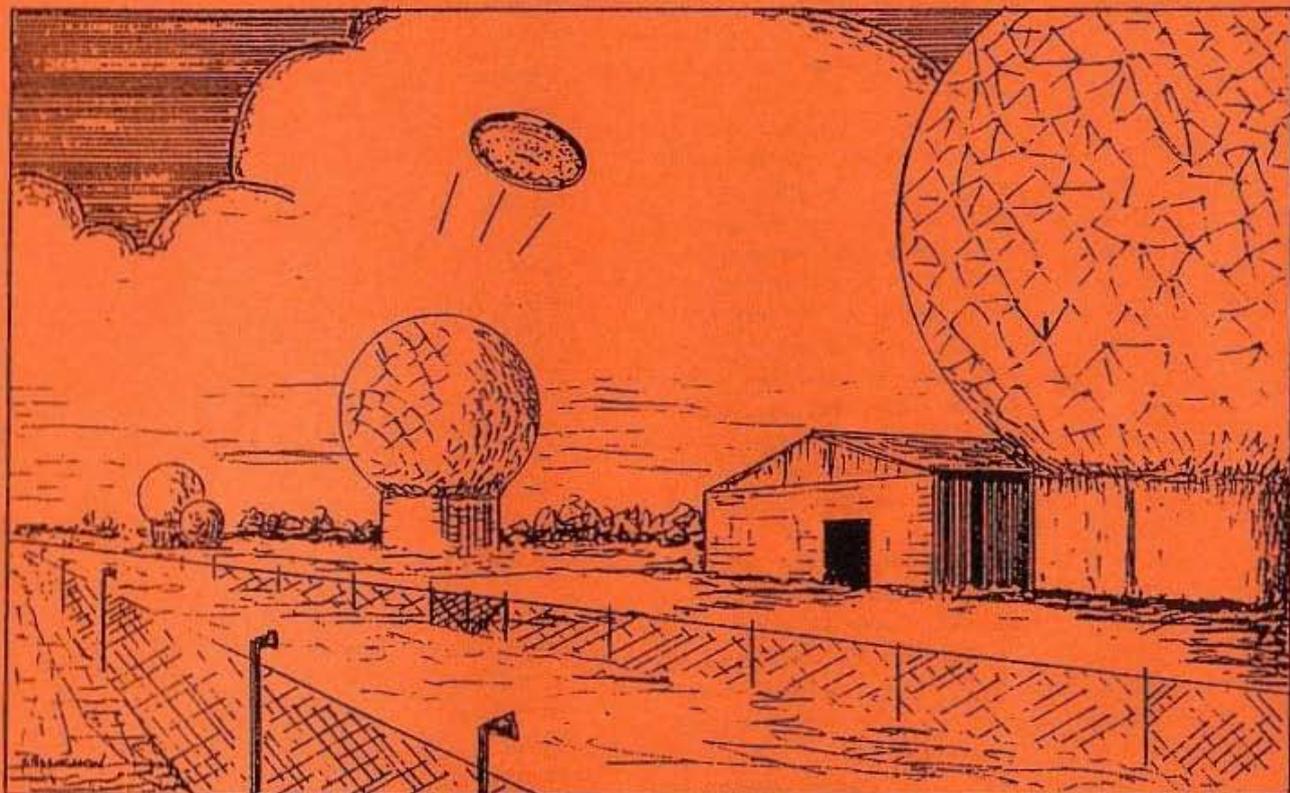


NORTHERN UFO NEWS

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Contents: A 20 PAGE SPECIAL! pp 2 - 5 A brave new UFO world (the future of UFOlogy as we approach our 50th birthday)...pp 6 News round up (a newsstand blitz hits the streets)...pp 7 - BUFORA changes Director of Investigations...pp 7 - 12 Televisual nightmare (the full low down on the dealing and dirty tricks behind Secrets of the Paranormal). pp. 12 Case notes on vanishing people and a flying Man in Black!...pp.13 - 15 Reviews extra (looks at the *UFO Encyclopedia* project, *One Step Beyond* and *Past Lives, Future Lives* plus forthcoming UFO books for the year ahead)...pp.16 - 20 Cases from North Wales (including the phantom plane and an animal mutilations outbreak), Lancashire, Merseyside & Scotland (including a mid-air encounter, more triangles, contact from alpha centauri, a UFO captured by camcorder and a sinister MIB episode in June 1996 - or is it all a sick joke?) pp.20 Summer events.

J.R. Comments...

It is time for another in the long line of Northern UFO News apologies. What would an issue of NUN be without one!

Delays this time were sadly inevitable, partly thanks to the terrible affair over my BBC documentary - which left me drained and pretty much in total despair of UFOlogy for some considerable time (see later). I came to the brink of quitting but would not let the evil minded so called 'UFOlogist' (and he knows who he is) that was responsible win out in such ignominious terms. So I fight on.

However, most importantly the break was enforced by my mother being taken seriously ill a few days after the last edition was completed. She was in hospital for many weeks and this was a two-hour bus journey away from me (I do not drive as some of you will know). As my only other family live too far away to get here this meant being out from mid morning to late night, every day, for quite some time, and so unable to even answer phone calls or work on the magazine (the hospital banned laptops in fear that they might interfere with the ICU equipment).

It was a gruelling and worrying period, so soon after my fathers death, when, I admit, UFOlogy only came to mind when forced to do so thanks to the sick actions of that wicked person who seemingly ignored my mothers health to score disgusting points for his own personal kudos.

Thankfully my mother fought off the misdiagnoses and maltreatment of the NHS (thats another - pretty gruesome - story) but is still far from well. I have also had to explore options of getting us back nearer to south east Manchester in the medium term. Easier said than done - and another time distraction as it is a full day trek by train and bus just to go look.

As I am sure you will understand my mothers health had to take priority and put all other matters on the backlight. This was including my work with 'Strange but True?' So I am not writing the book of the series this time around; although, no doubt somebody will be doing it.

Sorry once more and I just hope you will all bear with me. NUN will continue, of course, as regularly as circumstances permit - and, as always, your subscriptions cover six issues (however long they take to appear!) and not just a period of time, so nobody is going to lose out.

A brave new UFO world:

Two things have set me pondering about this (very long) editorial. Firstly, the self-seeking and frankly odious way in which one or two in the UFO world put their own ego above the fight to resolve the big questions that confront us. This has always been true but was brought to the fore through recent events.

Secondly, talks with the team at the British TV Production company who have made the trailblazing four hour TV series on UFOs due to be screened by Discovery this autumn. After spending a year and many dollars on this project they have a surprisingly clear insight into what is right and wrong about the way UFOlogy does its stuff. I found myself sympathetic to many comments.

Indeed, to some extent, and in my own contentious way, I had already tried to propose similar concepts. Some of you may recall my BUFORA lecture at Sheffield three or four years ago ('The Death of UFOlogy') in which I recommended a new direction, to some extent now fulfilled by 'New UFOlogist' magazine. My talk was OTT on purpose. Of course, I do not think UFOlogy has no future. But I do feel we need to take a long hard look at where we are going after 50 years chasing shadows.

Just before I was forced out of BUFORA council by the power-brokers - both myself and Paul Fuller had been endeavouring to find some new ideas to fit into the way investigation and research is conducted. I think we may well be perceived by some as a threat because of that. Big groups (and many small ones) put their own existence and self interest ahead of UFOlogy and I fear that to some any idea would be dangerous if it meant in any way stifling the omnipotence of the few.

When BUFORA's World Wide Web site began last year I was asked to contribute a regular column. Yet my first piece, along similar lines to this editorial, was not only rejected but seems to have set mass panic afoot amongst the BUFORA council. Why? Because what I was advocating - a new direction for UFOlogy - but one lead by BUFORA - was seen by those in control as not just revolutionary but pretty darned near to treason. Absurd as that seems to me, it's exactly what is wrong with British UFOlogy.

It is time we started to do what is right for the future progress of our subject, not what is only in the best interests of a few UFOlogists or the leading UFO groups - even though I tend to believe that what I suggest will surely have benefits for all.

The UFO world really exists to fulfill the needs of three different kinds of people.

Firstly, the ones who enjoy running things. To them solving UFOlogy is secondary to the fun of organising groups, conferences and magazines. Nothing wrong with that. All subjects need this kind of person to survive. Most UFO groups are run by them. The danger comes when they control the direction that the subject takes, for then it ends up being run largely to maintain the status quo. After all, progress leads to resolution and that will put these people out of a job. So they have a built in subconscious motive to make sure we go nowhere particularly fast.

The second category is by far the largest. These are people who are interested in UFOs but are not especially motivated to do very much about it. UFO membership groups only survive by virtue of subscriptions from hundreds of such folk. Often they join, stay a couple of years, then move on to something else. UFOlogy is not a lifelong passion, but they enjoy reading what is going on. Mostly these enthusiasts are attracted to UFOlogy by its media image of X-Files conspiracies and alien abduction scenarios. More sedate UFOlogy switches them off. Once they see these conspiracy theories lead nowhere except to more conspiracy theories, then they often drift away. UFO groups need these people, but, let's face it, they are never going to take us very far towards the truth.

