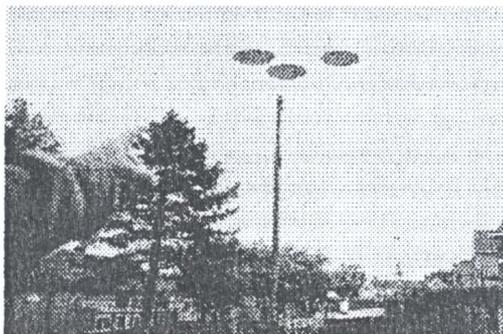
Kathryn also called local newspaper *The Sheffield Star*, where journalist Dave Clarke passed her details on to me.

WITNESSES # 9 & 10

Jon Slater lives on Molineaux Road some distance down from the Ritchie family. At 11:10pm he had just opened the front door in order to walk his dogs, when he was confronted by the sight of three unusual objects directly opposite in the sky ahead of him.

The objects were a very bright orange, arranged in a horizontal line, and were moving very slowly northeast, away from him.

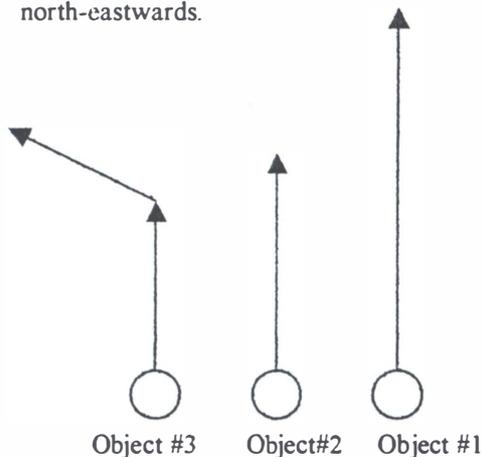
He estimated that they were about the size of a 10 pence piece held at arm's length, and were definitely individual objects, solid, clearly-defined against the low cloud, and apparently self-luminous. The lights did not strobe or flash.



Jon called for his mother to come and look at the lights, and once she had them in sight,

rushed inside to phone a friend of his who lives close by. (Unfortunately, his friend had been getting ready for bed and by the time he had pulled on his clothes and gone outside, the lights had gone.)

Returning to the doorstep, Jon saw that the lights were still very visible, and still heading north-eastwards.



As they watched, the 'right-hand' object suddenly picked up speed and shot off NE and out of sight, "faster than a jet". Jon had snapped his fingers to indicate the incredible speed.

The middle object then moved off ahead of the remaining one, stopped dead, and appeared to either diminish in brightness or vanish altogether.

Finally, the left-hand light picked up speed and followed the other two, abruptly turning at a sharp angle to the north-west, with no change in speed, and vanished off into the distance.

The Slater's watched the sky for some time afterwards but saw nothing else unusual.

Talking afterwards, Jon was particularly impressed by the sudden acceleration and speed of the objects, their ability to "stop dead" on the spot, and the sharp-angle turn. He was also impressed by the complete silence and the intensity of the lights, which he compared to the after-burner of a jet.

CONCLUSIONS

So what was it that so many people saw?

First of all we must remember that whatever they really were, the "lights" appeared and behaved strangely enough for so many

independent witnesses to think them extraordinary.

Although these objects were little more than what J Allen Hynek had termed "nocturnal lights" (NL), the lowest of his UFO categories and usually ignored by the seasoned ufologist, they showed certain qualities that stand them apart from their ilk.

*The number of lights. There appears to have been between 5 and three objects. By their independent movements these are obviously 'separate' objects and *not* different lights on a single object (such as an aircraft).

*The intensity and colour of the lights. These were not the white or yellow usually attributed to aircraft lights. Most witnesses stressed that the colour was gold, or a very bright orange.

*The lights did not strobe, flicker or flash, but remained constant like a lamp, and were sharply defined.

*Although no-one provided an estimation of altitude that can be relied on, all witnesses described the objects as being well below cloud level.

