

The Armchair Ufologist

By Andy Roberts

Tough on ufology, tough on the causes of ufology

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In the Year of Our Lord, Kenneth Arnold

Obligatory Di Content

Just a quick word about Princess Di before we get on with the show. It was all terribly sad. Tragic even, but also generated lots of conspiracy and humour material which will entertain for ages. It couldn't have ended any other way really could it? Would she have got as much coverage if she'd snuffed it in bed from a heart attack? I think not. If you gotta go, go big style. The Queen Mum's going to have to croak whilst riding the Manx TT naked with no helmet to top that one.

If anyone ever tells you that mass hysteria doesn't exist refer them to the events of the past couple of weeks. Barely days after Di's death people were having visions of her, and an American psychic had channeled her instructions for making cookies or something. It will get worse before it gets better.

Still, I never thought I'd see that old coke-queen Elton John performing at a royal event.

I liked Diana, she wasn't going play the game, only her game. I think they should rename Venus.....

No Reason To Get Excited

It had to happen I suppose, the smash hit film of the summer Men In Black and it's eponymous hell spawn single made it to number one and it mentions Roswell. Yet despite it being the 'anniversary' of our sad subject the year has passed passed with no Big Wow and hopefully will now quieten down somewhat.

I can't report from too many confs this summer as by the time

the heat and drugs kicked in during June I thought feck it, and devoted my time to reading, and mountain climbing.

But both I and my spies found time for a little light infiltration duties and we are proud to present all the dirt that's fit to print so let's do it.....

The Disbelieving of Liverpool

Fathers' Day found us ignoring our children as usual, audience watching in a draughty hall in central Liverpool at the rather grandly named 5th Merseyside BUFORA Conference.

As they filtered in I couldn't help but observe what a motley crew attend a UFO conferences. Men with kids, obviously sent out for a Fathers' Day 'treat' mingled uneasily with young couples (obvious X-filers) and sundry coffin dodgers. The occasional furtive group of potato-headed lagermen with baseball caps and military modes had me quite worried, but I just passed them off as 'UFO Magazine' readers. A non PC acquaintance let it be know he didn't think it was a 'babe fest'. Quite, what the gender ratio is at any event is obviously of no concern to anyone, but in his own, unevolved, way he was right but for the wrong reasons.

The only females present, bar a few ufological types, had obviously been dragged there by their partners as foreplay to the evenings' night of passion. They would have been grossly disappointed.

Refuse to go to conferences girls, there are better things in life. Like having one, for instance.

It's Not All Rambling...

Predictably, the day held few surprises. Margaret Fry took the stage first. A veteran of the UFO scene, Margaret has worked hard for BUFORA, Contact UK and other groups and is a sincere practitioner of the ufological arts from her north Wales cottage. She is also a hard line adherent of the ETH. Consequently we have agreed to disagree. Her talk was a tortuous struggle through the Berwyn mountains 'crash' of 1974, which after being abandoned by ufology for donkey's years has recently been picked up again and all manner of what have

you has been alleged. Both Margaret, Tony 'Ken' Dodd and sundry other UFO fanciers are convinced that an ET craft crashed and the stiffs were removed by a crack team of stiff removers to Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment.

They even have witnesses.

Britain's Roswell I'm sure.

- NOT.

I'm equally sure that barely 10% of the audience had actually heard of the case. Everyone else must have been completely baffled as Margaret's monotone stumbled from observation to observation about the rumours surrounding the case.

Here we saw a common ufological trick employed; that the area was 'remote'. This crops up quite a lot in UFO accounts, as if we are supposed to be impressed by 'remoteness'. Well of course we are. However, the Berwyn mountains aren't really that remote at all (I've been walking there). You don't really get 'remote' in England or Wales and even Scotland has few really 'remote' places. But beware it when you see this trick being used to impress.

I suspect strongly that if you see 'remote' used in a book or magazine article the authors are using it to prevent anyone going there to find out what they are on about is nonsense.

If you really want a good round up of the Berwyn event you'll have to wait until Dave Clarke finishes his definitive piece on the matter, probably to be called 'It Was A Meteorite Really' by Dave Clarke.

Tim After Tim

Tim Matthews next. Having arranged a truce with local group MARA, he was brought in to prove that BUFORA could, if they wanted, be controversial.

Unlike Margaret who had whispered her way into our lives Tim positively bellowed. Eschewing written notes he stalked the stage like a stage stalking thing banging off bon mots whilst hammering home yet more unpalatable facts about triangle research. Certain ufologists

could be seen nervously chewing their comfort blankets as Tim demonstrated tim and tim again that at least some of the triangle reports appear to represent terrestrial, military, test craft. Still UFOs mind, but none of your sing if you're glad to be grey nonsense for Tim.