Why? Because, on the chance (and it is just a chance) that they are right and the UFO world is the product of alien and government conspiracies, we are so far out of our depth we are like flies buzzing round an elephant - a nuisance, but ultimately harmless. And, on the rather better chance, that UFOlogy has more to do with other things (like physical sciences, parapsychology, consciousness phenomena, etc) then these UFOlogists are really only a distraction to ourselves.

Then, finally, there are the handful of truly dedicated UFOlogists. The ones to whom answers really count - and what does not matter is the form that these answers take. To know if you are one of these people then answer the following questions honestly.

If it were proven tomorrow that UFOs had absolutely nothing to do with aliens visiting earth, would you still be interested?

If it were proven tomorrow that UFOs were simply some kind of natural, scientific enigma, unresolved, but of primary interest to physicists or psychologists, would you remain a UFOlogist?

In other words, if it is the truth about UFOs that matters to you - however, exotic or mundane that truth may prove to be, then you are one of the few. UFOlogy is a lifelong obsession that will never go away. But I doubt that there are more than 100 such people in the whole of the UK - although I may be pleasantly surprised if we had some way to resolve that question.

Okay - but so what, you may ask? So everything, in fact. The problem is that UFOlogy attempts to be all things to all three groups of people and - I contend - this is not only a terrible waste of resources but is ultimately doomed to take us round in circles.

A UFO group works on the principle that it can cater for all. If it has 100 members, then a half dozen or so will be of the organising type who will fill most of the bureaucracy that it will create (the complexities of UFO bureaucracy - with directors of this that and everything - is evidence in itself of this ethos at work). It will also have perhaps a dozen or more truly dedicated UFOlogists. The rest - three quarters of the group - are there to read the magazine, attend the conferences and provide the money that allows the group to produce the magazine and invite big American speakers to the next conference.

What about UFOlogy? What about research and investigation? What about making any actual progress? This ends up last on the list of priorities, which tends to mean virtually none of it gets done. Sure, the odd case is investigated. Sure, some dedicated person will fiddle with a computer and 'do research'. But what does it bring? A paper at next years conference - that's about it.

A good example is UFO Call. In 1989 when BUFORA council set this up (thanks to Mike Wootten) I gave up a service I was already running in the north-west, from which bigger things may have grown. I have now written and presented almost 350 editions of the news and information service (for which I don't get paid and am not interested in being paid). But BUFORA scoops quite a lot of money from this pot. Your calls (at quite expensive rates) have brought in during the past two years sums of money to the group not far behind their membership fees. I estimate £20,000 in the past 3 - 4 years and certainly (according to figures in the current AGM statement) £12,500 in the past two years. I expected something similar; although I only create, write and present the service and am not on council so am not told what it makes or have a say in how that fortune is spent.

And dont forget, to most of us, £6000 per year IS a fortune, bearing in mind it is all new money which the group does not need in order to survive. It could be - and should be - properly invested into doing real UFOlogy. Is that what is happening? Not so far as I can see - although, of course, no longer being on council means I have no real idea what BUFORA is actually doing with this windfall.

Now, even though it may seem here as if I am getting at BUFORA once again, I'm not. If I were then I would not still be doing UFO Call, would I? BUFORA is the best group in Britain to use this money properly, but I think it only right that - now we know the sums involved - we should ask as a UFO community that we have some say in how this money should be spent. So why not write and offer your suggestions - both to me (which I'll print) and to BUFORA council (which I hope they will take seriously and debate).

Indeed, in my 'censored' web site paper (when I was just guessing the income for the last two years - and it was really 50% more than that!) I actually proposed that BUFORA show some initiative and leadership and call an all-Britain congress of interested UFOlogists and UFO groups to discuss the future of UFOlogy and to consider wise things to do with this newly created wealth. As BUFORA would have run the show I am baffled as to why this was regarded as a treacherous idea. Sadly, it seems that it was.

The outcome? No conclave was set up and no obvious sign that the UFO Call 'lottery win' has been utilised to fund any kind of new initiative or actual progress in the UFO field beyond what has happened before. I find that a shame, which could so easily be put right.

I suspect this lethargy is not because anyone is spiriting the money away into their pockets, or because BUFORA want to use it to create a more glossy magazine or to invite more US speakers over at considerable expense next year. That would be abuse of an asset and I have more faith in BUFORAs common sense than to think that.

So, surely, it is not unreasonable for us to ask where the money is going or, indeed, to expect the UFO community to have some say in what we all do with it? After all, many of those who call (and so fund) the service are not BUFORA members, but are obviously UFO enthusiasts. I think this is a decision that BUFORA could turn over to the whole UFO community without losing any of its independence and certainly gain considerable kudos by so doing.

However, this issue of how to spend £6000 per year is a symptom of the wider problem. UFOlogy - and here not just BUFORA, but all of us - are trying to do too many things, often in competition, when we should surely specialise more.

As I see it, there will always be (and should always be) local groups on the ground to handle the PR and investigation within communities. They are very effective ways for those who love organising to do their thing.

There are also excellent outlets for the enthusiasts - eg 'UFO' magazine being a case in point, shamelessly aimed at this end of the market and publishing only what it knows will sell and ignoring aspects of UFOlogy with which its readership would not be interested.

Yet our national UFO groups (not just BUFORA - but I keep mentioning them because its our biggest and best and thus our one real hope) dont learn this lesson. They go for more members, try to make their magazine all embracing and stage annual conferences and lectures with the same set of lecturers preaching to an audience that contains 50% regulars who have heard it all before and 50% newcomers who haven't, but wont be around two years from now when the speaker is next on the programme. Somewhere along the line we have lost the point of a UFO group existing and we have lost all reason for these conferences, save to act as social forums, get your names in the papers and make yet more money (to not do any real UFOlogy with)

What should be the point of a UFO group? Surely to investigate and research the UFO mystery with a view to making progress towards actually solving the questions we face?

What should be the point of a UFO conference? Surely to debate new evidence, decide how to use this to make progress and plan, conduct and then report back on real UFO investigation and research work?

I argue that neither function is really being fulfilled by any UFO group or any conference that is presently being staged in the UK (or many other places frankly). That has to change if we are to go anywhere at all.

So what can we do? Firstly, we might create a UFO Research Institute. This would exist solely to conduct and promote serious research projects (which might include in-depth studies into important cases). This need not be done in such a way as to either produce a massive new bureaucracy nor to form a rival group to any in present existence.

Indeed, as I visualise it, the Institute would in effect be a 'professional' UFOlogists forum as an adjunct and it could be supported by all existing groups.

What I suggest is this. That UFO groups be invited to ask their members to consider a two-tier structure. If they wish to join either a local or a national group and simply participate in that, then they pay the standard rate for that group. If - in addition - they wish to pay, let us say, an extra £10 pa, this would qualify them for membership of the Institute. All of that extra £10 goes into the Institute's funds. Individuals not part of any group could become an Institute member directly.

This gives flexibility to individuals and also retains full autonomy for all groups. More importantly, it means that those UFOlogists who support the aims of the Institute know that their extra £10 will not be used in any way other than to fund research - ie it will not become absorbed, as will their group membership fee, in the monies required to run that group overheads and to maintain elements such as magazines and conferences.

The Institute would, I suggest, operate rather like the UN. All groups who annually 'donate' memberships via this system would be eligible to 'chair' a meeting in rotation. This could function on the basis of the largest representative group having first choice, and so on as each meeting came around. That group would be responsible for arranging a venue, inviting all Institute members and nominating the chairperson for that meeting. This would avoid the need for the Institute to have any group structure and to waste any of its income on non relevant expenditure.

Every member of the Institute would be an equal say partner. At meetings they would have one vote, just like anybody else, and majority decisions would decide issues.

Let us say that the Institute attracted 100 members once established. That would give a pool of £1000 pa. According to the greatest number of UFO group membership donations (and that's quite likely to be - but not certain to be - BUFORA, I would have thought) that group would take on the chair responsibility for the first meeting. This meeting would set up the Institute regulations and determine priorities to allocate funds from the £1000. These should, of course, be very specifically focused in terms of worthwhile and positive research ventures which nobody is doing right now and which will aid progress

Ideally, I would envisage more money being available. Groups may, for example, choose to donate to the fund. Successful enterprises (eg UFO Call books by authors that do well, magazines that make a profit, etc) might also support the scheme. It is also possible to see the Institute publishing its work in an annual book length format / or producing specials on research projects and case histories - all by the original researchers, but with the profit going straight into the funds. In this way things could start to happen fast.

What about conferences? UFO groups will continue to fulfill the need for the lecture based get togethers, just as they will serve membership needs as at present. What the Institute should set out to do - at least once a year - is organise something new - a working seminar type conference.

These would be small scale (ie probably aimed at only 20 - 50 people, but not closed to anyone). However, they would very definitely not be intended as public meetings and the media would not be invited. They would be funded entirely by those who attend and their purpose would be very clearly research orientated. They would be designed in such a way as we would be able to invite working scientists to participate, knowing that they will not have to confront UFO buffs wearing 'I luv the Greys' T-shirts, find stalls marketing model aliens and have to dodge the cameras or reporters asking inane questions like - *whats a physicist like you doing here with all these nutters?*

Each seminar would set out to address a specific question. For instance, we could have one based on earth energy theories, or vehicle interference cases, or retrieval of government documents. Participants will be invited beforehand to present original research based around a series of pre-defined questions that need answering. Outsiders with relevant background would be invited to contribute. At the start of the seminar an agenda for working parties would be set up and by the end of the seminar specific proposals for new research would be presented. These would then be built upon by the Institute in the months and years to come.

