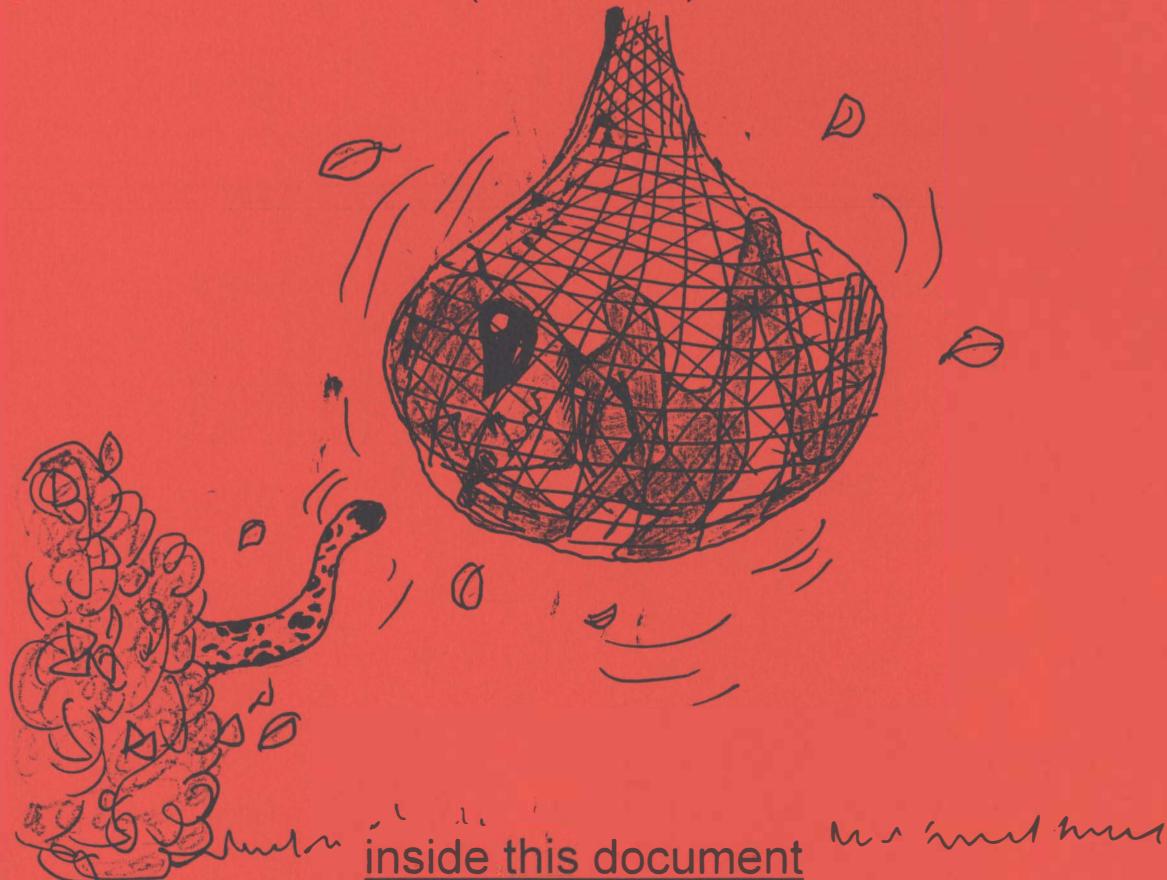


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(Vol 6, # 12)

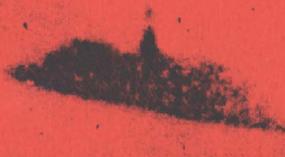


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YORKSHIRE UFO SOCIETY
224 BELLHOUSE ROAD
FIRTH PARK
SHEFFIELD
SOUTH YORKSHIRE
S5 6HT

Tel (0114) 2497270

e-mail: davbak@blueyonder.co.uk

tomboll@blueyonder.co.uk

website www.yufos.org.uk

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"Personnel? That's for assholes!"

A VIEW FROM BRITAIN

THE JENNY RANDLES COLUMN

(Originally published in The MUFON JOURNAL, June 2002)

(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.)

A PENNINE MYSTERY

UFO sightings have not been widespread in the UK for several years now in what is fast becoming a real fall in public interest, but one area of the country has probably generated more attention than any other for quite some time.

This is a region of the southern Pennines in and around the picturesque town of Matlock, Derbyshire. Not only have strange lights been witnessed here but some video footage has been exercising the minds of many UFOlogists.

Windows

This area is part of what is called the Peak District National Park, a region of undulating hills and narrow gorges towards the southern end of the Pennines - a range of hills often known as the 'backbone of England', because it runs like a spine down the centre of the island across about 100 miles of the country. It separates the old kingdoms of the roses - the white rose of Yorkshire to the east and the red rose of Lancashire to the west - and old rivalries between these ancient regions still surface in the moorland villages and nearby urban areas that encompass major cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield.

This area has long been recognised by British UFOlogists as one of the most active windows in Europe. Indeed some statistics that I have worked on for my book on the area (*Supernatural Pennines*, Robert Hale, London, 2002) show that you are 12 times more likely to have an encounter in these often sparsely populated moorlands than you are anywhere else in the UK. I will have more to say on this analysis next month, as it is unlikely this book will reach a US audience.

Each part of the Pennine Window has an association with different types of phenomena and the Derbyshire peaks seem to be linked

with almost Star Trek like time and space distortions. There are countless sightings of what appear to be time slip replays of events from World War Two (the famous Dambuster Raids were prepared for in local reservoirs) and many other curiosities of this nature - including, believe it or not, several well attested sightings of a pterosaur (a flying dinosaur!) cavorting over the hills.

Humming Hills

Another oddity of this area is the prevalence of humming noises coming from the hills themselves. The rocks literally sing with a strange high pitched noise. There are several hotspots of this but an interesting one is near the small settlement of Winster, just five miles west of Matlock. One witness described to me what she experienced here: "It was as if the hillside itself was vibrating...a pleasant humming like an orchestra was tuning up on one note."

This hum is also reported on Ilkley Moor - an active location further north where both UFOs and alien contacts have been reported in some numbers - including the infamous photograph of a little green man that was taken by an abductee at the conclusion to his abduction. A number of the witnesses to these sounds have told me that they think the hum is emerging from the ground and has the form of a vibration within the rocks - which do often have a high quartz crystal content.

Indeed there are reliable reports of people getting mild electric shocks from touching some of the taller standing stones and even well attested cases of reverse lightning - forks of glowing blue energy emerging from the ground. A good example of this occurred at Totley, about 15 miles north of Matlock where a three pronged fork of little balls of light climbed from exposed rock outcrops and

entered the sky on a non-stormy day.

The UFO activity

Although, to me, this background is essential knowledge when considering the UFO activity in and around Matlock it has (I fear) never been considered by any of the journalists or UFOlogists - including some from the US and Japan - who have been attracted by the recent spate of sightings in the Peak District.

These began to build up in the fall of 2000 but sporadic reports have continued ever since. It is fair to note that they rarely involve anything much beyond glowing lights that move across the horizon - but they do include lights in formation sometimes reported as being on the undersides of large triangular craft. That said, in some of the witnesses that I have spoken to, the dark shape is inferred rather than clearly seen - in effect to 'connect the dots', so to speak, by making the subconscious assumption that these moving lights must be on some otherwise unseen darkened craft.

There are some explanations on offer. The area is on a flight path into Manchester Airport and because of the altitude low flying aircraft, especially when their engines are throttled back late at night due to severe noise restrictions, can seem strange. I live 20 miles from Matlock at 1000 ASL and have witnessed such things often. Also, the aircraft are, of course, much lower relative to your altitude. Since many witnesses are on a busy road (the A 6) that passes through the peaks at night they tend to be unaware of their proximity to air traffic because Manchester Airport is much further away by road than it is as the jumbo flies.

Moreover, there are two other sources of unusual air activity (even if one leaves out the hang gliders, gliders and hot air balloons that are common here in summer). Military exercises, some involving low flying, troop transporting and helicopter rescue do occur. And there is an airbase called Woodford, which builds aircraft and several times a year sees giant Russian transport aircraft pass overwhilst ferrying wings. I have more than once resolved in this way what even to local residents seem to be puzzling low level, huge and slow moving objects.

That said, the past history and associated window area phenomena of this location must have a part to play in some of the sightings - regardless of how we ultimately explain

precisely what is going on within such a hotbed of UFO activity.