The alien fanciers eyes soon glazed over whilst the 'serious ufologists' drooled sweat as they struggled to come to terms with just how the devil Tim had found out so much about military air routes and bases, secret aircraft materials and suchlike.

The answer was deceptively simple.

He'd just gone out and done the necessary research and lo and behold he'd found the answers! A salutary tale for many ufologists I'm afraid.

His act was half up to the minute research findings, half wind up for the believers, and his impressions of Tony Dodd ("I have it on the highest authority lad") should get him on 'Ufologists In Their Eyes' asap. If only he'd have finished with "My name's Tim Matthews, goodnight" it would have been complete.

A local bod by the name of Roger Ellison had been roped in to give a ufological history of Runcorn and surrounding areas. He needn't have bothered as it was terrible. We'll pass him by eh?

He's A Rocket Man

Stan 'the man' Conway has been at it for thirty years. He was speaking on the propulsion systems of UFOs.

My, how exciting.

I thought this sort of nonsense went out with the ark, but the dark ufological days we wade through have obviously made it acceptable at UFO conferences once again. The very idea of trying to work out the propulsion system of something we don't even know exists in the first place has always amused me no end, and so we settled back to view Stan's attempts with interest.

Five minutes later we were bored silly, my schoolboy physics (which basically consists of knowing that if you throw a schoolboy in

the air he'll fall and break his neck) having failed miserably. Stan's a good speaker though and obviously thinks highly of his own theories.

He's probably the only one who does.

Incidentally, Stan was one of the handful of readers who weren't entirely happy with issue one of TAU and a source told me he wanted a 'word' at this gig because he was 'fizzing'.

Antacids rather than a word would have been in order I think Stan.

But in the end he sat meekly one seat away from me, and apart from some high drama when his foot became trapped in the folding seat, his fizzing was kept well and truly under control.

Wood you believe it?

The main attraction of the day (for some) was Larry Warren and Peter Robbins, on tour to promote their book 'Left At Eastgate', another tome about Rendlesham Forest. Due to their important schedule they just 'had' to speak on Sunday, (not a good day for conferences at the best of times), and this was why the hall was half full.

When will ufologists learn that book publicists need us rather more than we need their latest dancing bears?

I'm not too well versed in the whole Rendlesham event so I can't really comment on their 'facts', save to say that 'those who know' reckon Warren is talking out of his propulsion systems. But as a double act you couldn't beat them.

Co-writer Robbins was a ringer for the small guy out of Penn and Teller and together they could have passed as a sort of cosmic Simon and Garfunkle, singing their hit 'Are you going to Rendlesham Forest'.

Larry Warren had his act down to a tee, and was a fantastic performer, performing fantastic material. Jokes in all the right places, lots of nonsense about how the breakthrough was really near, we were all part of it etc, how he had been silenced by the US military.

So silenced in fact that he and his chum had written a book and were on a lecture tour to promote it.

Now that's what I call silenced!

There was a bit of a minor contretemps when Warren had a dig at Tim Matthews for his particular view of the subject, suggesting it was the 'low road'. Tim of course was outraged at this and raised it in question time. Like the gentleman he is Larry Warren apologized. We'll meet them again later.

If you have any answers we'll be happy to provide full and detailed questions.

I went home thinking why? Not why in any sense of the 'why UFOs' sort of why, but why had we all wasted our time sat in a freezing hall listening to people who were in the main talking complete and absolute garbage?

Who's That Girl?

Having encountered the enigmatic Judith Jaafar yet again at this conference I am beginning to think that she is a government agent sent to spy of what goes on at ufocons. If you see her at a conf please report back and we'll log it on Almawatch.

From a once ufologically naive attendee at an IUN Jacques Vallee conference she has risen fast, dangerously fast, through BUFORAs ranks via the witless support group. I suspect that if we plotted her ufological peregrinations on a map some form of deep saucer-related secret will be revealed. She's almost BUFORAs version of Terry Waite, going among the war torn UFO groups of the provinces administering balm to the frenzied peasants who've had enough of BUFORA shenanigans foisted on them in the name of ufology. A sort of anti-matter version of Irene Bott.

What's the frequency Kenneth?

The week containing June 24th was bound to be a biggy. The media had been getting itself into a tizz about UFOs for months. Every newspaper, radio and TV station had gone UFO crazee. Ufologists everywhere had been pestered for their knowledge and the media still hadn't learned anything. In the end the media storm was

just a lot of static. On Saturday June 21st Jonathan Ross hosted a 'light hearted' televisual look at the subject. As you'd expect it plumbed new depths in stupidity.