These are at present very rudimentary ideas. I am sure that you will have suggestions - even if only that this whole concept could never work. Please pass on your views and I'll publish them. In a year we will face the 50th anniversary of the UFO field. Radical new steps are needed. We cannot just stand still.

News Round Up:

:: For those who thought the *New UFOlogist* was a thing of the past I was pleased to see Issue 4 appear recently. Its the best yet, thanks to the hard work of Joe Dormer and Paul Fuller. A nice Albert Budden/Danny Sullivan cover too. The contents includes Dr Serena Roney-Dougal updating her research linking UFOs with the Pineal gland, Albert Budden discussing some experimental work into magnetic fields, an interview with Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos about the content of the released Spanish Air Force UFO files and a fair bit more as well. Subscription for 4 issues costs £8 via 3 Selborne Court Tavistock Close Romsey Hants SO51 7TY

:: What with the above and Andy Roberts association with BUFORAs 'UFO Times' making a significant difference to the quality of this fast improving in house publication things are certainly looking up in the *UFO* magazine world. What is more we have a rash of journals on the newsstands as well. In the bad old days (it seems like last week) you would have been hard pressed to find even that old, but ever fascinating, ETH/conspiracy stalwart 'UFO' magazine in too many places. Now even backwater newsagents are selling it. It has also been joined by a flood of imitators. 'Encounters' was the first, but it has struggled to maintain any kind of quality and suffers badly from seeming to import most of its content off the Internet screens - with often dubious consequences. You can find this alongside the mystical 'Nexus' (now available far and wide) and, of course, the irrepressible quirky 'Fortean Times', which went monthly in April and has UFO content in virtually every issue. These were joined in the Spring by 'UFO Reality' - a new age/Warminster revisited mag that is like a crop circle groupies version of UFOlogy. I cannot imagine there is space for all of these to survive, but I don't see the newcomers denting 'UFO' and 'Fortean Times', with their long background in the subject injecting the kind of astute awareness and sheer knowledge of whats what that the imitators simply cannot match as yet.

:: That said, a new hope flared in late May with issue one of a monthly venture called 'Sightings'. I've had long chats with its editor (Mark Smith) and he knows his onions. Whilst a business man, not especially a UFOlogist, he saw what was 'wrong' with all

the other would-be newsstand journals and planned a serious hard nosed version. This just may be the publication to give the oldies a run for their money. Its aim is to focus on quality, to involve real UFOlogists, to run proper series and be high quality glossy in format with full colour throughout. Few newcomers would be openly hostile to the Roswell footage because of danger to the credibility of the UFO field or plan an educative series on IFOs. 'Sightings' is promising to become the sort of magazine you'll want to buy for its common sense but not feel ashamed of possessing. One well worth support to ensure that it fulfills its impressive ambitions - which may not be easy to match with the realities of what high street buyers want out of a UFO magazine. At the moment its around in most newsagents and issue 2 came out late June. The standards were maintained and it has my full backing. Give it yours.

:: Andy Collins sends us his latest newsletter. Understandably irate at the lack of enthusiasm shown for his brave and dynamic Orgone research he has abandoned attempts to progress this further and has few kind words to say about the dogmatised views of many people in the field. However, his other researches go on - including a plan to turn his 'Black Alchemist' book into a TV series that would make the X Files look like Noddy (his words!). He also announces plans for this years Questing Conference (see back page).

:: Andy's very own ABC Books (no gimmick as his initials really are ABC!) has its Spring catalogue out. Its packed with bargain offers and rare second hand titles. Send an A5 SAE to ABC Books PO Box 189 Leigh on Sea Essex SS9 1NF

:: Midnight Books has its Spring wares on show in its own 44 page catalogue - full of both second hand and new titles. Getting hold of copies of rare and out of print paranormal titles in this way is becoming increasingly popular and I'd warmly recommend both the ABC and Midnight collections as very well worth your time. Midnight also require an A5 SAE via The Mount Ascerton Rd Sidmouth Devon EX10 9BT. You can phone (9 to 9 Mon to Sat) on 01395 - 515446

:: Earth Scan, new on the Science Fiction channel is seeking first-hand stories told by UFO witnesses to camera. Contact Simon Oakley PO Box 2195 London W1A 0US

BUFORA Changes

What goes around, comes around they do say. So it was interesting to learn in June that Philip Mantle, after ensuring that I left BUFORA council and taking over my long held role as Director of Investigations in December 1993, has now found himself having to divest this job and other BUFORA responsibilities. I understand Mr Mantle intends to stay on council. Indeed, later word (from council's chosen replacement as Director of Investigations) is that his actual departure may not take effect immediately.

Personal pressure reportedly brought about this enforced switch, but hopefully BUFORA will tell members the fuller background to what is one of the saddest days in British UFOlogy for some time. Philip's many friends will want to know the reasons for this disappointing news and let's call on BUFORA to explain all and not, as they have in the past, ignore the matter via UFO Times. Such a prospective loss to this major organisation cannot simply be allowed to go by unheralded.

The new Director of Investigations is - I gather - to be Gloria Dixon, who has my total admiration and respect and I am sure will do a first class job. I wish her all Good luck in what is certainly an ill-fated role - whenever it is that she eventually takes on this mantle of responsibility.

TELEVISUAL NIGHTMARE

As you will recall from the last issue I was invited during the summer of 1995 to make a documentary for BBC television. If I had known then what I know now, I am not sure that I would have said yes quite so readily. For it turned out to be a real nightmare, which for weeks after its 11 April 1996 transmission seemed like it would never end. Indeed the massive shellshock has been partly responsible for the long gap between the last NUN and this present issue.

I think it instructive to tell the background story because I am sure that others can learn from my experience. I also suspect it explains a good deal about the problems that UFOlogy faces today. So I apologise for the amount of coverage given over to these matters. I will make up for it in future editions, I promise and have added four extra pages to this NUN to allow for this.

The first time I visited the vast BBC complex to be loaded down with camera equipment and cart it back by tube (no posh expense account here) I had grand plans about what I wanted to do. But the BBC were really interested in an extension of their successful 'video diaries' series, where you film everything from having breakfast to putting the cat out and their editors make a semi-egotistical film about your life.

I wanted to do some sort of real documentary and had plans. Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that what I did not have was money. So I had to fight not to fill 29 minutes with shots of me lecturing, going on local radio, signing books (ad nauseum).

At first I was going to make a documentary about UFOlogy's reaction to the Roswell film footage. However, the BBC were worried about lawsuits if I was to seem in any way critical of some potentially rich people. I couldn't make a programme looking over my shoulder and still recall the day I told the Manchester Evening News in a 40 minute interview why I considered that the MJ-12 documents are - rather as is the Roswell footage today - a threat to UFO credibility. I don't know who created MJ12 but it was not a UFOlogist and I just had to say what I felt about those files. So what, you might think. Unfortunately, so a year long lawsuit.

As I came to read many bitter press attacks on why I was not critical enough in my BBC-2 programme I had cause to think back to that year of hell for being too critical. Some media loud mouths who attacked my programme probably neither knew, nor cared, about such a fact, just as their awareness of UFO reality was equally feeble or biased.

In 1975 I part wrote a sober film for BBC-2 (sharing time with 'Chickens' Lib'). It was objective and pretty sceptical but rather dull. No doubt its only chance of appearing on TV today would be for an audience of liberated chickens. So it was also frustrating when the critics bemoaned the BBC for letting an uncritical believer loose on television.

Lessons borne in mind, I persuaded the BBC to let me make a programme asking what the British MoD really knew about UFOs - perhaps not the easiest task given our official secrets act or my nil budget. I thought it was possible to make an objective presentation that would utilise documents on official records whilst trying to come up with something that had not been seen on TV before. I suspect it was overly ambitious and unmindful of certain TV realities, but it was worth a shot.

Work on the programme as it finally appeared really spanned from Christmas onward and involved treks all over the UK to film at Kew (the PRO - Public Record Office) and to track down witnesses in Carlisle, the Yorkshire Moors, East Anglia and Kent. To be honest I was unsure how this was going to come together and my mother's sudden illness left me struggling. I had some say in the editorial process, but in effect the BBC fleshed out my ideas with their choice of footage, presented it with 48 hours notice and told me to write a voice-over script around this. Then I had to run all of this by the big boss - or department head - who proposed various changes, perhaps because the bigger boss (head of BBC-2 Michael Jackson) had asked to see what I was up to when he heard that I was making a programme about UFOs and (oh dearie me) the British government!

Some of the UFO press were disappointed in the end because they felt I offered nothing new. This surprises me a little as I don't recall seeing the process of gleaning Air Staff files from the PRO on TV before. I also carefully chose the Jim Templeton photo case because of its association with MIBs (a subject not covered here on mainstream TV either). But the date (1964) was necessarily old, because it allowed me to scour the PRO files for any data about the case.

Perhaps it is not appreciated that I could not focus on any case post 1965 because Britain has a 30 year rule governing release of data. So I would not have been able to secure any records that were more recent than that. Even so, we made new discoveries on the Templeton case (eg the link with the Australian missile launch).

