Friday, November 4, 1988 YELLOW ADVERTISER -Colchester- 4 NOV 1988

After all the recent UFO "sightings" reporter Keith Harris asks:

IS THERE ANYONE OUT THERE?

This photo was taken in Leiston, in 1979, by a professional photographer who claims he didn't know the object was on the film until it was developed. The photo is filed with Ron and Brenda.

UFO investigator Ron West, for one, believes there is

WHAT did happen over Basildon on the night of Friday, September 23, 1988?

ET's made it home but if events on that night are anything to go by his friends could be making a return trip — and specifically to Essex.

All the signs are there. On that night alone more than 32 people contacted the East Anglian UFO hotline with reports of strange sightings.

Clusters of lights forming triangular shapes over parts of Basildon were repeatedly reported.

After two weeks more than 250 calls had been received about strange sights witnessed by people in the area.

In fact the UFO hotline, based at Leiston, Suffolk, received so many calls it was able to build up a pattern to the sightings.

It was a clear, starry night and sighting that night were not confined to Basildon — they included Southend, Canvey, Billericay and Wickford.

Many times the lights darted and skipped erratically, crossing their own paths at tremendous speeds.

So what are these strange orange lights, these black, diamond shapes and low humming sounds all about?

Sceptics put the sightings down to aeroplanes waiting for the go-ahead to land at Heathrow.

But UFO investigator Ron West, for one, reckons there's definitely "something out there".

Such is his faith that he's more than a match for the sceptics who pooh-pooh the notion of little green men travelling billions of light years to visit Earth.

"There are times when there is stacking at Heathrow," admits the 57-year-old. "But aircraft are visible and have easily identifiable navigational lights."

What's more, the man who's spent the last 25 years studying reports of UFO sightings, reckons Essex lies under a "window" that's in some way visible to UFO occupants.

Together with fellow ufologist Brenda Butler, Ron believes this is where UFOs enter the Earth's atmosphere.

Backing their beliefs are a series of sightings in the Basildon area.

The most recent began on Friday, September 9 when black rectangular shapes with white and blue lights were seen over Pitsea for five minutes.

Basildon engineer Peter Aldridge of Clayhom Circle saw a "single, large, orange light" on the same night and at the same time heard a humming while out walking his dog at 10.30pm.

He watched it for a minute or two before the light split into two, came together again and then shot off "almost like the dot when you turn the television off" said the 41-year-old.

The following Saturday and Sunday, four separate callers reported a formation of yellow, red, orange and white lights moving quickly across the night sky and triangular shapes were also seen.

On Tuesday, September 13, a middle-aged Laindon woman out walking her dog saw a bright light in the sky.

There was no noise but it "travelled faster than any plane".

On September 23 John Haven of Leigh called the UFO hotline to report a formation of red, white and yellow lights over the sea.

Ron took the call in Clacton and, going outside, he could see three stationary white lights over Southend.

They were later joined by a red glow which followed a course out to sea and inland again before vanishing behind trees.

On September 26 a woman heard frightening, loud whirling noises over her house, went outside but became frightened. The same thing happened the following night.

Finally between 7.45 and 10.30pm on September 30 an observer in Basildon watched mysterious lights over the town.

And Brenda's fully behind Ron's theory of a "window" over Essex.

That coming from the woman who investigated the mystery crash at Rendlesham Wood near Woodbridge air base in Suffolk.

The incident was clouded in controversy as her book, UFO Crash, reveals.

Her involvement with UFOs forms just part of her researches into the paranormal which are known far and wide including in the USA where she is referred to as Britain's number one "ghostbuster"

But it all stems from a "close encounter" at her father's farm near Aldringham in 1979.

Father and daughter saw a bright light hover above fields and next day found the tops of trees burned and bark stripped away as if by intense heat.

Holes were found excavated in the vicinity.

Brenda claims the Ministry of Defence keep files on UFOs but deny such things exist.

In their investigations, Brenda and Ron adhere to a strict code of practice laid down by the British UFO society.

Sightings are listed by type: In 1 is a light in the sky; In 2 a cluster of lights; then there's the Clix, close encounters ranging from a distinct shape to a case of abduction by unknown beings.

Other cases of UFO involvement are associated with "dreams", claims Ron.

"We have heard of people who have "dreamed" of strange events involving UFOs, being chased by them for instance," he said.

But the dreams are real and the dreamer simply believes he has dreams, says Ron.

Others may laugh, or be genuinely interested, but the two ufologists run their agency with dedication and without funding other than from their own pockets.

"We will carry on getting as much information collated as possible. Eventually scientists are going to want such information and we believe this will be of use," said Ron, pointing to the thick piles of reports.

Ron and Brenda will sift through the many reports of sightings that reach them, choosing ones which seem more worth a visit to the observers and asking other people to send a written report.

Written reports which then warrant further investigation result in visits by writers by the UFO Investigators.

Both would like a grant so they can devote their energy full time to the project, but in the meantime they intend to continue the work by their own means.

They would like helpers prepared to be investigators, visiting people who have called the hotline and taking details from them.

They would also like contacts in local areas who wouldn't mind being called at often late hours to check on a possible sighting.

If you'd like to help, or have yourself seen a UFO, the hotline number to ring is 0728 830757.

REPORTS of UFOs go back thousands of years and occur around the world, though the modern UFOs came to the fore in the 1940s.

During World War 2, pilots of all nations reported being chased by bright objects. These came to be called foo fighters.

After the war British Intelligence discovered papers in Germany revealing the German's belief that foo fighters were a secret British weapon.

The British had suspected foo fighters as being a German secret weapon.

As for the great UFO mystery, often a subject of controversy and always one of covert interest, the questions remain as yet unanswered.

"One day we shall know the truth," say Brenda and Ron.

Husband and wife saw bright light coming straight towards them

DEREK Burnett never believed in UFOs. But that was before his strange and frightening experience in Wickford's Memorial Park, near the end of July.

Derek, who owns a shop in Basildon's Eastgate Centre, was with his wife, Norma, taking their dog Ben for a walk at about 10.30pm.

Norma described the incident: "We both saw a light across the park, it looked like a torch but it was still and shining towards us.

"Then it came straight towards us, getting bigger and very bright, but it didn't shake or bump up and down, almost as if it was moving on rails.

"As it neared us, it seemed to be a lopsided triangle of three lights, very close together," said Norma.

Both Norma and Derek became frightened and hurriedly left for their home in Mount Close. But the episode hadn't ended.

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"While we were in Highcliffe Road two big balls of light, one orange and one white suddenly shot up above the houses, over the park," said Norma.

"The white ball floated towards the orange ball and turned orange," she added.

Then they left the two strange lights stationary over the housetops.

Norma and Derek Burnett, with Ben, where they saw the mystery lights.

'Two balls of light suddenly shot over the houses..'