Ross's typical media hypocrisy was summed up when later that week he appeared on the Richard and Judy show and said (of the Arizona UFO incident specifically, and UFOs generally):

"It's absolute rubbish. If it was true we'd know about it by now. These people have been drinking too many alcopops and should be banned from watching the X-Files for a couple of weeks. They're just boring people who are seeking a bit of media attention."

Quite.

Kill a media person today.

Oooh, wot a picture

On a more serious note, a UFO photographic case from 1966 was hauled out for reappraisal this year by, surprisingly enough, the people who took it. Readers familiar with ufological history will be aware of the 'Conisborough' photo taken by Stephen Pratt on 28/3/66. If not look it up in a UFO book, it'll all come back to you. It's an everyday story of boy sees orange blob/photos orange blob/three saucers appear on developed film/become UFO 'classics'.

The rest of the family also saw 'something' and the photo has echoed round books and magazines since then to support a variety of ideas. Because of its similarity and close geographical proximity to the Alex Birch photo which, Birch later admitted, was a hoax, and because it looks like a hoax, people have naturally thought it was one. This laissez faire attitude to what was obviously a huge ufological event (for Conisborough) has enraged the Pratt's and led to Stephen Pratt's brother Kevin putting out a small publication dealing with the case, explaining why it wasn't a hoax (mainly because he says so). £1.50 to Kevin Pratt at 210 Bancroft, Glascote Heath, Tamworth, Staffs, B77 2EY should get you a copy.

Before I ramble further, the political dimension to all this is that Graham & Mark Birdsall, purveyors of UFO Magazine appear to have let Jerome Clark, the famous American ufologist, diss the case

in their '50 Years Of UFOs' issue. Kevin Pratt, Stephen's brother, wrote numerous letters to Clarke but in typical arrogant ufologist mode he chose not to reply to them.

Kevin's statement includes the provocative phrase "I can assure everyone that our experience back in March 1966 is genuine and people can assume all they like, it will not change the fact that it happened. We are willing to put our cards on the table and have the UFO negative and the Kodak camera examined for the last time, using the most up to date methods available by independent and unbiased experts, in the vain hope that we can put an end to the rumours once and for all."

Way to go Kevin.

A long way to go because what Kevin doesn't realise is that even if a team of scientists demonstrated it was a fake, or a hoax, no-one would change their mind at all.

It's certainly an intriguing case though, made more so by the present circumstances. But Kevin's offer is a bold one; why, if it is a hoax, would the Pratt's go to such lengths to protest its innocence.

BUFORA hope to get the negative and have it analysed properly, once and for all. They will of course lose the negative if it is given to them and a cover-up will be implied by default and the Pratt photo will achieve religious status.

From my point of view I think it is a hoax for the following reasons:

- 1) Pratt did not see through the viewfinder, what later appeared on the photograph
- 2) It looks very similar to the Alex Birch photograph
- 3) It looks as though it has been pasted onto glass in the same way that other hoaxed photos have been made
- 4) The three 'saucers' are conveniently and neatly 'banked' as if flying in formation and nicely composed within the photograph

But then I'm cynical.

It is to be hoped that BUFORA - or someone - takes up the offer of the photo for analysis and settles the matter once and for all.

Mmmmmm, NIC

July 5th saw a BUFORA NIC (National Investigations Committee, dummy) meeting in London. Sadly, I couldn't attend as I was away on a weekend zen ufology meditation retreat where the koan up for study was:

'If BUFORA's Code Of Practice For Investigators States That There Is A Moratorium On Hypnotic Regression, How Come Malcolm Robinson - a BUFORA member - is using it and speaking at their conference?'

After a week of dawn rises and thwacks from the head monk the answer came, pure as a falling snowflake. But not until after this report from TAU's man on the spot: 'A very brave and dignified Gloria Dixon in the chair, showing no emotion when the Young Turks (Richard Conway and Matthew Williams) slithered into the room. Alma also there as a calming influence.

Much excitement when it came to question time after Albert Budden's presentation, with voices raised to volume strength 10, and with BUFORA Chairman-elect Stan Conway almost coming to blows with Albert, such was the strength of his feeling against Albert's 'electronic pollution' theories. Gloria stepping in to keep them apart, doing a good peacekeeping job.

More excitement at Garfunkels afterwards, with the protagonists nervously positioning themselves at the tables, Alma and Gloria at opposite ends, the Turks somewhere in the middle. The Young Celt losing little time in discussing 'that tape' with Gloria. Now claiming that he didn't actually record Sue Mantle's 'conversation' at all, he was just bluffing, a ploy to calm Sue down, he was becoming concerned that Sue was going to hang one on him.