The other case that I featured, the Lakenheath/ Bentwaters affair from 1956, is not 'new', of course, but I included it because it showed that the MoD had major official reports from its aircrew. Once again we had made a significant breakthrough - finding the crews of the two RAF jets scrambled on that famous night, who agreed to appear on camera.

So these two (hardly insignificant) aspects to these cases were presented for the first time anywhere at all to my knowledge.

Otherwise I had to somehow blend together the history of MoD interest in UFOs, - illustrating how files were missing from the supposed public record - and then indicate that there were clearly other locations where these files must therefore be. It was not as easy as it sounds, but it was deliberately kept simple.

The existence of Air Staff 2A is acknowledged by the MoD and is supposedly the be-all and end-all of their UFO study. But we screened a 1987 file released with its distribution list 'accidentally' still attached. This proves that files go to two other locations - the DSTI (Department of Scientific and Technical Intelligence) and DI 55 (a defence intelligence unit). Their records are NOT being released through the 30 year rule onto the PRO at Kew and, we might reasonably infer, may be the secret place where the best British UFO data is residing - presumably immune to release to you or I forever.

This was what I tried to do in the limited time that was available to me. I can honestly say it was a straight attempt to let viewers see that the British government have collated data on UFOs for years, have caused key case files to vanish from the supposed public record and that figures involved in their own collation process consider there to be a lot more to UFOlogy than the MoD ever let on.

I quite purposely avoided any attempt to say what UFOs might be. The ETH was not discussed. No other theories were mooted. The point of the programme was that the MoD took UFOs seriously enough to have (at least) three departments studying them and to ensure that no records at all get released for 30 years and that the most important records (eg on the Lakenheath/ Bentwaters affair) are not even released after that. Whether UFOs be hallucinations, natural phenomena or spaceships is quite irrelevant to that argument.

I wanted people to sit up and ask themselves why there was this response and, more importantly, for the media to ask key questions of politicians. That's why it was important to undersell the subject and focus on documentation, not wild ideas or claims of a huge conspiracy. I closed by arguing there seemed a cover-up of government ignorance as to what was happening, not protecting of a massive guilty secret. I believe this to be true.

Yet none of us were prepared for the enormous media backlash that this mildly contentious programme was to generate. On the upside it achieved 'pick of the day' in almost every national newspaper. On the downside it provoked a flood of articles from the media who attacked the programme before it went on air. Nor were these tabloid hacks. They were some of the most influential newspapers in Britain, the ones read by the politicians whose attitudes I hoped to change.

One of the most hostile was a full page article from Simon Hoggart in the

Guardian entitled 'Strange Voices'. It blasted into the BBC and its series, focusing on my programme because it had been chosen to lead off the six week run. 'Unintentionally very funny' was a mild start. Words flowed afterward like 'awful', 'grisly' and 'depressing'. My programme was 'quite the screwiest', even though its competition was the likes of Uri Geller trying to get Reading FC to win the cup when they were almost relegated and a doctor who lived half his life as a several thousand year old dead surgeon.

Hoggart, author of a book that 'exposes paranormal claims', used selective out of context quotes, eg citing my conclusions where I say 'I don't know what a UFO is. Nobody knows' - before claiming that he does know (they are all planets, stars, planes, balloons, etc). Then adding 'they are no more likely to be space aliens than unsolved crimes are to be caused by burglars from the planet Xaxon'. What this did not tell his readers, of course, was that I had explained how 95% of all sightings are really IFOs (in exactly the terms he claims) and that not once did I even suggest that the unsolved cases were 'space aliens', from Xaxon or anywhere else.

He rants on: 'Nothing stops her. She quotes hearsay as if it were established fact. When a document she wants exists, it's proof. If it doesn't, it's more proof.' Then his wonderful summary explains: 'All she succeeds in doing is establishing that odd things are seen in the sky, the MoD would like to find out what they all are, and sometimes it can't. And the MoD is notoriously secretive.'

Forgive me, but wasn't that precisely what I did set out to establish? Hoggart evidently thinks I should have tried to prove far more, because to his simplistic viewpoint all UFOlogists have to believe that the aliens have landed and are residing in Hangar 18.

We went out of our way to establish things with evidence, not hearsay, and as for the files. We found MoD documents and cited them. If we did not find MoD documents that clearly had to exist (eg the papers from which the briefing file on Lakenheath/Bentwaters had to be written or analysis report on the film of the Woomera launch, which was referenced by, but not included in, the PRO records) then surely it was reasonable to point that out?

How can it be somehow ridiculous to show what is on the public record as well as what that public record clearly indicates ought to be there and yet which patently is not?

To close Hoggart calls my work 'a cynical attempt to cash in on the success of

the X files' and 'cheap, careless and dishonest'. He adds that it would 'disgrace a downmarket cable channel' but on the BBC was 'shameful'.

Of course, I tried to fight back. The BBC took legal advice, thinking the word 'dishonest' may be libellous of them. The irony of what happened to me and the Manchester Evening News was not lost when their lawyer termed the above to be just 'fair comment'.

With the BBC even declining to send a letter to the *Guardian* I submitted my own. It was quite short but predictably ignored. When I chased them the paper said they had no duty to give me reply and one article was enough. But the very next day they published a second critical piece about my programme!

That second article was by Catherine Bennett - a name I knew well as she had some months earlier approached me for an interview for her own three-part TV series on the paranormal. I had agreed, only to face a bombardment of questions, the gist of which was 'why do you con readers in your books'.

I disputed as best I could, but had not been prepared for any specific instances. When I later checked them out, I found that I had written nothing like what she had suggested. So I politely requested a new interview or to vet her comments for accuracy before her film appeared. Her producers said no, so I made it clear in return that I would not accept any misrepresentation. Guess what, weeks passed and this series 'Strange Days' was scheduled (without fanfare) for late at night on BBC-2 in mid June. I got a curt letter advising that my interview had been cut as now being superfluous to the programme.

In her *Guardian* attack Bennett blasted not just my documentary but all paranormal TV shows, like *Strange but True?*. She spoke of how myself and other 'enthusiasts' had been 'allotted thirty minutes to promulgate mumbo jumbo...undisturbed by sceptics, scientists or anyone else who might spoil the feast of superstitious speculation.'

Leaving aside my major quibble as to how the presentation of hard evidence (via witness interviews, PRO documents and on the record comment by MoD sources) qualifies as 'speculation' she then launches into me in rather the way she did in her aborted interview and tells readers that, whilst I am billed by the BBC as a UFOlogist I have 'previously applied detective skills to poltergeists, precognition, time travel...and a washing machine which mysteriously sucked energy from a housewife.'

There were days of stuff like this and not once did the media sources responsible

give me the courtesy of a reply, even to say no. They just ignored every attempt I made to respond to this stuff. So much for fair play.

Hardly any mainstream highbrow paper failed to attack what I did in oddly similar terms. Thomas Sutcliffe in the Independent, for instance, forgetting that on the programme I clearly stated that I did not see a conspiracy in the MoD, just a cover up of ignorance, spoke of the 'malleable logic of UFO devotees' and how 'government secrecy is never a simple matter of bureaucratic reflex always evidence of a conspiracy'.

This same 'broadcasting writer of the year' also had a nasty, personal attack on one of the UFOlogists who gave his time in my programme, which I won't dignify by repeating. Suffice it to say that when journalists resort to tactics like that you just know you have got facts which they want to avoid dealing with.

Mind you, that's nothing, according to yet another loudmouth reviewer, I was a typical UFOlogist who looks the part so as to 'imbue her obsession with a spurious scientific edge' - ie 'a plump woman from the Wirral (eh?) in early middle age, the insane shapelessness of her hair and zealotry in her face give her the aura of a bit player in the X Files.'

Actually, this was from a good review (in the London Standard) in which the writer added 'Given a camera crew (er - no) a tiny budget and access to archive footage Miss Randles raised enough questions about UFOs to create a state of suspended disbelief that survived the closing titles by several minutes.'

Indeed, it was very interesting to note that all the zealotry (to use that word) came from the highbrow nationals, who acted like zombies in unison chanting Dalek fashion - 'this programme is credulous trash', whilst many of the major provincial papers were far more positive. Indeed, the fact that they saw exactly what the programme set out to do makes you wonder rather about the motives of those nationals.

It would be easy to see an orchestrated campaign to smash the programme's credibility, but that would be paranoid. Yet this barrage of stories by so many prominent newspapers effectively ensured that no influential sources tuned in, as they were all brainwashed beforehand into expecting a ludicrous attempt to show that John Major keeps a martian up his jumper.

Ironically, it did not stop many other people viewing. The programme got 4.3 million viewers, apparently a record for this department of the BBC and putting it in the

top five programmes on BBC-2 that week beating 'Star Trek: The Next Generation' and 'Murder 1'. This was nearly twice what any other programme in the series got. I say this not in any egocentric way, but simply to show the pulling power of UFOs these days and to illustrate that there are many people so fascinated that you might almost expect there to be a faction in authority which would be worried by a programme on this topic.

It may well be relevant that ex MoD man Nick Pope had his book published two months later and the MoD could have feared that a combination of my documentary leading into his onslaught would have seen pertinent questions asked of their UFO policy. But whether they would consider - or would be capable - of somehow manipulating press opinion in such an overwhelming tide of negativity is a rather different matter.

