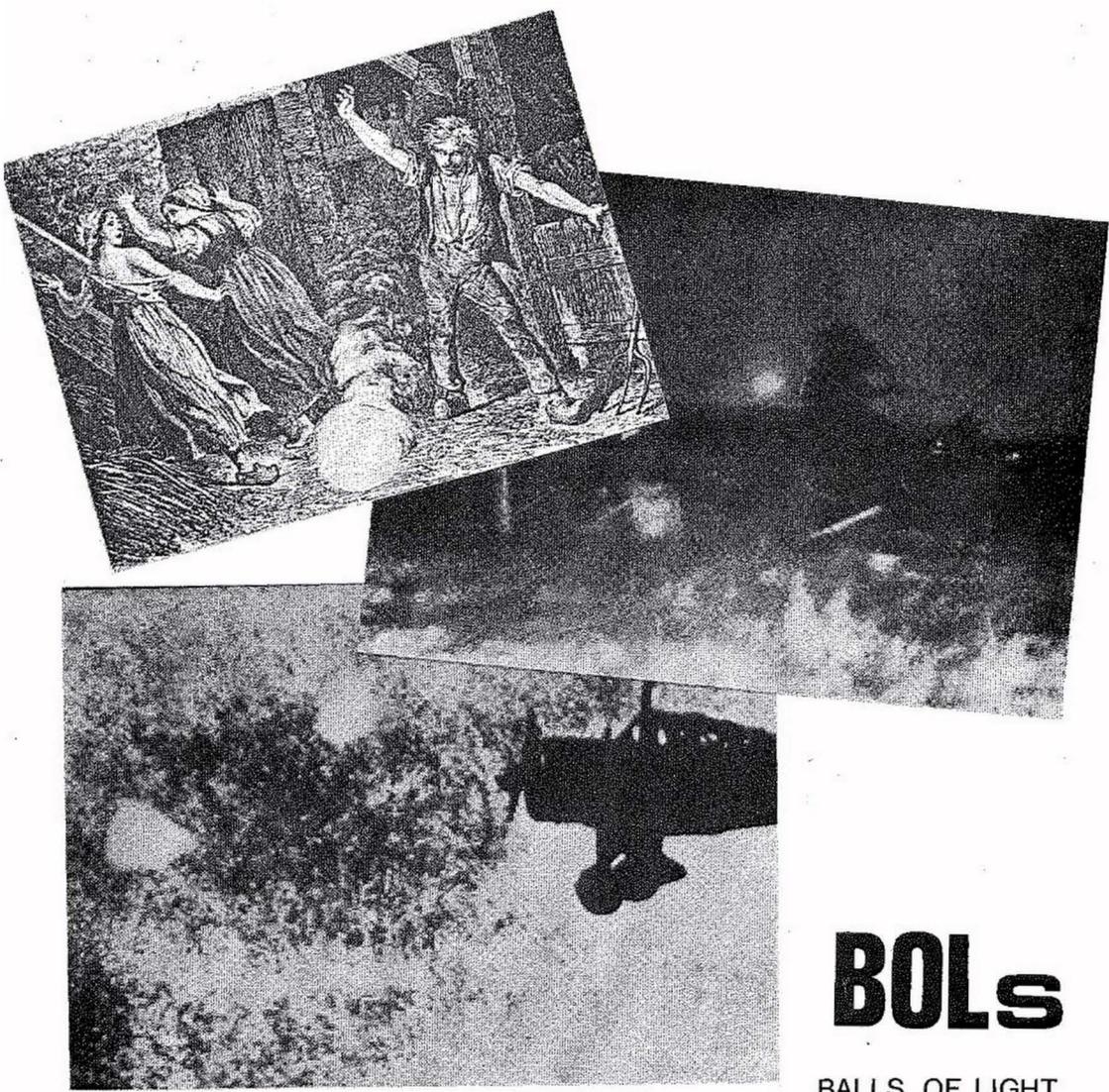


THE **PROBE REPORT**

JOURNAL OF UFO INVESTIGATION



BOLs

BALLS OF LIGHT

AN EXAMINATION BY HILARY EVANS

Vol 3, No 1. JULY 1982

THE PROBE REPORT

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Edited by Ian Mrzyglod.

16 Marigold Walk,
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PROBE



16 Marigold Walk
Ashton
Bristol BS3 2PD
Tel, 0272 666270

UFO RESEARCH ORGANISATION

(Volume 3, No 1.)

(Issue 9)

EDITORIAL

Due to lack of space, for which an explanation will be shortly forthcoming, there will be no moans, gripes or complaints in this issue's editorial column. Instead, there is a brief explanation of what is currently going on within these pages and also what is intended for the immediate future.

Firstly, this issue is not appearing late despite being published one month behind the regular schedule. The PROBE REPORT will now appear in January, April, July and October of every year, basically slipping back one month from the original datelines which were in operation for the first two years of publication. This was a necessary move because your editor had to revise magazine work deadlines to fit in with examinations and studies, which were clashing with each other. Consequently, as no other member of PROBE accepted the offer as Editor (yes, this post was up for grabs... and may still be), thus not relieving the pressures, The PROBE REPORT had to undergo this minor hiccup.