But was he bluffing about bluffing? And why is that young rascal Andy Roberts claiming that he has a copy of the tape, which he has copied and is circulating?

Both main protagonists managing (but with strained expressions)

to maintain their dignity. The Celt switching his intention to yours truly, trying to tilt him from his neutral stance. A long nose-powdering session by The Skirts near the end. A slightly bemused Dave Pointon, a nice bloke who foolishly thought everyone would be talking about UFO investigations (UFOs? what they?) makes his excuses and leaves.

A foursome off in Alma's new bubble car, with an intrepid but battle-worn Gloria heading for the Lion's Den. Yours truly decamping at Kings Cross (to catch a train, don't be silly).'

So now you know what goes on at these recondite gatherings. The answer to the koan is of course:

'The hypnotic regression that is practised is not the hypnotic regression that is forbidden (honest!). Put your trust in the ten thousand pounds which will surely come and the great man will have riches'.

Well, that's cleared that up then.

Mantle Pieces

The continuing saga of Philip Mantle vs The Rest of Ufology continues apace and looks set to rival Di's death as the tragedy unfolds into the autumn. The tape story is but a small part of it all but is one of this year's more hilarious ufological incidents.....and it goes like this.

At the Michael Aspel TV 'debate' bun fight Sue Mantle accosted Matthew Williams and 'asked him outside', to discuss various things he had been allegedly saying about her husband Mr Philip Mantle esq.

Scared of being roughed up in a public place by a gurl Matthew agreed, and they duly walked down some lonely (or so they thought) corridors. At the appointed place Sue unleashed a stream of vitriol at Matthew basically along the lines of "My husband's the cats pajamas why do you not share my opinions you, you, you you-you".

Matthew, having once worked for HM Customs and having been subsequently investigated by 'the government' (or so he says) and therefore used to interrogations stood impassively in the way that

only Matthew can, and said little. They then went back to the party for cakes and musical chairs.

BUT, rumour had it that Matthew had used his Dictaphone (I know, he should have used his fingers like normal people) and recorded the spat for use in the forthcoming Trial Of The Century. Rumour also had it that a tape of the event plopped mysteriously onto my doormat a few days later - obviously having been taped by a directional mike of some sort, but still containing the dreadful screeching. I casually mentioned this to Sir Philip Of Mantilli via email and within minutes Super Sue was on the 'phone defending her hubby and demanding the tape.

This little incident neatly demonstrates how essential it is to get members of your immediate family to protect you when the ufological going gets rough and tough - we'll meet another, sadder, example of this shortly.

Dr Who?

Let's digress further into Philgoss. At a recent local UFO group meeting in Sheffield Special Agent Clarke was shown the booklet produced by ITV to accompany the Aspel 'Out Of This World' show. A perusal of consultants listed on the rear revealed one 'Dr. Philip Mantle'.

Golly, a Doctor already.

That explains how he wangled himself into the green room at the above event.

The Gospel According To Matthew

Matthew Williams is another example of a new bug from nowhere. Birthed into ufology a few years ago following a 'sighting', he became a man with a mission. Dressed in smart clothes he haunts UFO confs and is in regular demand as a speaker.

Why I don't know as his stock in trade is sub-Tim Good, sub-standard, subterranean homesick greys rubbish. He's all over the subject like a rash, thinks he can take both ufology and BUFORA by storm. Indeed, he has stirred up a hornets nest of buzzy proportions.

What he doesn't realise is that he's merely been manipulated by impersonal forces within the subject to do their dirty work for them.

And he fell for it, hook, line and sinker. Even his so called 'UFO' sighting was cleverly staged to bring him into the subject with the sole intention of balancing Philip's rise to power. They are now both equal on the ufological scales of justice and the time is now right for.....

Ten Things You Neither Knew Nor Cared About Matthew Williams

- 1) He has no sense of humour whatsoever, having had it sucked out by the UFO he saw on a Welsh hillside several years ago
- 2) He claims he's Welsh but doesn't speak the language, play the harp or even wear national dress. His trademark 'sing-song' accent masks a guttural barking sound
- 3) People - even his so-called 'friends' - call him 'Slick' behind his back
- 4) He takes ufology very, very, very, very, very, very, very seriously indeed and believes 'the truth' will be revealed soon
- 5) He will never get on BUFORA Council (oh, alright you all knew that one)
- 6) He looks like Nick Pope from a distance
- 7) He sounds impressive but often talks total bollocks
- 8) He thinks the fact that military bases have tunnels under them is in some way ufologically relevant
- 9) His magazine, Truthseekers Review has never found any truth whatsoever
- 10) He actually thinks he is in the X-Files

Policy? Put the kettle on!

