

AURA
updated May 2011

DISCLOSURE AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER NINE JAN 2004

Combining the resources of all

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Moon Dust & Mystery Spheres:

A number of “mystery spheres” were found in Australia during the 1960’s. At that time there was some speculation among UFO researchers that these balls might, somehow, be connected to the UFO phenomenon.

As far back as 1964, the English UFO magazine, “Flying Saucer Review” [10(1):5] related the finding of such objects in New South Wales and South Australia, between April and July 1963. In that article, Mr Allen Fairhall, then Federal Minister of Supply, is quoted as stating that inquiries to the relevant American and Russian space agencies had failed to determine the origin of these spheres, thus raising speculation in some quarters.

Jumping thirty two years forward. In his 1996 document: “UFOs Sub Rosa Down Under-The Australian Military & Government Role in the UFO Controversy” Bill Chalker wrote:

The Joint Intelligence Organisation (the reorganised JIB) maintains a secret BOLIDE file. It still seems to be anchored to the premise that “UFOs” could involve the chance of retrieval of Soviet hardware and therefore contribute some useful intelligence. It appears JIO have a “rapid intervention” capability as they have been able to instigate prompt widespread ground searches in suspected “hardware” crashes. They do this through “special access” channels. This operation may be similar to US activity operating under the code name Project “Moondust.”

What was Project Moondust?

A check with the authoritative “The UFO Encyclopaedia” written by US Researcher Jerry Clark, [Clark, J. 1996. “The UFO Encyclopaedia” Volume 3. Omnigraphics. Detroit p 128] indicates that:

In 1961 the U.S. Air Force established the classified Project Moon Dust to “locate, recover and deliver descended foreign space vehicles.”

Did Australia participate in this Project?

We recently uncovered a file (full details later on in this Newsletter) which seemingly indicates that yes we did.

Department of Supply file SA 5644/2/1 contains a 1962 memo from the Controller WEA to the Superintendent Woomera. In it, it stated that “the United States Embassy” informally sought WRE’s assistance to obtain information about sightings, or of downed fragments of space vehicles. This location and recovery of fragments was exactly the role of the USAF Project Moon Dust, and the request to Australia was made the year after the Project commenced. In our reading of the Supply file, there is never actually a mention of the words “Project Moon Dust.” However, as it was a classified US project perhaps this is not surprising.

Listing of known falls of space vehicle fragments

A check of various sources available to us, lead to the compilation of the following list of nine such objects, found in Australia between 1963 and 1988.

Table 1

Date of find
Location of find
Description
Source

8 Apr 1963
Bouilla Station NSW
5.5kg & 35.5cm diameter
FSR 10(1):5. 1964

28 Jun 1963
Mount Sturt Station NSW
8kg & 41cm diameter
FSR 10(1):5. 1964

12 Jul 1963
Muloorina SA
15cm diameter
FSR 10(1):5. 1964

Sep 1965
Merkanooka WA
Titanium sphere. 50cm diameter
Department of Supply file SA5644/3/1

Apr 1968
Mudgee NSW
29kg & 61cm diameter
AFU Newsletter 46, July 2003

Mar 1968
Inkerman Qld
60cm diameter sphere. Grey colour with 4 holes in it.
RAAF file J63/25 5/40/AIR PART 1

Dec 1972
NSW
3 spheres. 61cm diameter
UFORA Research Digest Issue 30:10

17 Oct 1973
Mouroubra WA
51cm diameter
UFORA Research Digest Issue 30:10

Jun 1988
Marble Bar WA
Titanium 37cm diameter sphere.
<http://www.reentrynews.com>

“Sphere” files located

In December 2003, as a result of our examination of paper file listings at the Adelaide office of the NAA, we located two more files relevant to our inquiries.

The first file was a Department of Supply file SA5644/3/1 titled “Joint Intelligence Bureau requests for an examination of a sphere found at Merkanooka WA.” The file revealed that:

- On 6 October 1965, the JIB asked the WRE to examine and report on the sphere
- The ball reached WRE on 18 October 1965
- A memo dated 1 April 1966 to the Chief Scientist from the WRE stated that: “Our examinations show that the object is certainly of USA origin and that it could be assumed to have formed part of a space vehicle.”
- A memo dated 10 August 1966 from the Chief Scientist to the WRE asked that the ball be forwarded to Defence R & D Attache in Washington for handing on to NASA
- A later report stated that the ball had been found on 10 September 1965 and that NASA determined it “...was a fragment from the Gemini 5 spaceflight” specifically a Gemini 20 inch OAMS fuel tank used as a water tank.