Perhaps I was just unlucky and caught the backlash for all the recent pop TV on the paranormal; although why my unassuming effort (which made no wild claims and ignored alien bases, abductions, etc) should kick up such a mega media storm is a bit of a riddle. The BBC and I expected it to be too down to earth to have had much of an impact. What happened was a big shock.

However, the media campaign showed no signs of abating. Even weeks after the programme the Daily Mail featured an amazing tale.

On 24 April they claimed 'UFOs a flight of fancy says MoD'. This headline introduced a piece by their defence correspondent which cited my programme (quite ridiculously) as having revealed key facts via 'an unnamed MoD source' (who was, in fact, quite clear on screen and named on camera!). They added that in response the MoD had now publicly announced it had 'no evidence which might substantiate the existence of (UFOs)'. They further alleged that an 'MoD insider' (whom they did not name) had told the paper on 23 April that the MoD had ordered a statement of this sort to be published in an RAF magazine to go on open sale 'in a bid to quell public interest which had escalated since the broadcast'.

The Mail continued that the MoD had 'denied the existence of an official UFO investigation unit' and that Air Staff 2A was low key and secretarial only. Which is, of course, quite probably correct - but, as my programme had shown, none of the important case records appear to be on the Air Staff 2A files anyway - so it is hardly relevant!

These key cases are all at the non-existent other departments which the MoD are clearly sending reports to - as their distribution list that I aired does prove. Do they do so at the waste of tax payers money, if such departments dont even exist?

We can guess who the Mail's MoD insider might be, but interestingly once again the paper refused to publish anything from me and would not even correct the serious errors their article included.

I do not just mean their false claim that my MoD source was unnamed nor the way they played right into the MoD's hands by harping on about Air Staff 2A (when I think the thing that really got the wind up the British government about my film was the public proof that the real investigation goes on elsewhere). I was more bothered by their amazing claims as to what the MoD said when denying UFOs - because I traced the MoD article the day before from which the Mail's piece was written. It is utterly different.

In this piece the MoD admit to being 'open minded' about the existence of aliens. The 'no evidence which might substantiate' quote comes specifically about ETs - and not about UFOs themselves (not what the Daily Mail imply). Moreover, far from denying there are any UFOs the MoD statement actually says; 'it is quite common for a sighting to remain unexplained' - virtually the opposite of what the Mail suggest to their readers! So why refuse to put this glaring set of misquotes right? Even UFOlogy's friends in the press here seem to have big questions to answer.

However, even legitimate press attacks like these do not seem to have been enough for someone out there determined to destroy what little good my programme did. For a series of dirty, underhand tricks were set in motion which shook even me.

Hours before transmission, the BBC received a call. It did not go to the department I was working for. It went to their finance office. The BBC were politely urged to consider disassociating from me or even scrapping the programme. Why? Because, this source claimed, she just thought the BBC ought to know that I was the subject of a major fraud investigation involving large sums of unpaid national insurance contributions and I had been on the run from the government for years.

Absurd as this astonishing claim is, of course - thankfully rejected by the BBC - it bothered them enough to call me right away. It had been suggested that they phone the

National Insurance Agency in Newcastle to probe my finances. The BBC did not.

I pay these contributions by direct debit and can easily prove I am up to date. Aside from which, my address is in almost every book I have written, so the idea of the government hunting me for years is mad.

The source of these calls gave a false name. It was very carefully chosen to try to implicate two well known UFOlogists with whom it is common knowledge that I do not see eye to eye. I do not believe either of them was involved and whoever made this call had a far more sinister motive in mind.

When the BBC did not bite, the same source tried again. Later that day they handed over to a national tabloid newspaper with several million readers a copy of my birth certificate and mothers marriage certificate and fed them a story about my private life from 25 years ago. That story was only about 10% accurate, but it was, of course, too much for the paper concerned (The Sunday Mirror) to resist doing a big piece about.

Unlike the BBC, the Mirror chased leads everywhere and spoke with various friends and colleagues to check out the truth or otherwise of these trans-sexualism stories. It has hardly been a big secret (it was in front of 5 million readers in the News of the World in June 1994 when a sick UFOlogist sold it to them!) The Mirror knew this, so their story was no exclusive.

The Mirror tried to talk to me, but I was at the hospital every day with my mother. When I found out what they were up to I tried desperately to stop them, even promising to cooperate fully with an interview if they waited until my mother came home. I explained she was very sick and this story could harm her recovery. Of course, the Mirror told me they would think about my offer - and went ahead and published anyway - with a story full of silly half truths and untruths and a photograph which they got from somewhere that I have still to ascertain.

Many have told me that they assumed I took the story to the paper. Well I didn't. The last thing I wanted at that time was to risk my mothers life (for it was that serious) and whoever out there did this - be they part of some government plot or an evil UFO maniac with a cash payout in mind, will, I hope, one day be exposed and be treated by the rest of the UFO community in the way that such people deserve.

I dont care what they say about me, but when they hurt my family I dont forget

After this attempt to destroy the credibility of the programme life was hell for a time. I had to travel 25 miles a day by bus to the hospital with this big yarn alerting everyone. The local press were even more despicable, because they knew how sick my mother was and wilfully disregarded my pleas that everyone in my mother's ward read their paper and she could suffer. Yet the Blackpool Evening Gazette published their laughable version of the truth - with some truly priceless nonsense inside. A shameless act.

Frankly, I do not care who knows about my life all those years ago, if they really think it has anything to do with this documentary. What I do find unforgivable is that someone - probably fully aware of my mother's situation - chose to take this to the media for their own reasons.

Whoever is behind this all, then they know who they are and I hope they can live with themselves. As such people probably have no scrap of decency then no doubt they can. But time brings vengeance in strange ways and they will get their come uppance.

Thankfully, although she did suffer a medical setback as a result of the trauma, my mother pulled through with the aid of helpful nurses and friendly patients with whom she by then had established a strong rapport.

However, if you ever get asked to make a programme about UFOs do be mindful of the wrath that you may be setting in motion. Think about not only the powers that be who might have the influence to do almost anything to smear you, but the perverse jealousy that seems to inflict the UFO field with such venom that someone could strike.

I do not say, don't do it, because we have to press on and try to get the truth across even if it costs us dearly to do so. But I do say remember that there are people who will not want you to do what you may feel you must do and tactics such as those described above are sadly quite acceptable in this day and age.

In the next issue I hope to present more data on the cases covered in the programme so we can try to assess what might have gotten someone out there so wound up.

Meantime, the BBC (without even informing me) have already sold my documentary to satellite and cable TV - ie The Science-Fiction Channel (!) It appeared on here (twice) on 16 July preceding the fine TV movie about the Betty & Barney Hill abduction. I suspect it will air again, and no doubt in other countries too, but watch listings as I did, since I doubt whether I'll be told!

CASE NOTES

This is an opportunity to present one or two peculiar stories that don't really fit as 'sightings'. If you do have any ideas to offer about them let me know as investigators presently seem to be at a loss with them.

Never mind missing time cases - how about *missing people*?

A, a young woman from Manchester who wishes anonymity, is puzzled by a series of experiences which seem weird. In these she literally disappears for a short period of time!

They have occurred half a dozen times since 1994 and involve other members of her family who enter a room, walk around and swear that she was not present, even though she was in their plain sight.

More recent experiences have occurred outside - eg in a crowded pub or whilst walking with a friend. Understandably A is getting quite disturbed by these spontaneous vanishings, which never last more than a couple of minutes.

I have come across one similar case in the past (a one off on a mid Atlantic ship) and noted abductee Ros Reynolds reportedly disappeared briefly from the view of a bus load of passengers whom she was travelling with.

What A would like to know (and so would I) is whether this odd sort of story has ever cropped up in your investigations?

Recently I was called by a woman regarding her view of a *flying man in black!*

The woman had contacted me through writer Colin Wilson, whom she knew indirectly via a bookshop where she works in a Cornish town.

The event was at 22.00 on 4 June 1996 and involved an object drifting across the near horizon for about two minutes. At first she thought it was a 'sack' floating on an air current. She also ruled out other suggestions of mine, which she had already thought of (eg a man in gyrocopter whose frame was masked against the skyline).

Apparently, the form seemed to be of a small man, about 5 feet tall, with dark Victorian style clothing that flapped in the wind. It was at twice rooftop height. A dog nearby saw it as well and stared with hackles up as it passed silently across in about 2 mins.

My only other suggestion was that some kind of novelty balloon or kite might have been in use at a local fair, but she seemed unimpressed. Any thoughts?

Major articles elsewhere

Two new magazines to report. The first is the neatly titled *Man in Black* (£9 for 4 from 14 Gresham Rd Thornton-Cleveleys Lancashire FY5 3EE). It's different, being irreverent and at times amusing. Reminds me of old UFO *Brigantia* issues. Despite the title it does not only cover UFO matters - although proof that Mr Blobby is an alien is one piece and the argument that Michael Jackson was an alien baby is another! If you feel that the paranormal has to be taken seriously, don't buy this. If you feel UFOlogy needs a sort of upmarket students rag mag, then it's for you.

Certainly more sober is *Dragonwatch* (£2 for 1 from 29 Ovington Terrace Llandaff Cardiff CF5 1GF). This is the new publication of the Welsh UFO Federation (WIFU). Judging first issues is always tough. This looks good and has potential, but its content is understandably less reflective of what is to come. There are reports on Area 51, Zacharia Sitchin and his visiting astronauts theory and a pro look at Billy Meier. A way to go yet, but one to watch.