Another BUFORA 'event' this summer was billed as a 'Policy Meeting'. In line with BUFORA's helpful, public face, it was

naturally held on the dark side of London and most people only got to know about it a day or so before.

Of course this gave rise to the usual yelps of conspiracy, and it was perhaps just a tad coincidental that anyone who might have challenged the BUFORA status quo got their invite too late to do owt. Some 'trouble makers' didn't even get their invites until the morning of the event.

An oversight, obviously.

In the end we were glad we didn't go. Apparently they had some sort of 'trainer' there doing lots of exercises.

Trainers are the curse of the 1990s, being highly paid and talking, by and large, total shit. They always come with a flipchart and want you to go into small groups before feeding back. Some of you will have been there as part of your real world jobs so you'll know what I mean. A complete waste of time in any sphere let alone ufology.

You're supposed to be investigating UFOs you dimwits not running a multi-national biscuit company.

My Significant Other is a high powered management trainer and, of course, whilst her stuff is fantastic the rest is rubbish. To inflict this sort of nonsense on BUFORA members is symptomatic of the way it is going.....downhill, fast. Throwing money out of the windows as it goes.

I'll Be Your Mirror.....

When and if BUFORA straightens itself out I don't know what we'll do for gossip, really I don't. But in the meantime....or is it the mean time, lets make hay while the sun shines.

And shine it did on the weekend of 16/17 August. It shone on BUFORA and the 8th International Bun Fight. The people didn't come in droves, preferring sun oil to snake oil, and in fact had to be virtually begged to come through the doors. All human life was there including the.....

Crazy Bag Man

Do you know what I hate about conferences? I hate that growing number of smug, self-satisfied gits who wander about aimlessly clutching attache cases, pretending they contain anything of importance other than the banana sandwiches and rusks their mum/wife/girlfriend/mental health professional packed for them. What can ANYONE have that's worth bringing to a conference in a case?

There is one guy who I've seen at a few events and really you just want to take him aside for a slap...keep a look out...you'll know him when you see him.....a prize for the first person to tell me his name.

Movers & Shakers

A special mention in despatches must go to Richard Conway for doing a difficult job despite being hindered by people in his own organisation. Never has a conference been so ill thought out. And never has one person fought so much against entropy to make it a relative success.

Well done Richard.

Now give ufology up.

In the end it was largely a covert IUN operation which got the show on the road by sorting out ticket sales, providing stewards and so forth. 'Twas ever thus.....

No Sleep 'til Bedtime

I didn't attend many of the lectures over the weekend, preferring instead to hang out with my chums the Wootten's and other UFO luminaries, in the hope some stardust would rub off on one of the common folk.

Late Friday night found me at a very surreal soiree, a coterie at which Judith Jaafar (who even the hotel receptionist thought looked like Alma from Corrie, a 'remarkable likeness' quoth he) led the community singing and provided hope for us all.

This miniature version of the Toronto Blessing ended with myself, Mike Wootten and John Spencer talking what can only be described

as bollocks about matters ufological.

But what fabulous company to be talking bollocks in eh?

UFO politics within BUFORA being what they are the question on everyone's lips come Saturday morning was, "is Philip coming"? He was indeed but due to, ahem, 'baby sitting problems' he was only there for two hours each day, being shadowed by various BUFORA high rankers desperately trying to slip a black spot into his hand.

In some unintentional parody of the aforementioned convention of biscuit salesmen from Wisconsin, BUFORA as usual handed out its Investigator Of The Year award (which went to David Sankey from south Yorkshire). Another 'special' award went to Judith Jaafar for going to the most ufocons, sorry for, ah, for something else I forget what. Judith graciously accepted the award and gave an impassioned speech about politics and infighting in BUFORA.

And about how she was going to stop causing it!

Bill Of Confusion

Conferences come and go, but each one has, by international law, to have a major upset in which someone's feathers (or scales) are well and truly ruffled.

And it duly came on the Sunday morning and is of such a trivial nature that I would skip to the next exciting bit if I were you.

It goes like this: Several people had been told prior to the conference that their hotel B&B would be paid by BUFORA. It's traditional at IUN and BUFORA conferences that people who do the work had this paid. Fair enough. That's how it should be.

Anyway after checking out I lurked behind a convenient pillar and was witness to a frankly shocking scene whereby Mike and Gaynor Wootten were asked to pay their hotel bill despite having been told by the conference organiser Richard Conway several months ago that they would be on freebies.