The second file, was again a Department of Supply file, number SA 5644/3/2 Part 1. Here appeared the story of the first three spheres listed in table 1.

Bouilla ball

A 14 inch diameter, 10lbs in weight, sphere was discovered on the 8 April 1963 by Jim McClure on Bouilla Station, near Broken Hill NSW (30 deg 06mins S; 141 deg 52mins E). It was delivered to the Weapons Research Establishment in South Australia for examination, where it was determined to be of American origin. After much discussion with the USA, the sphere was returned to there.

Johnson ball

Another sphere turned up on Mount Sturt Station (29deg 32mins S; 141 deg 34 mins E), near Broken Hill on 29 Jun 1963 and was named after the finder, Colin Johnson. It weighed 18lbs. The Bouilla and Johnson balls were found at location 50 miles apart. This sphere was also determined to be American and returned there.

Later analysis, documented on the file, indicated that both of these two balls were from a US Agena rocket used to launch test satellites.

Muloorina “ball”

On 9 Jul 1963 Tom Churches reported finding a metal sphere with a red rubber balloon attached. The sphere was 6 inches in diameter with a hole at the bottom and was said to have been found on Muloorina Station some 3 miles SE of Lake Eyre South. However, examination of the sphere soon indicated that it was a hoax, two halves taped together with "sticky tape." We do not believe that this find has been revealed as a hoax before.

Proposed explanations

The following table lists explanations which have been put forward for these objects:

Table 2

Location of find

Explanation

Bouilla Station NSW

US Agena rocket stage used to launch USAF test satellites on 14 Dec 62 & 7 Jan 63. Re-entered in Jan 63.

[<http://www.reentrynews.com>]

Mount Sturt Station NSW

Muloorina SA

Hoax.

[Dept of Supply file SA 5644/3/2 Part 1]

Merkanooka WA

Water tank from Gemini 5 spaceflight

[Dept of Supply file SA5644/3/1]

Location of find

Explanation

Mudgee NSW

Pressure vessel from Delta booster used to launch biosatellite II on 7 Sep 67.

[<http://www.reentrynews.com>]

Inkerman Qld

Given to US Embassy Australia. No known results.

[RAAF file J63/25 5/40/AIR PART 1]

NSW

Probably high pressure gas storage tank.

[UFORA Research Digest No 30 Sep-Oct 1992]

Mouroubra WA

WRE says American satellite.

[UFORA Research Digest No 30 Sep-Oct 1992]

Marble Bar WA

Probably from Soviet Foton 4 launched 14 Apr 88, re-entered 28 Apr 88.

[<http://www.reentrynews.com>]

If something fell today who would respond?

An Internet search reveals that Australia has a plan titled "The Australian Contingency Plan for Space Re-entry debris." According to <http://www.arpana.gov.au> this plan "...has been prepared to coordinate the activities of Commonwealth, State and Territory Departments/Authorities involved in recovering and neutralizing any radiological threat arising from the re-entry of space debris over Australia and the island territories." Emergency Management Australia coordinates emergency responses under this plan. The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency provides a number of services under the plan.

Department of Supply file SA5644/2/1:

We have uncovered and examined, another previously unknown Government file dealing with UFOs. File number SA 5644/2/1, located at the Adelaide office of the National Australia Archives, was a Department of Supply file held by the Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) at Salisbury and covers the years 1966-1974. The title of the file is "Unidentified Flying Objects." A summary of the 114 pages of the file, has been posted to our website at <http://disclosure.freewebsite.org>

Items of interest to us on this file are as follows:

Space vehicle fragments

The file refers in a number of places to "space vehicle fragments." However, unfortunately for us, there is no evidence on this file of any "crashed saucer" retrievals.

In August 1962 a procedure was put into place by the WRE regarding "Identification of space vehicle fragments." A memo dated 16 August 1962 from the Controller WRE to Superintendent/Woomera stated:

"A letter has been received from the Department of External Affairs stating that the United States Embassy has informally sought their assistance in obtaining information which might be used in the identification of space vehicle fragments. The Embassy stated that if a luminous object is observed in the atmosphere and/or fragments are recovered which might be associated with the re-entry or earth impact of space vehicles, the following information would be helpful in identifying the vehicle and determining its origin..."

There followed a listing of information of use, such as date/time/location/description etc etc. WRE staff at Woomera were asked to report any such occurrences. The concluding sentence of the memo was: "No special effort is justified in order to obtain these reports."