The big one

The case that has grabbed the most attention from the Matlock area centres on the village of Bonsall (mid way between Matlock and Winster). It has been reported that a US TV network has paid a lot of money to secure some video footage captured by a local woman on 5 October 2000 - although I doubt if this network have much of an idea as to the context into which to properly place this story.

Having looked into some of the reports that were stimulated by the publicity surrounding this video, I am positive that many of them are misperceptions. Some proved to be aircraft - many were the planets Venus and Jupiter - then bright - but I do not suggest that all the local sightings are easily explicable. I would be sure that a few are a consequence of the window area activity that this location clearly reflects.

As for the video itself, sadly I am not persuaded that this will change the face of UFOlogy. In fact it shows what is described as a gigantic object - basically circular - but with a bite cut out from one side - that hovered near Bonsall. However, the video may bear much less of a relationship to what was actually present than you might imagine.

In fact, the size of the object is - I suspect - an artefact of the focus of the camcorder. It appears to be failing to lock onto a point source of light and so reveals an enlarged, out of focus image. The 'bite' is a direct consequence of part of the internal camera system being revealed by superimposition onto this out of focus effect. So, what resembles a massive flying saucer is in truth quite possibly a much smaller light (such as a star or planet) that the camera is distorting as a result of its optical limitations.

I know (because they have told me!) that many UK media sources, and witnesses and other UFOlogists consider this suggestion to be the "outrageous nonsense uttered by a debunker" - as one phrased it after I first suggested this possibility soon after the case surfaced. And, I should make clear, this is my opinion of this case only. I could, of course, be wrong and am certainly making no intimation whatsoever of impropriety on the case of the witness. She clearly saw (via the viewfinder) exactly what she filmed and is sincerely puzzled by it. All I

am offering is a likely explanation for what was there.

However, this is not debunking - merely an expression of a caution that I believe needs to be applied to this particular case. In no sense am I suggesting that the US TV company should not be paying this witness big bucks to use her film - of course she should quite properly get whatever they are willing to pay for its use. But I am suggesting that I have seen several similar pieces of video film of late from all over the UK and these - according to the analysis we did and (more importantly) the views of photographic experts turned out to be explained in this way.

As such any serious investigation of what is going on in Bonsall needs to take this possibility into account.

Which is not to say that there are no local UFOs crossing the skies of this area. I would be amazed if there were not. And it is not to say that video evidence of them cannot be captured. Self evidently it can be and within a window area such as the Pennines you are far more likely to be successful than elsewhere.

But what it is to say is that all evidence, regardless of how spectacular it looks on a TV screen, has to be regarded on the premise that it is more likely to have an explanation than not - for that is the basic home truth of UFO investigation . Most UFOs turn out to be IFOs.

Even ones with photographic or video evidence.

UFO OVER BURNLEY

(Burnley Today, Sat Sep 6 2003)

Was it a bird, was it a plane or was it really a UFO?

Burnley cabbie Mr Steve Haworth and a passenger watched a mysterious flying object suddenly appear, perform a series of mind-boggling manoeuvres and then simply disappear without trace above the town, early on Saturday morning.

"I thought it was an aircraft at first," said Mr Haworth, of Burton Street. "Then, when I

weighed up all the pros and cons, I decided it couldn't possibly be."

The part-time taxi driver was taking a customer from his Hufling Lane home to work in Waterfoot. They were travelling along Bacup Road when they turned a corner and first saw the object in the sky.

"It was only 7:45 in the morning, but there wasn't a cloud in the sky. It was beautiful and clear," he said. "I immediately thought the object was a plane, but it wasn't small, it wasn't high up and it was moving slowly."

The silver cigar-shaped object with a small pulsating light in the middle stopped and hovered. Then it changed shape as it started going forwards and backwards in a perfectly straight line.

It did this twice before vanishing into thin air.

"There was no noise and no vapour trail," added Mr Haworth. "If it had been an aircraft we would have heard it from where we were. It did not take-off, it just simply disappeared."

This is not the first time an unidentified flying object has been spotted in the sky above Burnley. Sightings date back to 1869 and have been reported at regular intervals throughout the decades since.

Descriptions have varied from a round, glowing disc and a line of bright lights, to a pulsating cigar-shaped object just like Mr Haworth described.

He added: "The whole experience only lasted three minutes. I remember looking at the clock in the car, it was 7:45 a.m. and by the time the object had disappeared it was 7:48 a.m..

"I'm so glad I had someone with me who saw what I did, otherwise I would have been doubting my sanity. I'm just curious to know what it was. I have considered and dismissed all the sensible options; a UFO is the only logical explanation I can think of."

CLAPHAM WOOD INVESTIGATION

(part 2)

By GARY CROMPTON (YUFOS / COTC)

07/12/2002

Our second investigation of Clapham Wood was held on a cold and wet Saturday in December. Again, myself and Gavin Moulson were present and we had chosen the 7th so C.O.T.C and Charles Walker could also attend. We were halfway into our journey when disaster struck. Stuart from C.O.T.C called to say both himself and Stacy would not be able to attend the investigation due to coming down with chicken pox, Charles was also unable to attend due to family matters. Stuart had also said that Clapham wood, in particular the Chestnuts area had been very active recently and advised both myself and Gavin not to venture into the woods alone as it was too "dangerous" in such a small group.

We pulled into a service area at Watford Gap to discuss the current events and make a decision on if to carry on. We decided that as we were halfway there already we should continue as planned and see what happens, a little unwise maybe after what Stuart had said but we had the "buzz" now so turning back was not an option.

We eventually arrived at Clapham at approximately 4:15 and as before, parked near the church in the village and did a quick equipment check. As it was December the light was already beginning to fade so we headed out into the already dark woodland. Our first point of call was the "worship" tree in the heart of the woods. We wanted to take some E.M.F readings around the sight and to also see if we could locate anymore evidence of "offerings" from occult groups.

The woods appeared even more surreal in the damp, semi-dark conditions and once again we found ourselves feeling light headed and tired. I don't know if this was just "in our heads", we felt it last time so we are going to feel it this time kind of thing but I felt like I had run a marathon, I had no energy. Again, like last time, the feelings subsided after a minute or so and we continued on our journey.

We came across more evidence of tree hexing as we progressed through the woodland. It's

strange in the fact that, at first, you don't notice any, then you see one, then another and before you know it, they are everywhere you look, all around you. At this point the heavens opened so we decided to cut short our stay in the main section of the woods and make our way over to the "Chestnuts" area. We were aware of Stuarts warning from earlier so we were a little more jumpy than the last time we were here. When we arrived at the area we went off the track and into an area of thick vegetation. More tree archways were clearly visible but the most significant find was a circle of burnt matter about 1 meter in diameter. Inside this circle was a smaller circle, again, burnt into the floor. Charles had spoken to us on our last visit about these strange anomalies and he had told us that when the "Friends of Hecate" summon up there evil incantations they use circles of fire to "hold" the spirit entity safely in place so it can't escape. Could this be actual evidence of an occult group using Clapham Wood?

We left the Chestnuts after deciding it was time for a meal break and a rest. We planned to return to the Chestnuts area at about 8 o'clock and then progress into Clapham Woods via the church to see if we could capture more evidence. We were extremely excited at what we had discovered and wondered what else we might uncover later in the night.

After a hearty meal at the aptly named "Worlds End" pub in the nearby village of Patching we headed back to Clapham. It was extremely dark now and we had to think seriously about what we were doing here. Should he heed Stuarts warning; after all, he was up here most weekends and new more about the place than most. We decided that because of the time and expense of getting here we weren't just going to turn around and go home so early. We got our equipment ready and headed out to the Chestnuts.

It was raining quite heavily now and the darkness seemed to envelope everything around us. There wasn't a single sound to be heard as we walked across the farmer's field and as we reached the bottom of the hill that

leads to the Chestnuts we asked ourselves again if this was really a wise move. From here on in things got very weird indeed.

We had just entered the main part of the wood when Gavin grabbed my arm and stopped me. He said he could make out the image of a person stood some 50 feet or so in front of us on the path. I took out my camcorder and switched to night vision filming to see if we could make anything out. I couldn't but then the most significant thing happened. Through the night vision lens I could make out a glowing white orb, not the usual kind though, this thing was big, maybe half a meter across. I took the camera away from my eye to see if it was visible without any equipment but it was nowhere to be seen. I alerted Gavin to this and he had a look down the lens as well. He too could see the light but not with the naked eye.