Gaynor is simply just not used to this sort of treatment and those responsible should know better.

Worse still they weren't even told this by a BUFORA council member.

Nor even a member of the Little People who exist to serve Council's every whim by sending in their £20.00 each year for the purchase of cocaine and whores.

No, this devastating pocket pranger was delivered by non other than Fleur

Conway.....ok, ok if you say 'who' anymore you'll begin to sound like an owl. You know, Fleur Conway. No? Oh well I'll have to tell you then. Fleur is in fact Stan 'the man' Conway's wife - you know, Stan from BUFORA council - you met him a while back at the Liverpool do. Yeah, yeah, propulsion systems, trapped foot, fizz (will you stop laughing at the back). This also makes her Richard Conway's mummy.

So, BUFORA are not only chivying people out of promises but non council members are now dispensing justice. To tell a member of 17 years standing (and a member who does most of BUFORAs admin donkey work and saves BUFORA a small fortune each week by various means) that they had to pay is not very clever.

But it's typical and consistent.

Not only that but consider this. Stan (tm) is highly tipped for BUFORA Council chairmanship, a position of power, and statesmanlike importance. Surely, bearing in mind the previous scenario, there is a possibility that BUFORA could be in an organ/monkey grinder dichotomy situation whereby people may think that Fleur indoors is pulling the strings and that Stan is just, well to use rocket analogy, the nose cone to her thrusters? But life's like that in BISCUIT Ltd I suppose.

I realise that behind every great man etc etc but behind every BUFORA chairperson there should be a chair.

And that's all.

Worserer still, when Mike protested that Richard Conway had ok'd all this (which he had 'cos I remember him telling me ages ago) he was told by Fleur 'The Mum' Conway that they couldn't even

Speak to him - and he's the organiser!

I've often found over the years that it impresses people no end when I get into difficulties if me mum sorts it out for me. Needless to say Richard's mummy and daddy paid for his hotel bill!

As I slunk away from the reception area I even heard it mentioned I would have to pay my bill. I realised that if BUFORA didn't sort this catastrophe out toot sweet they were making a very big mistake and that they were in danger of unleashing a very real force of evil - Gaynor can swivel her head all the way round y'know and her projectile vomiting is accurate to miniscule tolerances.

But out of it all, genuinely sorry as I was for M & G, there was delicious irony to it. It turned out that the only person to have his room paid for by BUFORA, other than the speakers, was none other than your humble scribbler. Those who have followed the BUFORA/IUN soap opera over the past seven years or so will have a long chuckle at this one.

You can almost hear Stuart laughing!

The Ego Has Landed

Then there was Max Burns, whose parents obviously named him from a casualty department wall chart. Supposedly he's been 'covert' for the past ten years (which means he started watching the X Files last year) and the little thing's just full of himself and what he knows.

He told us all about the South Yorkshire 'crash' retrieval and how he'd located the site of the crash etc etc. Funny thing was he couldn't quite remember where it had all happened when we gave him some names from the moors. But what's a little lack of knowledge when there are crashes to be retrieved.

New bugs eh? Bless. After approaching us at our table to give us a laugh at the paucity of his knowledge we sent him scurrying to speak to Tim Matthews whose comments later were unprintable (even here!). We'll be seeing more of Max no doubt.

Why? Because he's got contacts. We know this because he dropped a grubby bit of paper that had Stanton Friedman's personal phone number on it. Ooooooeeeeeeooooo.

Speaking of Stanton, if he was in the Space Boys would he be Ugly Space to Philip Mantle's Dosh Space, or perhaps to Matthew Williams' Vacant Space.

Whatever.

Max writes nonsense for Alien Encounters magazine, sister zine to Uri Geller's Encounters. The girls from Alien Encounters were at the conference, headed by their editor whose name sounds vaguely Arthurian, Nina Pendred. Max clung to them throughout and bizarrely enough they seemed impressed. I am told that Ninny Penny dreadful worked on a Scuba Diving zine before taking over at Alien Encounters so she's well equipped for running a UFO magazine.

All of which brings us onto voices heard on the Friday night when someone couldn't get to sleep. Why? Well, allegedly the noise keeping him awake was none other than the human voice of ex CIA man Derrol Sims trying to lure the girls from Encounters magazine up to his room.

We were shocked!

But etchings/implants, who cares what you've got on display in your room when you're on the circuit, eh?

After the crap Saturday night meal a galaxy of stars clustered in the bar at the Grosvenor. This was the place to be for gossip, scandal and sleaze.