A memo dated 15 October 1967 showed that this procedure was in operation at least between 1962 and 1967, and listed the reporting channels to be used by WRE to report UFO sightings. There were two in place at that stage:
Sightings at the ranges

Principal Officer/Ranges to Superintendent/Trials to DD/Trials to Regional Security Officer Adelaide, to Chief Security Officer, to the Department of Air
All other sightings

Superintendent/American Projects Division, to Head Office, to Department of External Affairs, to US Embassy.

However, a 13 December 1967 memo to the Assistant Secretary Projects from the American Projects Division, raised the question as to whether or not these processes still applied. It drew attention to a 12 October 1966 letter from the Department of Air advising RAAF responsibility for investigating UFO reports. The internal WRE memo recommended that "...all future reports, excepting those originating from the Woomera area, be referred to the local RAAF base for investigation." Although the file contains papers up to 1974, there is no record of whether or not these recommendations were followed.

STARS:

The file contains discussions about a "UFO club" at Woomera in the mid 60's. Apparently, a number of staff initiated a group called "Scientific, Technical and Astronomical Research Society," STARS for short, in May 1966. The Superintendent Woomera set out a number of conditions before it was formed, including:

"...the disclosure of any information originating in the area is prohibited"

"Under these circumstances then, you would not be permitted to publish any information either locally or through any affiliated society such as the Victorian Flying Saucer Research Society"

"Finally, should the existence of a club in Woomera be publicised you would no doubt be inundated and embarrassed by requests from other societies for information. I could therefore not permit any publicity on the formation of such a club in Woomera to be made."

Minutes of STARS meetings were sent to the Superintendent Woomera, and then on to the Security Officer. STARS designed its own UFO report forms, but the Superintendent closed down the distribution of these forms and the reports system was discontinued.

In August 1967 it was reported that: "...STARS has become somewhat moribund of late and as the activities of the organisation are closely scrutinised I consider that there is no need to feel that any security risk exists at present."

UFO reports

There are a number of UFO reports on the file. A list of these case follows:

1964. Yorke Peninsula SA. 1730hrs. Object falling SW to NE with smoke haze around it and with a fiery trail.

Jul 1966. Victor Harbor SA. 2025hrs. A 'star-like' object moved across the sky.

11 Feb 1967. Wollongong NSW. 2015hrs. Very bright object in the sky.

27 Apr 1967. Woomera SA. Several staff reported an object close to a Skylark missile. We are re-examining details of these reports.

30 Jun 1967. Woomera SA. Numerous staff reported seeing a variety of objects through instruments. We are re-examining details of these reports.

20 Jul 1967. Karoonda SA. 1537hrs. Silver object travelling at high speed.

6 Feb 1974. Sydney NSW. Photo of high altitude vapour trail.

26 Jun 1974. Alice Springs NT. 0942hrs. No details given.

RAAF file summaries & catalogues:

A summary of RAAF file A703 580/1/1 Part 7 has now been completed and posted to the project website at <http://disclosure.freewebsite.org>. The site now contains summaries of Parts 1-4,7,9 &10; and catalogues of sightings from Parts 1-10.

Other Department of Supply files examined:

In order to undertake as thorough a search for Government documents as possible, we have inspected a wide range of files which might be relevant. Three examples of the types of files examined are given below in table 3. None of these three contained material useful to our search.

Table 3

File number \ File title

SA5491/1/8 \ Summary of Australian Participation in Space Activities for the Minister of Supply

SA5491/1/1 \ Space Research (Policy). General policy and programmes.

SA5648/8/5 \ Unauthorised flying/flights/entry into restricted airspace at DRCS Salisbury & Woomera prohibited zones.

Photographic evidence:

On the NAA web-site we located "Series notes for series D897 Unknown Objects-DSTO WRE[A-K 1948-1957]-Australian Archives."

The notes state that the "...series contains approximately 4800 colour and black & white slides. Controlling records for this series (D896) indicate there were some 6220 slides registered between 1947 and 1971. The whereabouts of the missing 1400 slides is currently unknown...There are slides of Skylark launchers, Jindivik trials, Blue Streak movements and some unidentified objects..."

We located a register for some of these slides in the Adelaide Office of the NAA. NAA staff produced two bound volumes which contained dates, reference numbers and details of the photographs. A close examination of the hundreds of picture listed there revealed none of an unidentified or unknown nature.

RAAF Freedom of Information request:

We have submitted a request to the RAAF for access to a substantial number of files, under the Federal FOI Act (1982). Initially, we are seeking to physically view the files in Adelaide, before deciding which papers to purchase a photocopy of. We will keep you informed of progress.

Contacting the Secretariat:

We welcome information which would assist the Project. Our details are:

Contacting the Project

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