Panic was beginning to take hold so we slowly started to back off. I went back to filming as we backed away and now there were 2 orbs, then 3, then 4 until a total of 6 large orbs were visible at sporadic points in the woods. None of them could be seen without the aid of the camera. There were no lights visible anywhere in the woods that might have explained them away as natural. Although we were quite close to a road we couldn't see or hear any cars and there were no streetlights anywhere near us so what they were remains unknown. There could be a perfectly logical explanation and the chances are there were nothing paranormal but having studied the footage many times I am at a loss to offer a plausible explanation. At this point Gavin said again he could make out the image of a person some way off in the distance so we stopped filming and got out as quick as we could.

When we arrived back at the car my heart was still beating very fast. We locked ourselves in and discussed just what had gone on. Was there someone or something stood on the path in front of us? I guess we will never know. What the lights were though we can only guess. There was definitely no light source in the woods that we could see with our eyes, it only appeared on night vision camera.

There were reports in the late 60's to early 70's of lights descending into the woods and moving amongst the trees. These light anomalies account for most of the UFO reports at that time around the area but they were all seen with the naked eye. Common thinking about these so called UFOs is that an occult group (possibly the "Friends of Hecate") were

using black magic to summon up spirits and the flames and chemicals used were responsible for the light shows. I don't think this was the case for what we observed because it was invisible to the human eye so unfortunately the experience remains unresolved at the present time.

We decided not to venture into the rest of the woods on this occasion because although we wanted to discover the truth, it wasn't worth putting ourselves in any danger so we packed away our equipment and started the long journey back home. Although this visit to the woods started off as a bit of a disappointment due to Charles and C.O.T.C unable to attend it had ended fantastically. We had observed some very weird phenomena to which we couldn't offer a cast iron explanation but again, we now had more questions than when we had first started. We decided that another investigation of the area early in the New Year was definitely on the cards.

26/04/2003

We began our third investigation of Clapham Woods on Saturday the 26th of April. Present on the journey were myself, Gavin Moulson and Daniel Myers. We had arranged once again to meet up with C.O.T.C and Charles Walker and this time they were definitely able to meet up with us. We had agreed to meet the team at St. Mary's church at 7:45 as it wasn't getting dark until about then.

We arrived in Clapham at about 5:30 so myself and Gavin decided to take Daniel for a quick tour of the area so he could get a feel for the place before we joined up with the rest of the team. We discovered nothing new or important in our quick search of the area so we decided to get a bite to eat and wait for the others to arrive.

Having met the team we discussed what new developments had been happening since our last visit. Charles began to tell us about locating "hides" buried deep within the woods. Himself and Dave had been in the woods one night and accidentally stumbled upon a well-constructed and very well hidden "Hide". They took cover for over 30 minutes but having not heard or seen anyone around they decided to investigate this curious find. The hide was made out of trees and leaves and was very well camouflaged. They had passed the area many times already that night and had not seen the structure, it was that well hidden.

When they entered the hide they discovered a makeshift alter and various worshipping tools including candles and a dagger. As Charles and C.O.T.C are intent on stopping the Friends of Hecate, if that is who is behind all the paranormal events in Clapham, they completely destroyed the structure, which was no easy feat. They carefully photographed the whole scene first and bagged up any evidence they could lay their hands on and then smashed the thing apart.

The whole structure must have taken a very long time to build and it is incredible to think no one would have seen anything going on during its construction, again, does this mean some of if not all of Clapham village are "in on the secret" and are keeping quiet through either fear, cash incentives or possibly because they are an integral part of it. We talked to Andy Mercer for some time in the church car park about what he was feeling. He says he could sense an evil presence around us and in the woods and that we should be extra vigilant whilst we were in there.

We crossed the church's cemetery and over the stile to gain access to the woods. The field was full of bullocks so we had to walk carefully and quietly so we didn't start a panic amongst the animals. We headed straight for the "worship" tree to see if any "offerings" had been left lying around. There was little sign of any recent activity but Andy and Gavin were getting some good orb shots on there digital cameras. Charles inspected the tree more carefully and started placing his hands in various holes in the tree and surrounding stumps. He produced from one a candle that was encased in shards of broken glass, the meaning of which he was unsure about but it had to have placed there by someone for some purpose.

We ventured deeper into the woodland to find the site of the now dismantled hide and stumbled upon a very strange tree structure. The tree had no base, it seemed to be literally levitating in mid air. The top few branches of the tree had been "hexed" to another adjacent treetop. The exact reasons why someone would want/need to do this kind of thing is unknown at the time of writing, only the people responsible really truly know but one day maybe the truth will finally come out. It raises the question again of "could this be done without anyone seeing or hearing anything"? It was a tall tree, about 25 to 30 feet high and thick enough to make it impossible to simply

"snap" in two. We photographed the area (see fig 5)



and let Stuart get to work on pulling the thing down, again, this was no easy feat.

A theory that Charles has about the tree formations is that they are "signposts" for other F.O.C members who are new to the area to direct them to where the particular worship is taking place. I personally don't think this theory holds much merit but what we discovered next may give it some credibility. Very close by to the tree formation was what looked like a new, partly constructed hide. Charles confirmed it was made in the same design as the last one, with branches interwoven between each other, like a huge wicker basket (see fig 6).



The structure was still in its early stages but it appeared that a lot of work had already gone into it. Could the tree formation have been pointing out the hide for members unfamiliar with the area? The team decided not to destroy the structure on this occasion so they could observe any new developments that take place. It was possible though that we were being watched by someone who would be able to report the discovery of the hide to whoever was in charge, thus rendering it useless.

Excited by our new finds we headed over to the Chestnuts area of the woods. To access this part we needed to cross the field of

bullocks once again. I wasn't really looking forward to it anyway as wild animals in the dead of night are never a good thing.

When we got in sight of the field the animals were literally stampeding from one end to the other, around in circles and really seemed genuinely panicked by something. We were surely not the reason for the panic as we had approached the field quietly and in single file, plus they didn't seem fazed what so ever when we crossed the field earlier. A decision was made not to even try to cross the field, as it was way too dangerous so we had to back track into the woods to find a way around the animals. We had to go through very thick undergrowth but it was far better than being trampled on by a pack of out of control bulls.

It was suggested by one of the party that the bulls could have been disturbed on purpose to "put us in harms way" but I don't really think that was the case, but then again, in this weird place, anything could happen. We reached the Chestnuts area safe and well and started the climb to the "crossroads" section of the wood. When we neared the top we all heard a huge noise in the surrounding undergrowth but couldn't pin point where it was coming from. It was more like a crashing sound than anything else but could easily have been an animal. We could offer no explanation as to what else it could be.

The Chestnuts was not at all active on this occasion. We managed a few "orb" photos on our digital cameras but nothing else of any relevance seemed to happen. We sat down in the darkness for about 15 minutes to see what we could hear but nothing materialised for us. We headed back to the cars at approximately 11 o'clock, our investigation tonight was at an end and it had been the most interesting yet. Not only had we captured some very good "orb" photos but also seen evidence of hides/makeshift alters for possibly demonic purposes. We had seen some very strange tree formations that appeared to defy gravity and found evidence of possible "offerings" to whoever or whatever near the "sacrificing" tree. All in all, a very good nights work.

Conclusions

From our 3 investigations of Clapham Wood's its quite difficult to conclude anything. The things we have seen and heard make me firmly believe that something is defiantly going on there, what that something is though remains unclear at the present time. There is lots of

evidence to support the occult group theory, indeed, that's what I personally believe is happening in the woods. There is way too much evidence that points the finger at the "Friends of Hecate" to simply dismiss it. Charles insists he has had personal contact with a member of the F.O.H who stated the woods were being used for occult practices by them and no one would every stop them using the site, even going as far to say that "they" would stop at nothing to keep the site secret and away from the publics attention. The tree formations, the "offerings" tied around branches, the circular burn marks on the woodland floor, the makeshift alters, all this points in their direction.

I believe the alleged UFO sightings were nothing more than this group performing rituals, burning chemicals to produce eerie lights around the pitch black woods. Like I stated earlier, the goddess Hecate's favourite companion was a dog, is it simply too much of a coincidence that dogs start going missing in their hundreds in and around the area? Having said that, we are left with the "orb" photographs and the apparent contact with other worldly beings that Stacy and Andy claim to have had. Are orbs the by-product of some ancient black art that is being summoned up on Sussex's South Downs? Are the spirit voices that mediums claim to hear in the woods somehow connected to the group or are they an entirely new phenomenon that needs further investigation.

Like I have started already in this write up, I was left with lots more questions than I got answers for each time I visited the site and maybe we will never truly know or understand what is going on there. All I can say with any certainty is that Clapham Woods is a truly odd place but maybe one day, we will all know the secrets this enigma has to offer.