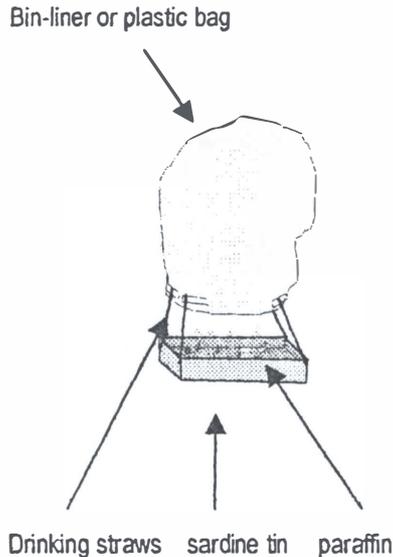
*The objects were in view for too long to have been meteors, or "shooting stars", which burn up in a few seconds. Even bolides rarely are visible for more than half a minute.

*Both Anita and Jon described "sharp-angle" turns, and a feeling that these were objects under some sort of control. At times the objects flew in a formation, keeping the same relative distance from each other.

All of the above appears to reject astronomical explanations such as meteors, satellites, planets, and conventional aircraft. Such as passenger jets and helicopters.

The speed of the 'departing' objects described by Jon also rejects the theory of city lights reflecting on the underside of birds. It can be argued that witness testimony cannot be relied on, and that Jon may have over-exaggerated the objects' speed when comparing it to a jet.

This may be true, but I still believe that even if the lights did not move "faster than a jet", they still moved fast enough for Jon to make that comparison, and that this certainly means faster than a bird.



One theory, which I did consider and which seems the most likely on the surface, is the "prank balloon."

Although there are numerous variations on a theme, a typical prank balloon is illustrated above and is easily constructed. A small tray, such as a sardine tin, is filled with paraffin or other flammable liquid, or propped-up birthday candles. "Struts" are made from drinking straws or balsa wood and taped to the tray and the edges of a plastic bag or bin-liner. When the paraffin or candles are lit, hot air fills the bag and causes it to rise into the air.

The reflection of the flames on the inside of the bag can be seen from a great distance, and can give the impression of a glowing sphere or disc.

The proximity of Longley Park ('A' on the map) to the initial witness sighting cannot be ignored. The darkness of the secluded park so late at night would be the perfect location for any hoaxer releasing prank balloons.

One of the identifying features of the prank balloon are witness descriptions such as "burning droplets of metal" or "blobs of fire" and are actually caused by gobbets of melting plastic falling to the ground as the 'balloon' burns itself up. Certainly, Ken (witness #2) and Stephen (witness #4) reported seeing something fall from the objects. Could this have been parts of the prank balloon's construction tumbling away?

Ken also described the objects moving in a "bobbing" motion, very like that of a balloon travelling on the wind. One method of

confirming a prank balloon as the explanation for a UFO report is conformance to wind direction. Although the weather was described as calm that night, wind currents can change dramatically at higher altitudes, and prank balloons could have been carried aloft at a reasonable pace even if the air appeared still at ground level.

However, the witnesses report that at times the lights held tight formation, at other times moved in separate directions, and - particularly in Jon's case - moved at exceptionally high speeds. Considering that the three objects noted by Jon were clearly flying at the same altitude, could wind currents move the objects separately, at varying speeds and in different directions? More importantly, could an air-current have blown them away at the speed Jon and his mother described?

It should be stressed that the police treat prank balloons seriously, as the 'balloon' usually disintegrates long before all the flammable liquid is exhausted. This can cause burning liquid and melting plastic to fall from the sky, risking injury to people below, damage to property, and is obviously a severe fire hazard.

However, the police had received no reports of either UFOs or prank balloons that night.

It is possible that the lights could have been military aircraft of some kind; we know from David Clarke's investigation into the Howden Moor case, that military jets *can* be mistaken for UFOs. The military are not keen to come forward and admit responsibility, especially if they were breaking regulations by flying over residential areas, or at low altitude.

It must be remembered though that no sounds were heard by any of the witnesses. Surely, if military aircraft were exercising manoeuvres so low and at such high speeds for more than five minutes, some engine sound would have been detected by at least one of the witnesses.

Other common explanations, such as searchlights or a laser light show can be rejected also, as the lights definitely travelled over a distance, and were not seen to merely hover in a certain area.

For lack of further information, the case remains open.