UFO Times Apr 96 With sub
BM BUFORA London WC1N 3XX

The first issue in which Andy Roberts joins Mike Wootten as co-editor. It shows. A biting editorial about how UFO investigators are rubbish. The full text of the Manchester 'mid air collision' (but no evidence it was a meteor - as if to prove Andy's point applies to the CAA as well!) Report on a covert screening of yet another Roswell film saga (groan). Visually this is a most impressive magazine. It will surely get better and better with Andy around.

Awareness 21/1 £9 for 4 CONTACT UK
Box 23 Wheatley Oxon OX33 1FL

Fascinating questionnaire and its results asking probing questions of group members about their beliefs and attitudes to UFOlogy.

Naro Minded £8 for 4 from NARO
3 Paignton Drive Sale Manchester M33 5HJ
 Issue two of NAROs own magazine follows up on stories from issue 1 (the Rochdale poltergeist, Clatterbridge UFO etc) plus other reports - eg a triangle over Old Trafford.

OVNI May 1996 £12 for 12 via PRA
94 The Circle Sinfyn Derby DE24 9HR
 More fascinating flying triangles over the South Pennines.

UFO Network £6 for 6 from UFO Network
88 Whincover Drive Leeds LS12 5JT
 New format for this Yorkshire based group. May issue includes a fascinating photographic case from Carleton Moor, an old UFO hotspot.

Trans-UFO £6 for 2 pay Eileen Fletcher
Derwent Cottage Derwent Dam S30 2AQ
 This worthy mag translates the best cases from non-English UFO publications around Europe (here including an elk mutilation from Scandinavia and an alien magnesium rod given a witness during a CE3 in Hungary).

IUFOPRA Apr 96
Box 3070 Whitehall Dublin 9 Eire
 Mystery explosions heard over Ireland (not applause at winning Eurovision - again!)

IUR Spring 1996 (CUFOS) \$30 US for 6
2457 W Peterson Ave Chicago IL 60659
 Jerry Clarke with an interesting retrospective look at the Joe Simonton alien pancake saga

MUFON Journal \$30 US for 12
103 Oldtowne Rd Seguin TX 78155-4099
 Mar:- A very detailed destructive analysis of the Santilli film, including comments by US military cameramen on its non-validity...Apr:
 - Full report and photos on the implant objects recently extracted from two abductees.

Annals 27 £7 for 4 to G Lovell
91 a High St Bangor Co Down BT20 5BD
 Quite a change of pace - heavy UFO stuff rather than its terrific mix of Fortean snips.

Dead of Night 8 No price again!
156 Bolton Rd E New Ferry L62 4RY
 Full of ghosts, ghoulies and that kind of stuff but always has several pages of UFO commentary by Jonathon Dillon that here looks at military activity in the UK a fair bit.

Journal of Meteorology Mar 96 £28 for 10
54 Frome Rd Bradford on Avon BA15 1LD
 New reports on ball lightning, including analysis of a recent trace case from Russia.

Strange 16 £15.50 for 4 to M. Chorvinsky
Box 2246 Rockville MD 20847 USA
 Long look at the (hum) Roswell film. But lots of other supernatural pieces too. Americas Fortean Times and darned good.

Fate £2.30 in shops (\$29.50 US for 12)
Box 1940 Future Way Marion OH 43305
 Interesting look at US black helicopter cases.

BOOKS OF THE MOMENT

High Strangeness
Vol 3 of the UFO Encyclopedia Project
 Jerome Clark 1996 777pp \$95 US
 Omnigraphics Penobscot Bldg Detroit 48226

Long term readers of NUN will recall my glowing reviews for the two previous volumes in this project. Jerry has been working on it pretty much full time for about 5 years and to quite outstanding effect.

Vol 1 covered the 1980's, Vol 2 the period up to 1959 and this final part of the trilogy takes us through the 60s and 70s.

Jerome Clark is editor of the International UFO Reporter and a very good commentator and archivist. He scored a UFOlogists dream ticket when a highly respected academic publisher paid him enough money to carry out the monumental task of producing this definitive UFO encyclopedia.

Of course, he could still very easily have made a hash of it, but I am glad to say he certainly did not. The painstaking effort that has gone into this mammoth three book venture has undoubtedly created a real UFO classic that is unlikely to be surpassed.

The one problem is that this is not intended as a mass market book. Production is spartan (ie few illustrations and a robust purple cover that is identical for all three editions). As such the price (around £60 for this edition - a little less for each of the other two) might require a rich uncle or a lottery win. But make no mistake - if you can find the £150 or so to treat yourself you won't regret it. These are books to keep and use and the 1600 large size pages in total are crammed with information to be referred to for years to come.

A cheaper paperback version has appeared of earlier editions and more will follow, but you lose something in the translation. I doubt anyone will ever write a one-off encyclopedia that comes close to matching the power of these three texts.

As in the first two books *High Strangeness* covers about 90 topics in alphabetical order. These range over people, major cases, key events and so on. Each article varies from a page to mini-book length and seems to be superbly researched and always accompanied by voluminous references. There is nothing skimpy about this work, that's for sure. The long section on CE3 cases during these two decades has, for instance, well over 300 separate references.

There is also a cumulative index and detailed bibliography for all three volumes. This new book is indispensable for these alone - the former running to over 50 pages and the latter to more than 130!

Almost everywhere you look in this treasure trove of UFOlogy there are things you will not know - little facts that the author has uncovered from obscure sources during his quest for information. It is impossible to understate how invaluable these books are to any serious researcher. If you want to know something and be sure of getting the definitive insight then I have found from my experience with these books that it is very unlikely that they will not be the best place you should turn.

Jerry is now to go back and start work updating the first volume for a future edition. If I were you I would start work on saving the pennies to get hold of one of the most important UFO writing projects ever put together.

For more information you can phone Omnigraphics in the USA on 313-961-1340 or fax on 313-961-1383.

One Step Beyond by Elsie Oakensen
 Regency Press, 1996 203 pp £7.50

Here is a very unassuming book that is no less captivating for that. Written by one of Britain's best known close encounter witnesses, with many media appearances and public lectures behind her, it represents a novelty for the UK market - a first hand account by a proto alien abductee.

There will be those who will challenge this description. Elsie recalls no clear kidnap by greys with the familiar medical examination. Indeed her 'missing time' is short and her memory of it decidedly sketchy. But that is not the strength of her story - which is a no nonsense, straightforward retelling of her unique perspective. The existence of a set of independent witnesses to partially confirm her encounter further elevates its importance as a piece of evidence.

Nonetheless, for me much more fascinating is Elsie's account of her journey after the sighting into the spotlight of media and UFO stardom, dealing with diverse UFO ideologies and acting out the part of pet witness for chat shows. Then there is her 'transformation' into an ESP world of healing.

We too often forget the importance of the witnesses used by us to form our theories. Rightly Elsie will not let you do that. This book provides a most illuminating cold bath.

Past Lives, Future Lives by Jenny Cockell
Piatkus Books, 1996 168pp £9.99

Three years ago this Northamptonshire woman published her book 'Yesterdays Children', relating her lifelong quest to seek out the truth behind a past life memory. Through this she became reunited with her children from an Irish existence which ended tragically some 60 years ago.

The amazing sight of a family get together between a mother now half the age of her own surviving children guaranteed the book was a huge global hit. Jenny still crops up on TV shows about the paranormal and her appearance on the pilot of 'Strange but True?' was a key reason in the progress of that series.

Right from the start I recall Jenny telling me (indeed I mentioned this in my NUN review) that she had begun an even weirder quest - to find her future selves and children. I expressed reservations as to how this might effect the strong credibility that her past life story undoubtedly possessed.

That sequel (surprisingly not called 'Tomorrows Children') has taken a while to arrive, fuelled, I think, by Jenny's great difficulty in producing evidence that even approaches the 'confirmations' that took her first book from a wild yarn toward the status of a believable account. After all, finding children that may still be alive is rather different from tracing details about a person who might not be born for another 200 years! If you publish a description of life in the far future of Nepal what can you possibly do to prove that it is anything other than vivid imagination?

I recall putting Jenny in touch with some (such as Andy Collins) who had researched 'progression hypnosis' -ie turning the usual UFO methodology on its head and taking a witness into the future, rather than the past, to seek out memories (if memories of the future are anything other than a contradiction in terms). But those experiments were not all that successful, as I recall, and don't find their way into this book.

So what do we have? I'm not really sure. There's curiosity value in seeing Jenny try to place her future lives in some sort of context but really that's about it.

From a UFOlogical perspective it is worth looking at the comparisons offered by clues about Jenny as a person and of known abductees. There are some. That may prove the real value of this book - which I found interesting, but ultimately rather dissatisfying.

Souvenir Press have begun a series of reprints from 25 years ago entitled 'Mysteries of the Universe'. Two early examples are from Charles Berlitz (viz 'Mysteries from Forgotten Worlds' - a sort of ancient astronauts tome - and his bestseller 'The Bermuda Triangle'). Both have been outmoded by more recent research (eg Larry Kusche's well reasoned destruction of much of the evidence for the Triangle). In many ways it's a pity that Souvenir do not include in this new series some of the more objective long out of print books about UFOs and the paranormal which would be very welcome to see again, but I guess the idea is to cash in with sure fire best sellers aimed at a new generation. Both these books cost £6.99 in B format softback and do, at least, give an insight into how much published writings about the paranormal have improved during the past quarter century (or, no doubt some will say, how much they have not!)