BUFORA Babes Gloria Dixon and Judith Jaafar (fresh from an episode of Absoufologically Fabulous) twinkled and glittered appropriately as they told me a very strange tale indeed concerning that Scottish ufologist McMalcolm of Clan Robinson.

Malcolm (of that ilk) was billed to be singing about the Fife Case (y'all know about that I'm sure - if you don't you have no business being here so shoo, shoo, shoo) but his revelations were cruelly stifled by an order from BUFORA high ups.

Yes, BUFORA had MADE A DECISION and he'd been been 'banned' from speaking about the case. This banning was, Gloria Dixon BUFORA's hard working and highly competent Director of Investigations told me, because of 'ethics' and 'morals'. I didn't agree.

Neither of those social inventions have troubled ufology before so why should they now?

We've already carped before that BUFORA are quite happy to let Malcolm go a-hypnotising against the BUFORA moratorium. So why should they bother about some goofy UFO tale which has not one scrap of evidence attached to it that it is in any way more real than that weirdy-man in the corner over there?

Apparently the witnesses in the Fife Case have now suddenly decided (after going to the UFO press in the first place) that they don't want the case mentioned. Even pseudonymously.

C'mon, you can't do that witnesses. It's out there in the public domain. You made it so - you who saw hundreds of scurrying aliens and huge craft, you whose child allegedly had aliens waving at him through windows.

In point of fact Malcolm was not going to reveal any personal details about the witnesses at all, names, addresses etc and there would have been no possible way anyone in the lecture theatre could have tracked them down. This witness driven investigation thang is getting ludicrous.....

I certainly don't agree with the way the investigation was done or the techniques used in it, but we can't change that. We should at least have been allowed to hear what Malcolm had to say about the case.

The cynical demon which lives deep within me tends to think that the reason the witnesses no longer want the case talked about is because it simply isn't true.

Imagine for a moment they make the story up (remember they did admit to having 'taken' FSR prior to the event).....not realising quite how bizarre the world of ufology actually is (although you'd have thought they would have grasped that from even a sentence of Creaking's purple prose). Suddenly it's all over the place, their friends and family wonder what on earth they are on about, and they are seriously worried a real journalist might get hold of the story.

See how tangled it all gets when you refuse to "confirm or deny" a simple query? Now, there are enough people who think Nick's

rise and fame in ufology is dodgy as it is. If he reveals 'Peter' to have been himself then it would be reasonable to suggest that he has been somewhat disingenuous in his manipulation of both subject, publishers and punters.

But what amused me most of all was that Nick was truly grateful I didn't think it was as bad a book as 'Open Minds Empty Thinking' and that he was gagging to know what rating the review would be getting. Naturally as a professional with integrity I couldn't tell him that. But hey, kids, it's not that bad.

For a beginner.

Send Lawyers, Guns and Money

Strange things often drop onto my mat and the other day a liveried servant of the Queen brought me a short video which contains two stunning ufological incidents.

The first is Irene Bott, of the Queen's Own Staffordshire Ufologists, giving Matthew Williams a bollocking at the Staffordshire UFO Group conference in September 1996. Matthew said the word 'BUFORA' more than once and Irene mounted the stage to chew him out about it.

It's a well know fact in ufology that Irene comes out in a rash at the very word 'BUFORA' and that gangs of street urchins follow her around her home town of Rugely, shouting it just to see the effect it has on her flesh.

The second incident is the golden, celestial, moment at the LAPIS conference in November 1996 when LAPIS stalwart Joe Dormer stormed the stage and suggested perhaps that Harry Harris was (and I apologise to sensitive readers here) a "shit stain on the underpants of ufology".

Of course all right thinking members of ufological community are fully aware that Mr Harris - a solicitor by trade - is a man of the highest virtue, of unsmirchable character who probably doesn't even shit, and if he did it would surely not leave a mark on our subject.

In that case Joe has faecal to worry about.

But it's all there in glorious testy-color. Both incidents (which total about six or seven minutes in all) are essential viewing for anyone who wishes to study the fascinating development of ideas within ufology. If anyone out there wants a copy contact me and we'll come to an arrangement.

Another regrettable incident in which the toadies of the legal profession stand to profit involves BUFORAs Malcolm Robinson (indefatigable Scottish investigator etc etc).

According to the Scottish Daily Mail (31/7/987) Malcolm was being sued by Falkirk councillor Billy Buchanan. Allegedly Malcolm had claimed, in his magazine 'Enigmas' that Billy B. had 'entertained' an alien called Zalus in his council chambers at Falkirk Town Hall. In fact, claims Billy B. it was actually a human called Gerry Rogers who came to see him, not Zalus.

Easy mistake to make.

