

STRANGE ENCOUNTERS IN YORKSHIRE

by Nigel Watson

A more than superficial look at the UFO literature, reveals that UFO encounters are far stranger than mere lights in the sky, and visiting spacemen.

A recent investigation by Graham and Mark Birdsall, area investigators for Contact International (U.K.), illustrates the kind of ufological scenario we are confronted with.

Their report deals with the sightings and experiences of the Ledger family, which took place in and around Clover Field, Leeds. This field being in the vicinity of Kirkstall Power Station, and located between Kirkstall road and Stanningley road, west Leeds.

The first sighting occurred at 2.0 a.m. one morning, in the first week of June, 1978, when Mr Barry Ledger (37) and his son, Reece (12) went rabbit hunting. They were walking towards Halfpenny Bridge, which leads to Clover Field, when they saw a stationary bright light ahead of them. The white light with a silver haze around it, hovered about 2 feet above the ground. After they had seen it for a few seconds it shot away at a fantastic speed.

Three days later, Mr Ledger, his son, and daughter, Tracy (14), were out hunting at 2.30 a.m., in the same locality, when they saw at the far end of Halfpenny Bridge, a rugby-ball-shaped object. This appeared to be 20 feet in height and 30-40 feet in length, and was hovering only a couple of feet above the ground. They watched it at a distance of 100 feet for about 30 seconds until it 'simply disappeared.'

The next day Mr and Mrs Ledger were walking through the field when at the same spot where he'd seen the object the previous night, they found a cluster of 5 or 6 holes in the muddy ground. In all they found 5 such clusters in the vicinity.

During the next week Mr Ledger, Reece and Tracy, visited the field again at night time. On this occasion they didn't see anything but instead they heard a whispering sound, so close to them that they were 'frightened to death' of this disembodied emanation. Ten days after the original UFO sighting, father and son were yet again hunting for rabbits at 2.30 a.m. in Clover Field, when they saw a light in the corner of the field, which disappeared after 30 seconds.

By now Mrs Barbara Ledger was fearful for the safety of her family. So on their next rabbit hunting trip Mrs Ledger, Nellie their hunting dog and a friend, Eddie, attended the proceedings. On this visit they heard a loud screaming sound which seemed to emanate from the top of Kirkstall Power Station. Mr Ledger's hair stood on end, the children were terrified, and

Mrs Ledger claimed that: 'It sounded like something in pain, (it was) terrible', and I couldn't sleep that night, I'd never heard a sound like it in my life'.

The Ledger's were back in Clover Field, two nights later. First they heard the rustling of leaves, then the dog Nellie began to whine, which made Mrs Ledger turn round and look upwards. On doing this, she saw a monstrous shaped-object, which appeared to be 5 times bigger than their dog, swoop 15 feet above her head. The 'bird' appeared to have no feathers, but instead had over-lapping scales, on the surface of its wings and body. Mrs Ledger thought it looked mechanical and added that their dog jumped up at it, as it flew over them.

The 'bird' or 'flying cross' landed on the ground ahead of them, close to the footpath. Their dog ran towards the object which began to wobble from side to side. It came towards the dog and then it suddenly vanished into, proverbial thin air. Although the Ledger's could see nothing, their dog persisted in snapping and howling, as if something were still there. After this, the Ledger's had to have their dog destroyed by the RSPCA, because she began to go berserk at the sight of birds, and she would also attack cats and dogs.

A few days afterwards, Mr and Mrs Ledger were walking through the field when they found a heap of 5 dead, young starlings. The birds had no marks on them and rigor mortis had not set in, indicating that they had only been dead for a few hours. Looking around they discovered a total of 6 piles of dead birds, all separated by a distance of 12 feet from each other.

After an interval of 3 weeks, the bizarre happenings in Clover Field had ceased - but after this period, Mr Ledger, Tracy, Reece and Eddie, who were out rabbit hunting, were yet again confronted by the unknown.

This time Mr Ledger saw a strange light near his son, Reece. 'I haven't a clue where it came from', said Mr Ledger, 'it was suddenly there. I'd no idea how long it was there, for all I know it could have been an hour... it hurt my eyes I recall, yet I couldn't look down, we more or less came around to see the light had

'It was then that I noticed I no longer had my rifle... I couldn't understand it at all, so we walked around searching for it, and I found it laid in the grass some 30 feet away from where I had been stood'.

Tracy and Eddie witnessed the light along with Mr Ledger, but surprisingly, Reece, who was closest to the phenomenon claimed that he saw nothing untoward.

As a result of this encounter, Mr Ledger

discovered that his wrist watch had gone hay-wire, and Eddie vowed that he'd never return to the field.

On subsequent visits Mr Ledger has noticed that the wildlife in the area has diminished, but no more unusual events have been reported, by the Ledger's.

It would be simplistic and naive to take this report of these strange happenings at face value. From an objective point of view we might argue that the Ledger's strange experiences can be explained in a perfectly rational manner. For instance, we could speculate that their UFO observations were nothing more than the lights of trespassing poachers - these and subsequent (mundane) triggers, inaugurating strange misperceptions in the minds of the Ledger family.

The rationalistic explanation is valid to a certain extent, but it does ignore the question of



FINDING THE FAMOUS

There have, of late, been a number of excavations, and subsequent controversies, concerning persons of ancient fame; perhaps the most notable being the alleged finding of the body of St John the Baptist at the St Makar Monastery, in the Natroun Valley, about 60 miles north-west of the Egyptian capital of Cairo. The details are extremely confused, and we have only reportage of reports in two Egyptian newspapers, *Al Ahram* and *Al Akhbar*, but I'll piece together the story as best I can.

According to the traditions of the Coptic Church, the body of St John, along with that of the prophet Elisha, was brought from Palestine to Alexandria in the 5th Century, and then secretly removed to the monastery in the 11th. This story seems to rest on oral tradition and two 15th Century manuscripts.

Earliest reports speak of two coffins being found in 1976, below a church within the monastery, which as a whole dates back to 360 AD. We first hear that only one of these had been opened, and had been found to contain the bones of Elisha, while the monks assured

how such 'ufological fantasies' are triggered off, and to answer this we need to know more about the witnesses involved (still a neglected area of study despite the popularity of Keel's writings). Also many elements of the Ledger's story - such as the dead birds, winged object, time lapse etc. - are prevalent in the Fortean literature, which indicates that such 'misperceptions' are archetypal in nature. Indeed, within just the ufological context, we are confronted with a wealth of subjective and symbolic information which is worthy of more consideration than it has been given in the past, it is fortunate that more ufologists are beginning to realise this.

[We are pleased to announce that Nigel Watson has agreed to do a regular column of comments and notes on the Fortean aspects of recent UFO sightings, encounters and reports, beginning next issue - Ed]

the reporter from *Al Ahram* that the second contained the remains of St John. This story soon changed alarmingly.

We are next told that a cave was found beneath the church, containing several undecomposed bodies, but this then changed again. The final version, as I understand it, is that the cave contained the bones of 14 people, and the skulls of 13; thus, 'obviously' the 14th man was St John. A wooden coffin was also found, which contained an undecomposed body, though no identification has been provided for him; except that he was not St John, for he had retained his head. Father Youhanna, the second most senior monk at the monastery, refused to say how the identifications had been made, but it is apparently customary for the monks to collectively fast and pray for long periods, until "heavenly secrets" are revealed to them.

All of which is very well, but the Roman Catholic Church also claims to possess the bones of St John, at Genoa, Italy. These were looted by one Guilielmo Embriaco from the city of Mira in Turkey, during the First Crusade, around 1100. The Genoese stole the bones,