Further Reading

Books

The Demonic Connection – Toyne Newton &

Charles Walker

The Dark Worship – Toyne Newton

Websites

www.cotcpi.co.uk

Written by Gary Crompton – YUFOS

A RETURN TO CROCODILE LAKE

BY MARK P MARTIN (YUFOS / CFZ)

The CFZ expedition into the mystery Crocodilian sightings began on Monday 21st July. It was a month and a day after my first visit. I booked into an above average B&B, in Hendnesford, a few miles north of the pool. After signing in I nipped out for a quick look round. Hendnesford is a quiet and pleasant little place. Its size that of a large village, rather than small town. A painted sign featured an arrow, prodding in the direction of "The Hen House, the Midland's best Irish Theme Pub." Irish theme Pubs are generally about as Irish as Brussels, but never the less I made a mental note that it may need investigating further.

As I returned to the B&B, a tall, distinguished looking fellow was chatting to the landlady. It was Nigel Wright, veteran UFO researcher, CFZ stalwart and expedition member. Nigel greeted me like a long lost brother. He had just arrived with the Exeter HQ contingent. It was hearty handshakes all round as the other team members appeared. Administrator John Fuller, Richard Freeman fresh from hunting Orang Pendek in Sumatra, the permanently laid back Graham Inglis and of course Jonathan. It's well known Jon is a big man. But it can be surprising just how large he is. I'm a big chunky man, six foot tall and over 15 stone. However, the top of my forehead is only about level with the bottom of Jon's chin and he is twice as broad as I am. He is a giant, both physically and in Fortean research.

A short time later my Mondeo and Nigel's people carrier parked at the lake side. Chris Mullins, head honcho of the "Beastwatch" group, was already in situ. Armed with a tripod mounted video camera, on the lookout for Crocodilian Cryptid creatures. I had already discussed the case with Chris over the phone and it was wonderful to meet him in the flesh. Another round of handshakes and greetings between the boys of the CFZ and Chris. Then I gave the crew a briefing on the case to date. This was my fourth visit to the lake and I filled the team in on the witness sightings, and my ideas on what the Beast might be (i.e. a released exotic pet or large Pike). If the animal was a released exotic pet, it must have come from somewhere. I mentioned my thoughts on this; I had some intriguing, information on a local, animal dealer. More about this later.

Richard Freeman gave us a run down on Crocs, the species that we may be dealing with, their behaviour and advice on how to deal with them: "Crocodiles have the most powerful bite muscles in the Animal Kingdom. Twice as powerful as a Great White Shark." Richard went on to tell us even a small specimen could give a serious bite, or damage you with a lash of the tail. He explained if we made visual contact with the beast, we should not attempt to capture it but summon him. He has vast experience with large Crocodiles, as he is the former head of reptiles at Twycross Zoo. So, if I saw this animal, with jaws twice as powerful as the shark in the film of that name, which can also cut you to bits with its tail. I should stand back and let Richard deal with it. Well, that sounded fine to me. No problem with that at all.

Although I've made the last bit sound a bit lurid, Richard went on to explain that small Crocodiles are not man-eating monsters (although large ones certainly can be...). It was just a case of being sensible and knowing how to handle the things. He elaborated, although the muscles to snap the jaws shut are fantastically strong, the ones to open are much weaker. Thus the established technique for dealing with Crocs is to lasso them, and tie their jaws shut. Then they can be handled. To facilitate the lassoing of our Cryptid, Rich was armed with a "Catch Pole", a wooden pole with a sort of noose arrangement at the end.

The next line of business was to launch the CFZ's inflatable boat. This vessel, a veteran of the campaign to hunt for the Monster of the Mere, is named in honour of Tim Dinsdale's Nessie hunting craft, "Water Horse." Graham Inglis was Captain and I was the crew. I paddled around the lake whilst Graham operated the Fish Finder miniature sonar device. Lines were run across the lake and tethered to posts. This made it easier to propel Water Horse across the surface; I took a rest from paddling whilst Graham pulled us across the surface, hand over hand. The respite was welcome, paddling a small inflatable through pond-weed is no fun, and I got the blisters to prove it. The lines also helped with measuring and mapping the pool; they were marked at five-meter increments. Thus equipped, with boat, sonar and lines Graham Inglis and I made a sonar map of the pools bottom.

During the afternoon the CFZ expeditionary force was reinforced by the deployment of other team members. Peter Channon, a crop circle expert, clearly a very intelligent chap he has the bearing and demeanour of a very friendly University lecturer, but is in fact a self employed electrician. Neil Goodwin, a journalist from Liverpool joined us. Neil is just the type of man I shouldn't like. Firstly, He is much better looking than me. Secondly, He is much better educated than me. Thirdly, He is much younger than me. However, he is a first class bloke and an absolute dude. CFZ Wiltshire representative Wilf Wharton was also in the thick of it. Wilf has the kind of sense of humour you find in a Rowan Atkinson script and was a continual source of one liners and quips.

Whilst Graham and I were afloat, Jonathan designated duties to the other team members. The shoreline was explored and marker flags positioned at various points of interest. The various groups kept in touch via Walkie-Talkies.

During the early evening, members of the shore party spotted something in the water. Something was moving, causing ripples. Jon's voice came over the radio, ordering the boat towards the disturbance, the shore party kept the area under surveillance and vectored us in. The activity turned out to be caused by large carp, I got a good look at them and recognised them as such. However, before we reached and identified the Carp, something very interesting happened.

I was paddling towards the sighting area. Then I saw it. Only ten feet or so from the boat. Something surfaced. Just for a couple of seconds. A head, dark green and flat, about nine inches long, coursing through the water, and then back under. Oh how I wish it had stayed up a moment longer. Just a second more, I'm sure I could have made a positive identification. During the previous month I had spent much time looking at pictures of Crocodiles and Pike. The thing I saw could be a large Pike. It could also have been a Crocodile.

I was stunned for a few moments. I almost fell out of the boat. Then I began to splutter and swear. "Graham, I've seen something. I don't believe it, I think I've seen a fucking Crocodile ..."

Later, after dark, the team began lamping for the beast. We shone various spot lights, hand

and head torches over the pool surface and into the thick reed beds. We hoped our scouring beams would produce a reflection from Crocodilian eyes. Graham and I were water borne once again, I played the rays from my powerful Maglight torch over Water Horse's bows, into the wall of reeds.

Chris Mullins had a wonderful contraption. A huge spot light attached to a 12volt power supply. It gave as much illumination as a medium sized Light House. All in all the investigative force were spraying several zillion candlepower onto the pool and its surrounding reeds. But to no avail. You see, what ever light we had, was stopped by the wall of vegetation. No matter how powerful the beams the light could not penetrate solid matter. However, the day's excitement was not over yet. Not by a long way.

At ten to midnight, for the second time in my life, I witnessed a genuine UFO. I was with the rest of the team, milling about on the shore, chatting generally, when Chris and Nigel grabbed my attention. They were both filming an extremely bright white circular light. It was at an apparently high altitude (I must emphasise apparently as, altitude is notoriously difficult to judge). It was completely silent and moving much faster than an aircraft. I measured its direction of travel with the compass on my watch; 114 degrees. It moved across the sky in a straight line until just above the horizon. Then it to swung from left to right. All of this was seen by a team of experienced investigators and filmed on two video cameras. Nigel Wright is particularly well qualified. He has studied the UFO phenomena for 35 years, lecturers on the subject and contributes to UFO Magazine.

John A Keel, the great Fortean writer has chronicled numerous cases of supposedly different types of strange phenomena occurring in the same place at the same time. Keel went to Point Pleasant, West Virginia to look for the Mothman and he encountered UFOs. The CFZ went to Staffordshire, looking for a Crocodile and we saw a UFO. Jonathan Downes summed it up best, a couple of moments after our CEI; "Well, you see, these things happen when you are Monster Hunting."

Tuesday morning found our investigations into the mystery Crocodile continuing. About 1000 words ago I raised the matter of where a large reptile, an illegal exotic pet, could have come from, and that I had some interesting information. During my investigations I was

told some interesting information, by a person who was in a position to know such things. A local exotic pet dealer was utterly corrupt and happy to smuggle and sell any animal. My informant will remain forever nameless, as they told me this in confidence. The area indicated by my source, was scoured via the phone and internet. I found a business, which perfectly matched the description given by my source. Perhaps our Croc originated here. There was strong corroborating evidence. A 14 inch long Snapping Turtle, was discovered a few days previously, in a waterway, four miles south of our pool. Someone was in the habit of discarding large reptiles.