Coming Literary Attractions

Books in the offing include Peter Brookesmith with a large format book about UFOs: *The government files from Blandford in the autumn*. He seems to promise to expose some sloppy research and is also working on a large format 'history of UFOs' book for the same publisher for 1997. This is alongside Paul Devereux.

Blandford will also be bringing out sometime next spring a book by Peter Hough and Dr Moisha Kalman looking at their alien abduction hypnosis experiments. Nick Pope is also believed to have an abduction book coming in 1997, possibly explaining why his own first-hand Florida 'abduction' story has been taken out of 'Open Skies, Closed Minds' (it being in the proof version I read last winter).

Peter Hough and I have a book published shortly by Piatkus which was entitled 'Postcards from Heaven' (but has been changed - at the bookclubs request - to the ever so snappy - 'Life after death and the world beyond')(groan). As you can tell it is not about UFOs at all, although I am currently writing a UFO book for 1997 which I'll tell you about when I know how the research concludes and the writing has gone.

Finally, there's to be no book of this years 'Strange but True?' TV series. Partly due to my unavailability in the Spring through my mothers long illness, other factors cropped up that are best left unsaid right now.

More Welsh Wonders

Investigations by Margaret Fry

Case 9447 *Flying Triangle* took place on 13 August 1994 at 23.05. The D family (Mrs D plus three adult children aged 19 to 21) were in their house at Denbigh, Clwyd, along with three family friends when an object began to approach.

All seven witnesses went outside and using binoculars observed as a well lit triangular object flew directly overhead. It made no sound at all. Margaret did not visit the site but spoke to each witness individually on the phone two days later.

In case 9448 *The Phantom Plane C* (aged 34) and a work colleague R (aged 22) were driving on the A483 near Gresford, Clwyd at 08.45 on 25 October 1994.

Suddenly they spotted a small silvery oval like a small plane moving quickly towards the east. It then turned NE and remained in view for a further minute but was lost when they passed through some trees.

Around this time Margaret was receiving various stories about a 'phantom plane' in the Cefn Mawr area near Wrexham. This took the form of a large, unmarked black Hercules type troop transporter which would suddenly appear near ground level and then disappear in mid flight. Because of the frequency of occurrence the name 'phantom plane' stuck amongst the locals. RAF Valley and Hawarden airfield both denied any knowledge of its various flights.

Margaret recalls that she saw it with her husband three times in 1987/1988 when the stories first began. It was flying extremely low (at one time her husband swerved - thinking it was a car coming up beside him!). A couple walking their dog on the beach at Pensarn had it buzz right over them.

The earlier wave of activity ended in 1988 when many villagers at Llangernyw - including parents and children at a local school - saw the old rusty unmarked aircraft fly very low over the village at 15.00, scattering everyone in its path. It touched a tree, then dipped into the valley, before swooping up and climbing over the distant hills.

There were infuriated calls to the MoD, who denied that this was one of theirs, saying no aircraft would be allowed to fly in the condition described.

UFOlogy has had numerous mysterious black helicopter cases, of course.

Case 9449 *Blurred light* was at Rhyl on 10 October 1994 and involved a small group at the home of Mr and Mrs R. Several witnesses reported a blurred white light travelling too slowly and consistently for an aircraft.

It was 19.20 and so dark, but the light was thought too low to be a satellite. It disappeared suddenly.

Case 9450 *White light* was a sighting by Margaret herself in Llangernyw at 19.30 on 17 October 1994. MF was out on her own when she spotted a white light in the sky over the mountains. She comments: 'This is only the second time in my life when I have been entirely alone when watching a UFO. I was jolly glad it was fairly high up in the sky.'

Case 9451 *Moonraker* was on 21 November 1994 at 19.10 when MF and her husband were at Kinmel Bay picking up a friend to go to a parapsychology class.

They noticed a well lit area that they first assumed was part of the Christmas illuminations on Rhyl sea front. As they crossed the harbour bridge into Rhyl it was seen as a large diffuse area of orange light.

They drove along the seafront to investigate and saw that the object was in the sky over Splash Point. This is a very busy area during the summer holiday rush but was dark and uninviting in winter. Mr F was not keen on investigating, despite Margaret yelling at him that the sphere was coming after them!

The three now watched as the object receded out to sea as a large dull orange mass - like a beehive which was ten times the size of the full moon.

It has been suggested to MF that this object was the rising moon (which was pretty full and low on the horizon at the time). This could have been subjected to distortion effects through low level mist as well as the common illusion which makes it appear much larger when near to the horizon (paradoxically it is actually slightly further away and this is an effect purely caused by human perception).

MF seems unpersuaded that this is the answer, saying that it was not seen at first near the sea but was rising over the sea when finally watched as they left the car to go to their meeting. Mr F sat in the car park during their meeting listening to the radio and did not watch the object depart.

Margaret would like to know the opinions of other UFOlogists on this case.



9448



9551

Welsh Mutilations:

Margaret Fry also reports on some animal mutilation phenomena that were described to her on 9 October 1994.

A farmer at Penryn Bay, Clwyd discovered two pregnant sheep with their heads cut off and forelegs missing, but without any sign of blood.

A week later, on 16 October, a farmer at Llandillos had his sheep attacked in the middle of the night. When he got to the scene he found five Scottish blackfaces with a neat hole in their heads and stomach slit, but again no trace of any blood.

MF says it is a pity that UFOlogists do not take mutilation cases seriously in this country. She adds that in late summer 1994 there were 14 reports of crop circles in the Clwyd/Cheshire border region and wonders if there could be a connection here?

Next issue we start a new series of reports from Margaret looking into 1995 cases from this most active region. Given her poor health I must express my thanks for this continued stream of investigations.

BRIEF CASES

9602 12 January 1996
Kirby, Knowsley, Merseyside 22.05

Mr M (a technician) was with a colleague driving through the town when they saw a large sphere about a quarter mile away and at 1000 feet in height. It seemed stationary and then accelerated diagonally upwards disappearing through clouds at astonishing speed. They reversed the car to try to see the object again but it did not reappear.

Investigation:- by Anthony Eccles (MARA) found the following weather conditions via Bidston - Wind SE turning at 15 knts - warm with above average humidity. Liverpool ATC confirm that a helicopter was airborne and could have been over Kirby (no radar link).

9603 20 February 1996
Bolton, Lancashire 23.30

A Mr A reported via Jodrell that he was walking alongside a park when two very bright lights - one red and one blue - dived from the sky at great speed. They were visible for only a second or two.

Investigation:- by Roy Sandbach, concluded that there was considerable meteor activity in the sky at the time and this sighting was probably caused by such an event. Witness was very shaken even days later.

Manchester mid-air encounter revisited?
9605 26 February 1996
Edinburgh, Scotland 15.45

Easyjet Flight 141A (a Boeing 737) was at 31,000 feet about to descend towards Aberdeen when the pilot called ATC: - 'We'd like to report something going past us at this time - bright green, dripping fire - travelling faster than us - probably missile/space junk or a UFO.' According to the radio contact ATC then said that they had picked up nothing on radar and the pilot further noted: 'It burnt out just after it passed us or stopped illuminating - it might have been a meteorite (sic) but I've never seen one that bright in daytime.' ATC advised the air crew to make a report to their watch supervisor at Prestwick upon landing.

Investigation:- this message was taped live by James Sneddon, who concurred with the meteor/space junk theory and wonders what the media publicity could have been like had this happened in darkness. The sighting would have taken on far more vividly and it seems likely the crew might have feared a collision as the glow stood out against the black sky. The similarity with the Manchester British Airways case from January 1995 is for me worth noting as I believe (and have said in NUN) UFOlogists worldwide have made a serious mistake by over-stressing that case - articles on it have appeared in nearly every major UFO magazine - from International UFO Reporter to UFO Times (without hint of the strong possibility that the Manchester UFO was a meteor). This new case certainly was a meteor/space junk because Roy Sandbach investigated a sighting via Jodrell reported by Mr D from Bolton (200 miles south) at about the same time. His 'brilliant yellow light' that shot between clouds must surely have been the same fireball meteor.

9606 6 March 1996
Wavertree, Liverpool 07.45

Mr E (an engineer) was travelling to work when he spotted an object like a cigar with a dome on top and a green light at the rear. It was silvery metallic and was moving slowly northwards. After a short time it turned through 90 degrees and headed toward the east. It then gradually moved away.



Investigation:- by Anthony Eccles (MARA) found that Bidston weather indicated a clear day with scattered cloud and a light north-easterly wind. Manchester Airport advised that they had no aircraft in the vicinity. It is not clear whether attempts were made to discover an airship/blimp. This was a Wednesday. Was there a major football match in the area? The description is rather reminiscent of an airship which are being used increasingly in the UK to cover televised games. Unfortunately, it is probably too late to check - although a football fan out there might be able to establish if a match was on.

9607 5 May 1996
Wallasey, Wirral 10.20

Mrs G described how an aircraft passed over and attracted her attention to a 'star' high in the sky above the promenade, which was then covered over by cloud. A few minutes later it reappeared, still stationary. It seemed to flash every few seconds. Mrs G pointed it out to others who came down the street but nobody was really interested as it did not seem to be doing anything. After about 10 minutes she got fed up and went inside. Returning around 10 minutes later she could not see it all. Later that day she reported the matter to Jodrell.