In the Scottish Daily Star (31/7/97) Councillor Buchanan 'stormed': "My family and I suffered for months and months because of what Robinson wrote falsely. Even now I still get shouts of 'Zalus' in the street. Now the truth is out I am suing him."

I don't know where this one is going. Malcolm has admitted he was wrong (always a daft thing to do when m'learned vultures are concerned) so if it does go to court it could either way depending on whose legal people are the best.

Tim Time

The UFO wars in Lancashire have calmed somewhat and links have been made between the various combatants, added to which Tim Matthews (he once lived in a teepee donchano) is now the proud possessor of a book contract for a tome dealing with Our Secret Technology. It's a book I'll certainly be looking forward to as Tim has done a lot of good research and the result will have applecarts everywhere wobbling severely. By the time you read this Tim Matthews be married to Linda, so a big 'ahhhhhh' all round from us all. But is Tim aware of the divorce statistics among active ufologists? Is Linda aware of the sort of nutters who will be ringing them at all hours of day and night asking banal questions?

Do They Mean Us?

Issue one of TAU was very well received and even the people who didn't come out of it smelling of roses seemed to enjoy it.

But there's always one isn't there?

George Wingfield got his corn stalks in a right old twist about the review of the tripe he came out with at the Burnley conference and spent the entire summer learning joined up writing just so he could 'send in'.

I quote his letter in full:

Dear Editor,

What a load of old nonsense! Surely you can't expect anyone to pay good money for this sort of undiluted crap? I suppose this is the sort of stuff one would expect from a truculent old Marxist like yourself, but I fear that your attempts at humour have resulted in abject failure. The alleged 'humour' appears to be nothing but thinly veiled malice. Your review of my talk on Flying Triangles at the LAPIS conference in Burnley grotesquely misrepresented almost everything I said. In particular, I never said that these were alien or extraterrestrial craft and that is certainly not what I think.

I gave your green rag to my Whippet to dispose of but even he found it unpalatable and turned up his nose. Don't bother to send any more.

Sincerely

George Wingfield

How George knew I was running a 'send the most stupid letter' competition I don't know but he won it hands down and has ensured himself free copies for life.

And the answers to his questions, handed to me by Carol Voderman in a silver envelope: 1) Yes I do expect money for it

2) Groucho rather than Karl

3) It was what you said

At the BUFORA conf I managed to sell George's ex or estranged wife, Gloria, a copy of TAU and she thought I had been 'rather rude' about George. How love endures eh?

While we're blowing our own trumpet it's nice to report that we received good reviews in Fortean Times and Earthed among other zines.

Ufologist Behaving Badly

No ufologist oop north can be unaware of Stephen Mera...who coincidentally is still listed as a BUFORA AI and was a steward at their Day of Abductions last year.

Joe Dormer of LAPIS writes:

'Disgraceful behaviour or what? On 9th of last month I sent NARO Minded former editor Stephen Mera (not realising he was no longer the editor) a letter for publication in NM. Now what do you suppose Mera did with it? He typed it out again and sent it in to the present editor under his own name! And he very nearly got away with it too! I wouldn't have known anything about it if someone hadn't recognised a certain difference in style (to put it politely). Now can you get your head round that? I mean, they're my views, not his! What kind idiot sends in someone else's views? Does he not have any of his own? Apparently not, for according to Andrew Blunn he's done this sort of thing before. I gather that's why NARO people booted him out. Apparently he steals other people's thoughts like some people steal babies - so desperate is he to have one of his own.'

Joe Dormer

Yeah, we've seen it all before Joe. Mera also appeared in the Manchester Evening News recently claiming he was writing a book, a famous researcher etc etc. File under Max Burns, Stephen Balon, Jack A. Nory etc etc.

Zine Watch

This time it's The Voice, Barry King's intermittent organ. If you don't get it or know about it please refer to my Forum article in Fortean Times 103. Strange guy, not held in particularly high esteem by people who knew him 'then'. I've always found him an ok bloke on

the 'phone but I don't believe a word of what he says.

To get to the point.....his latest VOICE mutters on about how hard I am to contact by 'phone, how it's 'suspicious' that my review hasn't appeared in either FT or UT and so on. The point I'm making is that how can you believe a word he says when he becomes paranoid about the fact that magazines have time lags in their schedules, and if his attention seeking isn't satisfied immediately he implies things are 'suspicious'.

Get a grip Barry please.

That's about it for a while. Please try to persuade people to subscribe. I welcome any ufological scandal, gossip or sleaze. You know where I am, let's tell the others where it's at. Thanks for the therapy.

And remember pilgrims.....

IF YOU CAN'T TAKE A JOKE, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE JOINED!