I passed the information on the suspect animal dealer to Jonathan. During Tuesday he left the lake side to dig into the matter and do some sleuthing. He returned later, with news of exciting discoveries. The business in question had gone to the wall a couple of months previously. Their former landlord said they had disappeared. Other legitimate, pet businesses had confirmed the dodgy reputation. Maybe, just maybe the Case of the Cannock Crocodile had been cracked.

Later that day I was delighted once again to meet John Mizzen, his daughter Linda Charteris and his Grand Daughters. The family had agreed to take part in a "Crimewatch" style reconstruction of their encounter. Neil and I were cameramen. Richard walked with the family down to the lake shore, and they talked through the sighting. Graham and Peter manned Water Horse and played the Croc. Mr Mizzen directed the boat to the positions where he had seen the Beast and measurements were taken. I remain very impressed with John and Linda's witness testimony. Their story has not altered at all, no exaggeration, no speculation. The description they give is more Crocodilian than a Pike like. Mr Mizzen is sure he could see serrations on the tail.

Conclusions? Well, nothing is ever certain, but I find myself gravitating towards the corrupt animal dealer, going bust and chucking his remaining stock into the local waterways (remember, someone definitely discarded the snapping turtle). Then, of course, I saw something myself, which may, (or may not) have been a Croc. Then we have the very strong Mizzen family testimony.

All of this, I feel is *probably*, too much of a coincidence. And, as a wise man once said "There is no such thing as coincidence".

PSYCHOLOGIST BIDS TO CREATE SCIENTIFIC HAUNTED HOUSE (*Ananova* 23rd July 2003)

A ghost-busting psychologist hopes to create his own 'haunted house' where spooky phenomena can be summoned at the flick of a switch.

Dr Richard Wiseman believes ghostly experiences can be explained by a combination of fear, and effects such as electromagnetic fields, temperature changes and low rumblings.

He plans to put his theory to the test by having control over a spooky environment.

Dr Wiseman, from the University of Hertfordshire, told *New Scientist* magazine: "We want to build our own haunted house, so we are totally in control. It would give really important scientific results, produce a huge amount of publicity, and go down in history."

Dr Wiseman believes unusual environmental effects play an important role in many ghostly sensations, and may even account for some sightings.

Laboratory experiments have suggested that subtle electromagnetic fields and 'infrasound' - low frequency vibrations just below the limit of human hearing - can induce hallucinations and feelings of unease.

There is also evidence that even a small drop in temperature can set the hairs standing on end, as can certain types of lighting and the shapes and sizes of rooms.

Such effects were seen in investigations undertaken by Dr Wiseman at two prime haunted sites, Hampton Court Palace near London and the South Bridge Vaults beneath a Victorian Bridge in Edinburgh.

"We showed people had odd experiences in the same places, and now we know they're based on environmental factors," said Dr Wiseman.

In his haunted house, visitors would be terrified by speakers emitting infrasound, electrical coils hidden behind pictures, and sudden draughts generated from vents in skirting boards.

There would also be control over lighting, the layout of rooms, and features within the rooms.

Dr Wiseman hopes the house can pay for itself by pulling in crowds, especially if associated with historic venues.

STRANGE SOUNDS AT BURBAGE

BY DAVE BAKER

Earlier this year, writer and researcher Dr. David Clarke received an e-mail from Tim Cooper, a friend he had known at University, who was mystified by an unusual encounter he had had while on a favourite and familiar moonlight walk.

With Tim's permission, he passed the e-mail onto me and needless to say, I was intrigued. This area is close to the point YUFOS have held numerous skywatches and if weirdness was afoot, we wanted to know...

Hi Dave,

Came across your site when I was looking for possible information to explain an experience I've just had. I recognized your name as I used to teach in the History Dept. at Sheffield and was friendly with Vanessa Toulmin who I think knew you?

Anyway. Just been out for my habitual monthly moonlit walk up at Burbage, though this time I parked at Toad's Mouth and set off up the main track (I usually park at the top and walk along Burbage Edge or Higger Tor. After about 100 yards, when the sandy track started to go up the incline I became aware of a strange sound, a sort of whizzing (whizz-whizz) which was repeating at intervals. Thinking it must be a bird, or maybe a bat, I stopped to listen. I then noticed that it was very quickly changing its position from one side of the valley to the other, then in front of me, then behind. The light was quite good so I strained to see what it was, as at times the noise seemed directly ahead and very close, but I could see nothing, even when I switched on my head torch and scanned around.

I must say at this point that I'm not a believer in "ghosts", am very sceptical about UFOs etc., and believe that pretty much everything has some explanation in the ordinary. But this really beat me! I stood still for about ten minutes with the definite sensation that something was flying around/past me, "buzzing" me if you like. But the sound was not like any bird I could think of (it was more sort of *electronic* or *mechanical*), and as far as I am aware, birds that fly around at night tend to be virtually silent. And what was particularly weird was that the sound seemed to have a sort of stereo image, as though it was being "controlled". When I heard it ahead of me I would stare in that direction and then it would immediately be to the one side, or directly above etc.

Now, I'm usually perfectly happy with night walks in all sorts of weather as I'm an outdoor person, but on this occasion I really didn't fancy proceeding up the

valley. So I started to walk back to the car and soon noticed the sound had disappeared. Regaining my rational scientific confidence ;) I decided to walk back to where I had first heard the sounds, to see whether it was something to do with the wind and valley shape in that particular spot (there was a light-medium breeze.) I stood for a while but it had gone. I then went back to the car.

My rational brain is seeking an explanation in wind blowing across the valley, echoes of a distant sound etc. But the nature of the sound, and the way it seemed to move its source, just doesn't seem to fit. I'd be really grateful if you could give me any information you may have on sounds people have heard in this area, or any theories, or even explanations, as to what it could have been.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Tim Cooper

Tim was more than happy to answer further questions, which were conducted via e-mail. The results are below:

DAVE BAKER: Hi Tim,

Thanks for agreeing to answer a couple of questions. Whereabouts exactly was it? I have been out to Ringinglow a few times, and there is a spot just off the road with a pile of rocks that are quite distinctive. Was it anywhere near there?

TIM COOPER: It was at grid ref. 262808, just at the start of the walk (north) up the "Burbage Valley" from the gate just to the east of the bridge at Toad's Mouth.

What time was this, and what date?

Monday 12 May, approx. 10 pm

Was anyone else around, or any other cars parked where you parked yours?

Definitely no other cars; no people were seen.
Was this usual for your trips up there?
Yes, at least at night-time.

Could you detect an altitude for the sound, ie, was it head-height, high above, ground level? When the sound moved, did it gradually change position (so that you could track its "path"), or was it instantaneous?

My perception was it varying from a maximum of around 4-5 metres above me to no more than a metre above head height. It changed position very quickly; sometimes in what seemed like a linear way, so that I perceived it as travelling from one side of the valley to the other; at others it suddenly appeared, either above or to one side of me, with no apparent origin.

What is the closest comparison of another sound? Did it appear to be a natural sound or an electronic one?

I have struggled with this ever since. In my original message to Dave Clarke I described it as whizz-whizz, but with a definite electronic quality and an apparent stereoscopic effect, particularly when it moved in the linear fashion - in other words, *whizz* as it left the one side of the valley and *whizz* when it (almost instantaneously) reached the other side. It didn't sound like anything natural I had heard. At the time, apart from thinking it sounded electronic, I was suddenly put in mind of the scene in Newman's *Dream of Gerontius* when he describes the "fearful" rushing of demons' wings when they are trying to take a soul down to hell. In telling you that I must stress that I am an atheist, with belief in neither demons nor hell, but for the sake of accuracy I feel I ought to reveal that that image did come into my mind. In the weeks that followed, the comparison that came to mind was the sound of the Quidditch ball in the *Harry Potter* film, if you've seen it.

How good was visibility? I know you said moonlight and that visibility was good, but would you have been able to see if someone was hoaxing you?

It was good moonlight but certainly, I would have struggled to see people in dark clothing more than 10 metres away.

Lastly, what do *you* think it was? It may be just the way I interpreted your story, but

the first thing that popped into my mind as an 'explanation' was someone flying a remote-controlled aircraft or something. Any chance?

My first thought was exactly that, and I stood still and strained to look for people, who I thought might be hiding behind the rocks to my right, or silhouetted on the hill-top to the left.