Investigation: I took the call and suspected the explanation as a weather balloon. Manchester ATC confirmed release points for balloons (closest being Aughton near Ormskirk - which did not fit weather patterns that day). However, the near stationary motion, great height and 'flashing' (the balloon was probably turning and catching sunlight) suggests it was launched some distance away and hours before - possibly from Ireland.

From here to Alpha Centauri

After publication of 'Star Children' I got many reports worthy of investigation; although often the witness was reluctant to cooperate. A wrote from a mid Lancashire town, very wary, asking me many questions and unwilling to say very much. Eventually he agreed to tell me a little about his encounters.

The first event was late one night when he saw 'someone or something go past my bedroom door'. He went to the bathroom to investigate, but nobody was there or on the landing. However, on returning to his bedroom a small being was sat on his bed.

The being was human like but child sized in stature. Unafraid A went up to the being and said 'hello' but got no answer. So he then explained he would turn on the light. At which the entity said 'No need to use the switch son' and promptly pointed a digit at the light. The bulb glowed, but the switch remained in the off position. In explanation the alien merely reported; 'You are one of the chosen. You will know (how) in time.'

Gradually, A told me more about his reputed future contacts (which seemed to be at a subconscious level). He claimed the beings flew in craft that used 'recycled electricity' in a way beyond our comprehension. They are 17,000 years more advanced and come from the alpha centauri star system. A regaled me with information about the proxima system of this 'triple star'. He claims there are '7 spheres' there and only one has satellites (the third inward). This is the home of the visitors. He gave a description (36% land, 64% water etc).

In situations such as this, where the witness (or contactee as he called himself) likes to babble but does not want to be investigated, what can an investigator do? Take his story at its word, perhaps? Treat it with obvious caution, noting the child like words and story elements? All will react differently, of course, but no full judgement can ever be possible in these circumstances.

All you can do is look for clues in the story - A's UFO knowledge, for instance, citing various books, shooting down the sceptical writers (eg Andy Roberts) or hinting that others (eg Budd Hopkins) would love to hear from him.

But what would you make of the clue when A finally decided to give the name of the alien world. He says it means 'love and peace everywhere and forever' and is called *Afoni*. Say this phonetically and ask if his subconscious mind might not be trying to tell A something.

The diddymen from mars
Case 9603 13 February 1996
Knotty Ash, Liverpool 20.00

(NB: For overseas readers 'diddymen' are little elf like creatures invented by Liverpool comedian Ken Dodd. They often appear, singing and dancing, in his stage and TV shows, are supposed to work in local 'jam butty mines' and come from Knotty Ash).

In recent years there has been a major spate of triangle UFOs over the north-west (mainly Derbyshire, but more recently Lancashire). Speculation is rife that they are connected with the so called HALO project - Britain's prototype vertical take off stealth jet (based on a Harrier design) which is being developed at BAE Warton north of the Ribble estuary on the Fylde coast. For non British readers this is very close to the site of July's British Open golf championship at Lytham, which they may have seen on TV.

Whilst the BAE acknowledge that the project is real they deny having built any working models and so being responsible for any UFO activity. To many who live (as I do) under the almost daily flight path of the low level tests of the newly built jets from Warton this denial is not so easily accepted. Something odd has been flying around and created much UFO activity from Liverpool in the south to Morecambe Bay in the north - including one or two unexplained power failures - the most recent being in the same week as the above sighting and blacking out parts of the Fylde for 40 minutes..

Whether this sighting is another example of HALO or relates to something else entirely it is nonetheless an intriguing case. It has also had a peculiar postscript which might escalate this story to even weirder proportions.

T was a 17 year old student residing in this green Liverpool outer suburb. At the time he was in the kitchen watching the dog in the yard outside. This made him aware of a white light in the sky to the north west.

After about 3 minutes T recalled that his camcorder was available and decided to try to film the UFO. As he watched it through the viewfinder from a precarious position on a wall the light began to move steadily northwards and vanished behind a building.

By now T was exhibiting bravery (or folly) and was pursuing the UFO with his camera, via walls, his bedroom window and even the roof!

Eventually, after a total duration of around 6 minutes, the object finally disappeared from any realistic vantage point and he did not see it again.

Investigation: - by Anthony Eccles of MARA began when he was put into contact with the witness within days by a mutual friend. AE was able to study the camera (a nearly new Sony VHS) and take the film for research purposes.

The first point of contact was to seek out weather data. It was a fine clear night with a light wind from the north. This should have carried any sound towards the witness (the UFO was silent) but a police helicopter with searchlight was still considered a possibility. However, Merseyside police confirmed on 7 May that there was no such activity on the night in question. One other option, that the UFO was the planet venus (quite bright in the western sky), seems eliminated by the clear motion of the object on the film. It is not excessive, but seems real.

T did refer to the object having various shapes, including triangular, but this was based upon his sighting through the viewfinder whilst he had been filming. The footage does depict oval and triangular shapes from time to time but it is more than likely this is an artifact of the automatic focus of the camera trying to home in on what is little more than a point source of light.

Investigation into the case is ongoing at this time and no definite solution has emerged.

A disturbing sequel:

Perhaps the strangest aspect to this case occurred in late June, some months after the sighting and six weeks after its airing at the BUFORA Merseyside conference in Liverpool. At the time T was in contact with the TV series 'Strange but True?' (at my instigation, via Anthony Eccles) for their possible coverage of this film on the new series.

T then received an unexpected letter from 'BUFORA' with an unfamiliar phone number on top and signed by Anthony Eccles. It referred to orders from an allegedly secret government UFO investigation unit (involving the word Sightings - although I will not here reveal the full code for investigative reasons). T was apparently required to cease cooperation with TV and destroy his film, a demand that he thankfully chose not to follow.

Anthony Eccles asked me to speak with T on this matter (which I did in early July). Tony had by then seen the letter and the signature was, he added, very definitely not his own. Someone had obviously faked it in an effort to implicate the UFOlogist. The unrecognised telephone number was that of BUFORAs Director of Investigations; which is, of course, freely published and also evidently intended by the sender of this letter to try to tarnish BUFORAs reputation.

It is very clear from the letter (which had a Liverpool postmark) that this is not actually on BUFORA headed paper, as T understandably imagined it to be. It is, in fact, a mock up using a photocopy of BUFORAs paper (presumably based on a letter that the source had received from BUFORA, which would contain Philip Mantle's number as a matter of routine.) This original had then been heavily doctored by the sender of the bogus warning, to create the false impression that it had come from this respected national group.

I stress that there is no possibility whatsoever of this MIB style ultimatum truly originating from Tony Eccles, Philip Mantle, or BUFORA. These tactics are the result of someone aiming to cause mistrust in UFO circles. It is reminiscent of that mysterious organisation APEN some years ago, who also sought to plant false evidence implicating respected groups and UFOlogists. In the light of other 'dirty tricks' as outlined elsewhere in this issue it is a most disturbing development.

Of course, this letter may be someones idea of a joke. If so, it is not thought funny by either the witness or Tony Eccles, acting as BUFORAs local representative and rightfully protective of the group. I also regard it in rather more serious terms. Indeed I have suggested that Tony and T take the matter to the police, not expecting any real assistance but to at least register BUFORAs concern.

If it is a one off practical joke, then it had to be someone aware of the identity and address of T, which limits the possibilities. We also need to find out who sent this letter and make that fact known to stop all sorts of bogus MIB tales circulating around this case.

Moreover, the hoaxer should be exposed by the UFO movement to stop this sort of thing from happening again. We have to take very seriously threats against a witness (even if they were meant as a joke). They warrant real effort to rapidly uncover them.

If you have any data or suggestions on this matter, let us know. Anthony Eccles is naturally keen to maintain his investigation.

SUMMER EVENTS

On Sunday 11 August 1996 the new smash alien movie 'Independence Day' has a big launch at a UFO cinema marathon at the *Apollo Tatton in Gatley, Stockport, Cheshire*. From noon to 11 pm with lectures by Peter Hough, Jenny Randles and NARO, displays, tables plus screenings of 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind', 'Communion', 'Fire in the Sky' & 'Independence Day' itself. Tickets cost £10 and can be booked by credit card between 13.00 and 21.00 daily on 0161-491-0711

Quests annual bash this year is on 6, 7 & 8 September 1996 at the University of Leeds Conference Auditorium. Jerry Clark is flying over from the USA (no doubt with copies of his encyclopedia in tow). Many more - inc Nick Pope and I - also. Details:- UFO First Floor 66 Boroughgate Otley LS21 1AE

NARO may (or may not) be holding a conference in Manchester on 14 September as previously reported. I tried to get info for this issue, but couldn't. So you'll have to ask - sorry!

Contact UK meet on 29 September 1996 at the Exeter Hall, Kidlington, Oxford with Nick Pope, Roy Dutton & more. £6 on door (£5 in advance) Box 23 Wheatley OX33

Final PS: Sad to see the irreplaceable Malcolm Robinson dish and SPI/Enigmas. But his decision to spend time with his family in the wake of the Dunblane tragedy (on his doorstep) is typical of the man. Bravo Malcolm

Local groups in the north

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