I also strained to hear, as I imagined anyone who was doing that deliberately to "buzz" me would surely let out a giggle. But I couldn't see or hear anything. I also tried to imagine it as a flying insect or other animal, but I just couldn't fit the sound, or the way it *apparently* moved to anything in my experience. My brother has suggested a certain type of moth, which I think is plausible, but, if so, it's not the kind of creature I'd like to spend much time around!

Curiously, again as a sceptical, non-conspiracy-theory-believing atheist, on one of the last occasions I stopped before turning to go back I found myself staring towards it and saying "What *are* you?" which struck me as strange later. In truth, I still can't work it out but the main contenders in my mind (not necessarily in order) are:

- 1) Remote-controlled flying machine or kite,
- 2) Electronic/electric pulse from some source,
- 3) Bird or flying insect that appeared strange simply because it was in an unfamiliar context.

What makes it difficult for me to attribute it to any of these with confidence is the nature of the sound and, more particularly, the way it moved quickly around me, producing a *perception* that it was "buzzing" me or "checking me out". I guess therefore, that if it was a remote-controlled device, I would say that it appeared I was being targeted deliberately.

Not long after I received Tim's reply, YUFOS held a skywatch in this general area, but saw and heard nothing unusual – much as on all our skywatches...

However, if anyone has any thoughts on this mystery, drop a line to the usual address, and hey- who knows? You could win a prize!!!¹

¹ But probably won't.

THE CUSWORTH CAT

BY DAVE BAKER (YUFOS / CFZ)

For some time now, I have been a member and local representative of Jon Downes' Centre for Fortean Zoology. A few weeks ago, I narrowly and regrettfully missed joining in with "The Hunt For The Cannock Croc" described by Mark Martin in last month's – and this month's – *Project Red Book* due to work commitments, and I was determined that I would not miss the next opportunity to tackle a cryptological critter.

My chance came when, out of the blue - as so many of these kind of cases are apt to do - an Alien Big Cat report landed quite nearly on my very doorstep.

According to an account distributed via the *forteana* Internet newsgroup, an out-of-place jaguar had been spotted in Doncaster by a school-girl a little over a week earlier.

According to the report, on the 9th August, 2003, 9-year old Charlotte Clarke was returning home from a visit to Cusworth Hall Museum with her cousin Thomas and her Grandmother. They were driving along Cusworth Lane when Charlotte saw something in a spacious field opposite the hall.

At first attracted to the sight of a long tail emerging from the tall grass, she soon saw the animal itself, crouching as if "ready to pounce"

Charlotte alerted her cousin and Grandmother, but neither of them saw the beast, or even believed her. She did not know at the time exactly what it was she had seen, but described it to them.

When she arrived home, she told her mother Diane, who did believe her, and gave her a large format book on mammals of the world. After pouring through the book, Charlotte was able to eliminate all other possibilities, recognising the jaguar by its distinctive rosettes, spots, and sandy coat.

Diane called a number of organisations, including the South Yorkshire Police and Cusworth Hall itself.

Charlotte's story subsequently appeared in a number of newspapers, including the *Doncaster Star* and *The Yorkshire Post* on 12th August and featured as a typically tongue-in-

cheek segment on BBC TV's regional news show *Look North* on Wednesday 20 August.

Only a few minutes after downloading forteana's reprint of *The Yorkshire Post* article, I received a message from fellow YUFOS and CFZ member Mark Martin, who had seen the story on the internet himself, who suggested we team up to investigate the case. I agreed.

However, we needed somewhere to start; all the reports I had read were light on tangible details I could use to track down Charlotte and her mum, Diane.

I called the South Yorkshire Police, and spoke to PC Trevor Suter, who was very friendly and extremely helpful. He gave me a run-down of the story more or less as I already knew it, and confirmed that there had been a number of similar Big Cat reports over the years from the Doncaster area, but usually of pumas or panthers. He explained that as a rule, the police only investigate such cases if the sighting is recent, as a matter of public safety. If there is no immediate threat to the general public, the report is usually passed on to other departments, even those outside the police force, such as the RSPCA.

More importantly though, PC Suter was willing to pass on Diane Clarke's mobile telephone number, as she had made it clear that she was happy to talk to anyone with a genuine interest in her daughter's sighting.

Moments later, I was talking to Diane, who elaborated on Charlotte's encounter, and said that she had more than just a motherly interest in it as she herself had seen a "black panther" 2 years previously. We spoke for some time, and it became clear that Diane was well aware of the Big Cat stories circulating Doncaster and it seemed like she would make an interesting interviewee herself.

Diane had no objections to our visiting the family to interview them, but it would not be suitable until the following week.

Mark and I had already decided that we would visit Doncaster and investigate the location of the sighting and the grounds surrounding Cusworth Hall itself, even if we could not trace Charlotte. As Mark works long shifts, we

could not arrange a date until Thursday the 21st.

I telephoned Diane on that morning, and she agreed that we could visit them that afternoon.

By incredible luck, synchronicity, or by the arcane manipulations of the Cosmic Joker, The USA's Most Maverick Investigator of UFOs and the Paranormal™ Tom Bolloxinski was in the country too, supposedly for an appearance on Channel 4's bastion of quality teatime magazine TV shows, *Richard & Judy*. Even better - for him - he was once again staying over at YUFOS Towers rather than a posh hotel "for the cute Limey ambiance, and the excellent company," and not, he assured me over a glass of my diminishing Wild Turkey bourbon, "because its free."

Of course, as soon as he knew that an expedition was on the cards, Tom was more than eager to join in, "...and show you guys how a real man chases pussy" - a joke we were "treated to" more than once on the day's adventures.

However, as Tom *is* an expert wilderness tracker with years of hunting Thunderbirds, Skunk-Apes, Bunyips and Midgeman under his belt, Mark and I could not refuse him, so on Thursday 21st August we piled into Mark's trusty Crypto-mobile, and, to the scene-setting sounds of The Darkness' ball-busting *Black Shuck* blasting atmospherically from the car stereo, we set off for deepest, darkest, mysterious Doncaster...

A LONG TIME AGO...

On the trip down to Cusworth we discussed other sightings of large felines in the general area over the years. Tom was particularly interested to hear about the visit Mark, myself, and fellow YUFOS member and PRB-publisher extraordinaire Jonathan Slater had made earlier in the year to the small village of Barnburgh. Our aim was to investigate "The Barnburgh Cat and Man" legend, so beloved of the Deane Valley.

In 1455, according to Deane Valley local legend, an important South Yorkshire landowner, Sir Percival Cresacre was returning to Doncaster after a meeting with the Knights Templar, when a wild cat "issued forth" from the woods and attacked his horse. Cresacre was thrown from the animal, and a vicious fight began between Man and Cat. The battle

continued through the woods, right up to the steps of St. Peters Church at Barnburgh. Cresacre eventually succumbed to his many wounds and fell to the ground, fortuitously crushing the beast to death beneath him. With his dying breath, Cresacre gasped his story to a servant who attempted to tend to his wounds and according to the legend his blood stained the porch of the Church and can be seen "to this very day".

All we could find was a vague stain that was more than likely a natural colouration of the stone, and the cleaner we spoke to - who was the only person around the church, knew nothing about any bloodstains. We were allowed inside the church to film and photograph Cresacre's tomb, which is on display in the nave. If this had been an episode of *Most Haunted*, every single digital photo we took would have shown spectacular orbs.

Tom expressed an opinion that perhaps the Barnburgh Cat and "our" Jaguar was the same one - "just real, real old", but I think he was kidding. I hope he was anyway.

CUSWORTH HALL

As we had plenty of time to kill before our arranged time to arrive at the Clarke's house, we stopped off at Cusworth Hall first.

Before exploring the grounds of the hall, we parked up alongside the field we suspected to be the one in which Charlotte had witnessed the jaguar, and - wary of trespassing on private land, examined the field as best we could.

Unfortunately, there was little to see. Since Charlotte's experience the crop or grass had been cut, ready for ploughing, and the long stretch of hot dry weather the British Isles had been enjoying for the past couple of weeks precluded any chances of finding tracks.

We filmed and photographed the field for the record, and then decided to move onto the grounds of the Hall itself.

The Hall is actually a museum, and caters particularly for parties of schoolchildren, encouraging them to experience and nurture an interest in nature and conservation.

These beautiful grounds are perfectly suited for a large feline, with wooded areas, open fields and lawns, and some distance from the buildings themselves, a beautiful lake, but

again we found no traces of a large animal. It should be remembered though that Cusworth Hall and its grounds are extremely busy, and populated by many visitors and staff; certainly more than enough human activity to keep a wary big cat away, at least during the hours of daylight.

On a whim we decided to enquire at the Hall itself if anyone had seen anything unusual in the area. A quick chat with the genial, but decidedly wary guide at the door revealed nothing; the man claimed that he had heard only a vague story about the jaguar, knew nothing at all about other reports, and suggested we talk to Colin Howes, the Keeper of Environmental Records, who was "somewhere around, probably down by the lake".

By now though, time was catching up with us. We didn't know exactly how to find the Clarke's house and were reluctant to be late.

Tom, however, was not convinced that there were not spoor to be found, and suggested he stay behind and put his animal and monster tracking skills to use. "I've found 'Quatch tracks in a Californian dry lake bed after three months without a drop of goddamn rain. On bare rock!", he growled as he marched off into the trees. "I sure as hell can find paw-prints from an overgrown pussy in goddamn rainy England!"

Which, for the record, he didn't, by the way.

We agreed to pick him up later on the way home, and then, making a mental note to contact Colin Howes at a later date, we left the Hall and Tom behind and headed for Doncaster.

CAR PARK OF HORROR!

Finding our way to a house in the middle of a city turned out to be more difficult than locating a hall in a remote area of the countryside. This wasn't helped by Mark driving back up the motorway towards Sheffield and *away* from Doncaster because we were too busy talking about Mothman, The Loch Ness Monster and the CFZ's upcoming *Weird Weekend*. Nevertheless, once we had realised our mistake, we were back on track, only to make the mistake of deciding to pull into Doncaster's own ASDA car-park in order to consult the map and find out exactly where the Clarke's lived.

This turned out to be the driving equivalent of entering a black hole, as it took absolutely *eons* to get turned around and leave the bloody place. How dare Doncastians go shopping on a Thursday afternoon? Didn't they realise that there was a YUFOS/CFZ investigation going on? Mark told me that for weeks afterwards, he would awaken in the middle of the night, cloaked in cold sweat, madly screaming "Let us out out! Let us out! Curse you Asda, curse you to hell!"

Eventually though, we managed to filter back out into the traffic, and track down the Clarke's home; and still with a little time to spare.

INTRODUCING THE CLARKES

We were made extremely welcome by Diane, Charlotte, her brother Reece, as well as the baby of the family.

Diane had told me that Charlotte had been featured on the BBC's *Look North* programme the night before. As both myself and Mark had missed the report, we asked if we could watch it before the interview.

Typically, it was a fine piece of balanced, intelligent TV journalism. Charlotte was interviewed briefly, a piece of footage was shown – surprisingly enough, actually of a jaguar – (so someone in the research department of the Beeb was doing their job) and then the journalist-in-the (literal) –field, went out to investigate the location. He wore a jungle-style floppy hat, opened up a tin of cat food, and made jokes about saucers of milk. Laugh? I thought I'd never start.

After watching the TV segment, we headed out into the back garden to film the interview itself.

Charlotte is a very intelligent, friendly girl, and appeared to be an excellent witness. She thought carefully before our questions, was very precise when she knew the answer, and did not appear to embellish on details if she was not sure. Indeed, Dr. David Clarke who later watched the video at the following YUFOS meeting declared Charlotte a more competent witness than most adults he had interviewed in his time.

Here is part of the transcript of a personal interview with Charlotte conducted by Dave Baker and Mark Martin, both of the Yorkshire UFO Society (YUFOS) and the Centre for

Fortean Zoology (CFZ) on Thursday 21 August 2003.

The initial interview was videotaped outside in the Clarke's garden and further questioning taped on cassette recorder in the house.

THE INTERVIEW

DAVE BAKER: So Charlotte, can you tell us exactly what it was that happened?

CHARLOTTE CLARKE: Well, I was coming home from Cusworth Hall, and I saw a jaguar.

When I went in the car, I looked in that field, and I saw this thing standing up, or getting ready to pounce at something. So I told my grandma and my cousin Thomas that I saw something, but I didn't know what it was. So I asked them what has black circles and two little black circles, and (was) a sandy colour.

DB: And you stopped seeing this because the car drove past it? Or did the animal go out of sight?

CC: Erm....I think it was still standing in the middle...

DB: But the car drove past so you couldn't see it anymore?

CC: 'cos I was looking...still looking out the back of the car to see if I could see it.

DB: And was it in long grass?

CC: Yes.

DB: So how tall do you think it was?

CC: Erm...about up to my waist...do you want me to...? (*Charlotte then stood up and indicated with her hand at waist-level*) Up to there.

DB: Right, and could you tell how long it was?

CC: No, not really...

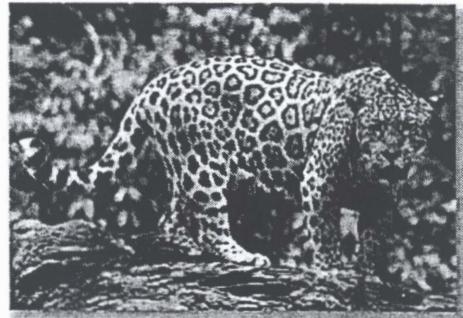
DB: No, well it is difficult to tell sizes with things like that. And what was the animal doing?

CC: Erm...I think it was catching something....like, trying to catch a rabbit, or... something like that.

DB: So as soon as you got home, what did you do?

CC: I asked my mum what has the description I gave to my Grandma, and I looked in a mammal book and saw what it was. And it was a jaguar.

Charlotte then brought the book over and flipped through the pages until she found a double-page spread of big cat paintings. The pictures included a tiger, leopard, cheetah and cougar, among others.



(A jaguar. Not the one from Charlotte's book, but one I "found" on the internet. Cute, isn't it? Though it could still rip your throat out – remember that kiddies.)

DB: Right so you looked into this book and you were able to find and identify the animal that you saw? And which one was it?

CC: That one (*points unerringly at the jaguar*) At first I thought it was a leopard, but it didn't have the spots in the middle.

DB: That's right, yeah. And what did you do when you had identified it, did you report it to anyone?

(Charlotte was a bit confused at this point, and could not remember whom her mum had called and in what order, but knew that the police had been called, among others.)

MARK MARTIN: And how far away from it do you think you were, Charlotte?

CC: Ermmmm....about where my mum's standing...not really far...

(This was about 15-20 feet)

MM: Not really far? So if I walk down your garden...just down here...and you say I was the Big Cat..... I don't look like a Big Cat but we'll pretend...how far away...if I walk back like this...?

(Charlotte stopped Mark approx 20 feet away from her)

CC: Yeah, yeah about there.

MM: About there?...From you...which is about.. less than 20 feet...

DB: And where would you say it's back was...where would it reach on Mark?

MM: So if it was standing here? How far up my legs would it go?

CC: About...about in the middle, where your hand is...

MM: About there?

CC: a bit...up...

(This was about 3 foot)

DB: And was it side-on to you, or was it facing you?

CC: Erm...it wasn't even...it was looking at something else...it wasn't looking at me, it was like, erm... like looking at something, like its prey or something...

DB: Right okay, but was it sideways like, moving across, or was it towards you?

CC: Sideways...

DB: Okay. Mark, get on your hands and knees

(Mark got down on all fours on the lawn, much to the amusement of Charlotte and Diane, his head facing to Charlotte's right)

MM: Was it like that or.....?

CC: Facing the other way.

DB: Go on, mucky your knees as well...

(Mark scrambled around to face the other way.)

All joking aside, this simple correction by Charlotte proved to me more than anything that she really did see something. An adult

probably wouldn't even have made any correction, assuming that this was irrelevant.)

DB: Okay so would you say it was shorter than that across, or longer?

CC: A bit longer.

DB: So a bit longer, right...Okay, you can get up now, Mark. That's just to try to work out the sort of size it was, from a distance, because its difficult to remember if you don't have anything to compare it to.

(From this we can estimate that the animal was about 5ft long, not including its tail)

(Mark walked back to us)

MM: Well that distance there....20 feet maximum. 18, 20 feet, that's all.

DB: How long would you say you saw it for?

CC: Erm.....a few seconds....about...30 seconds.

DB: So it's a fair time then? *(My thoughts are that it was probably not this long, although Diane admits that her mother does drive "very slowly", and Charlotte had said that she had continued to watch the animal through the rear window of the car as they drove on)*

DB: Did it have a long tail or a short tail?

CC: Kind of a long tail...'cos people were asking me if it was a cub, but it wasn't. It was too big.

We talked for quite some time with Diane and Charlotte after the interview, which was taped with their consent.

Diane has quite an interest in Big Cats and wolves, and shared a number of additional titbits of information with us. At this time of writing we are not sure if these are local gossip, urban legend, the literal truth, or variations on it, but I shall look into these further in updates to this case.

These include:

*Rumours that that someone from the police was working with the Lancashire Fire Service

Search & Rescue dog team in a bid to train the dogs to track Big Cats.

I was later able to squash this rumour by an e-mail to the leader of the dog team, who told me that "*There is no truth regarding this rumour, The Fire Service search & rescue dogs are trained only to find live causalities (persons).*"

*Sightings of a Puma in the Bessacar area 2 years previously. Diane claimed that she witnessed a "black panther" herself, as it walked casually and serenely beside the motorway. Indeed, the so-called "Beast of Bessacar" was witnessed on a number of occasions in 1999 in and around Doncaster, and features in a number of articles in the Sheffield and Rotherham issues of *The Star*.

*A pregnant panther was released or escaped from a circus which passed through Bessacar 6 years ago. Diane says that the circus also had a male panther, which "pined" without the female and so was released by the circus on its way back from the region. Diane says that this is on record in the Doncaster Public Library, but although I have not yet had the time to check this out, it is true that Doncaster does occasionally pay host to a circus, which pitches its tent close to the area of Charlotte's sighting.

Personally, I can see that a large cat may have been deliberately released, or may have escaped, but it seems unlikely that the puma's mate would have "pined"; panthers are solitary animals, coming together purely to mate. Few mated pairs of animals "pine" at the loss of its mate.

On the surface, it also seems unlikely that the circus would have taken the risk of releasing another large and expensive animal into the British countryside. That said, there is some precedent for this, and the story fits in with the all-round theory of just how large cats get into the wild in the first place.

For example, *The Yorkshire Post* (12 August 2000) describes how ex-lion tamer Leslie Maiden admitted releasing a panther and a cougar into the countryside off the A-57 Snake Pass near Sheffield in the 1970s, following the introduction of the dangerous animals act. It may even be this report, which has become mixed up with an entirely bogus circus story, to become local legend.

*Diane also told me that the photographer from *The Yorkshire Post* mentioned that a year

or so previously, at a farm "5 miles from Cusworth Hall", a "jaguar" leapt down from a tree onto a farmer riding his combine harvester below. The animal's clawed attack missed him, but scratched the harvester.

This story was also told to me by a Doncaster policeman I discussed the case with afterwards, but he had heard that animal was a "tiger", and that it had scratched the farmer's arm.

I have a problem with this version, though. Jaguars and leopards do climb trees, dragging their slaughtered prey high into the branches and out of the way of scavengers, but tigers rarely do so, such is their huge size and weight. It is also my personal opinion that a tiger would have probably scratched the farmer's arm off, or at the very least made a horrific mess of it anyway, but that's by the by.

*A worker at Cusworth Hall told Diane that someone "down the lane" from the hall kept big cats, including lynx, and – apparently – a puma. The story went that this individual had been jailed for "drugs offences", and that he may have released his animals into the wild before he was imprisoned.

This is an explanation heard time and again, and now so common that it has attained elements of the urban legend, but there are definite precedents for this. Much as carrying guns are now part of the drug and gang culture, the desire to appear to their peers as ruthless, windswept and interesting in a Hollywood Villain sort of way has, according to RSPCA and police, driven many drug-dealers into buying exotic and more to the point, dangerous pets.

A further, altogether more disturbing story I heard while at the CFZ's *Weird Weekend*, is that unscrupulous dealers are secretly and illegally importing exotic animals into the country, big cats included, purely for others to release into the wild and to hunt down for sport.

*Potterick Carr Nature Reserve, within walking distance of the Clarke family's home, has been the location of a couple of puma sightings in the past, and also the home of a small pack of wolf-hybrids, which during the Summer can often be heard howling in the night.

AFTERWARDS

Mark and I explored the fielded and wooded area near the Clarke's home, which in itself is an expansive place, and borders Potterick Carr Nature Reserve, separated only by a fence and the train-lines.

Unfortunately, we found no physical evidence for Big Cats of any kind, or wolf-hybrids. The weather had been too dry and the ground consequently too hard for tracks, and big cats usually cover their droppings. However, we found it easy to imagine that an animal like a large cat could exist there at least for a time.

We would have liked to explore Potterick Carr Nature Reserve, where Diane claimed the wolf-hybrids prowled, and where the Beast of Bessacar was glimpsed in 1999. Time was getting on though, and it seemed to us that the reserve was worthy of an entire day's investigation in itself.

Finally, we returned to the field where Charlotte saw the jaguar, but - as we expected - the beast and any signs that it may have left were long gone. The tall grass had been cut, and the field ploughed over.

After picking up a dejected Tom Bolloxinski, we returned home and, skilfully avoiding wrong turns and deadly car-parks, finished off our day with a stop off at a local hostelry for a couple of well-deserved pints of lager/cider.

However, the case continues: I have slowly been working to forge ties with the South Yorkshire Police, and have been added to their database. I have been assured that if any further Big Cat sightings are reported, I will be immediately informed.

MYSTERY AFTER UFO SIGHTINGS PUZZLE EXPERTS

(*Aberdeen Evening Express, 3 September 2003*)

Strange lights in the North-east night sky have baffled the experts.

Sixteen lights travelling rapidly across clear skies were spotted over two nights by a Fyvie resident.

Air traffic control bosses and aviation experts have ruled out aircraft or satellites, because the lights were travelling too fast to be planes or orbiting objects.

Astronomy experts say the lights could not have been "shooting stars" because they were travelling too slowly and from different directions.

One North-east UFO expert was at a loss to offer a straightforward explanation and said the mysterious sightings should be logged as genuine close encounters with unidentified flying objects.

The high-level Fyvie flyovers first appeared on Thursday about 10.30pm and were still crossing silently overhead more than two hours later.

They took only seconds to cross the sky, then gave a repeat performance on Friday night and into Saturday morning.

Resident and *Evening Express* reporter Graham Lawther said he spotted the first lights at 10.35pm on Thursday.

He said: "I had stepped outside for a good view of Mars, which is closer to the earth now than it has been for thousands of years, on what was a crystal-clear, moonless night."

"But I also saw a small white light, high in the atmosphere, appear in the southern sky and fly extremely fast to the north."

"It was far too rapid for an aircraft. It was across the whole sky in under 10 seconds and a plane would have taken several minutes."

Mr Lawther saw seven identical, fast-moving pinpricks of light between 10.35pm and 11.20pm, and six more from 12.15am-12.45am.

Three more were witnessed on the Friday night, between 10.20pm and 10.35pm, the first heading south and two more quickly heading north.

The lights, which appeared to be at the altitude of a high-flying aircraft gave off a white glow.

A RAF Kinloss spokeswoman said: "We had no activity in that area on either day."

A National Air Traffic Services spokesman said: "I have checked with our colleagues in Aberdeen and Prestwick, which covers the upper air space.

"There are no reports of any sightings from either night."

A spokesman for the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh said the lights could have been satellites in high orbit.

He said large satellites were occasionally seen with the naked eye, though never 13 in less than two hours.

He said they were almost always observed shortly before dawn or after dusk, when sunlight reflected off their highly polished surfaces.

The North-east is a global hotspot for UFO sightings.

Aberdonian Ian Taylor, who has been studying the subject for more than 50 years, said folk travel to this region from all over the country in the hope of a close encounter.

Lights and objects were regularly seen near Muchalls, Portlethen, Deeside and the area north of Aberdeen, he explained.

The ex-RAF man said it would be difficult to explain away the sheer number of the latest phenomena in the skies above Fyvie as aircraft, satellites or shooting stars.

"These were obviously aerial objects, either generating their own light or reflecting light," said Mr Taylor.

"What was seen was straightforward UFO activity."

Mr Taylor said no one should jump to the conclusion that the sightings were necessarily "craft from another planet" but said they were

certainly unexplained observations of unidentified objects.

"The frequency of sightings up here is immense," said Mr Taylor, who lives in Aberdeen's West End.

"If you are willing to go out and look in the evening, particularly in the winter time, you would be able to see things you would not believe."

Recent North-east sightings have included:

A hovering ball of light seen from Kincorth for two hours last January.

A silent red light following a couple in their car on the A90 just south of Aberdeen in December 2002, which shot off vertically.

Two "bright globes" spinning above Cruden Bay in October 2001, which faded after 10 minutes.

A black wing-like object, which glowed and buzzed a couple's home in Aboyne - and which was also seen by a man driving between Daviot and Oldmeldrum.