As for lack of space... almost the entire issue has been handed over to Hilary Evans, who has prepared a research paper on BOLs - Balls of Light. It is true that the article could have been split over two or more issues, but it was generally felt that the impact and impetus would have been diminished had it been done so. Hence, fourteen pages of the total 21 are devoted to BOLs. Obviously, planned content for this issue has had to be put back until next issue as financial constraints do not permit this journal being extended page-wise. Therefore, Geoff Bird's examination of the George Adamski/Elizabeth Klarer contactee cases will hopefully appear next issue (October) along with an enquiring piece by Colin Birch (Wessex UFO Investigation Research Group) into NASA's involvement with UFOs and the reaction to such UFO reports by NASA staff.

PROBE has also received a number of books for review, as usual, but because of the unique circumstances that we find ourselves in, any books not mentioned within this issue will no doubt receive reviews in October. The advertisements have also been affected but normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, on a sad note, we have to announce a subscription price increase. Looking through our records it seems we have held it down for well over a year, but what with.. (for full explanation of the increase see just about every other journal, magazine and newspaper in the country). Anyway, subscriptions will rise to £2.50 from July 1st 1982. Single issues will cost 60p plus postage of 15p. This sounds horrendous, but nevertheless is necessary and we hope it won't deter people from supporting this journal. On that particular topic, grateful thanks are extended to Kevin McClure and Jenny Randles for their over-generous reviews of this publication in COMMON GROUND. Their support is more than appreciated.

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**CASE
CLOSED**

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE MOON JENNY RANGLES

(Summary of an 11 page investigation report prepared for UFOIN by Philip Taylor BA, MSc, FRAS, who works at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, Sussex.

Abstract

Date of sighting: 4th October 1981. 19.55 to 21.00 GMT (BST was applying at the time).

Location: Hollington, Nr Hastings, East Sussex.

Type of case: CE 1: Physio Effects.

Investigation: Level A.

A spectacular object was seen for a long period of time by a retired lady (Mrs A) (name on file in the report) and her adult daughter-in-law. They claimed to be in "telepathic rapport" with the object and that it induced subsequent very severe physiological effects. Investigation lead to the belief that the object was identifiable as the Moon viewed through clouds.

The Events

Investigation began 10 weeks after the sighting when this summariser (JR) received a letter from the principle witness (65 year old Mrs A.). She had written to describe her sighting after a friend had pointed out my address in a copy of THE UNEXPLAINED (which Mrs A does not read). Interviews then occurred, both with Mrs A and her 30 year old daughter-in-law (Janette). Mrs A was reportedly watching a TV film, being interested by it, but at 19.55 GMT (20.55 local time) she felt "compelled" to go to the window. Here she was "amazed" to see a large, bright yellow object in the sky. She proceeded outside after it remained stationary for several minutes, here viewing it as a wobbling and pulsating object "like two blobs of golden jelly". Shortly afterwards it changed in shape to that of a cross. Mrs A was by now very excited and called her son at his home nearby. He and his wife could not see the object, but Janette decided to rush straight over to Mrs A's. Mrs A dashed back into the garden, leaving the phone dangling off the hook, but when Janette arrived some minutes later the object was not in sight. About 5 - 10 minutes later, however, it did reappear. For the next half an hour both women watched "enthralled" as the object changed shape repeatedly, taking on a variety of forms. They claim that the object emitted smoke from out of its bulk, thus creating its own "camouflage". Several times an aircraft came nearby, and on each occasion the object emitted smoke and hid itself behind it! Mrs A insists that at least some of these aircraft were military and were clearly investigating "it". The cloud used to hide the object did not move like the others around it and unlike them was "flourescent", emitting light from within. Most common shapes adopted by the object were "vertical cigar", "two golden dinner plates" and "crescent".

Ultimately the cloud moved and the object had disappeared. But then it reappeared as a "bright red disc on the horizon". Mrs A says she is astonished at the speed it must have moved. At this point both women wished it would return, and as if in response it did so! It was now very close, apparently above a nearby house and looking like a golden oval. It then faded to become reddish again. Janette got her best view at this stage, seeing lights and structured sides to the object. At just before 21.00 GMT it vanished, with both women pleased it had returned for them. Mrs A contacted the police and two officers came round that night. They promised to put in a report and return if their superiors decided to pursue the case. They never did. The day after, Mrs A says strange characters (dashes and letter "Z" and "C") appeared at the top of her TV screen. She believes these were a message.

The story was reported to the local press by the women and the story appeared in both the HASTINGS NEWS and the HASTINGS OBSERVER (dates withheld to protect witness identity). In this coverage some other local sightings that night were referenced although none were as spectacular as that of Mrs A and Janette. The MOD denied having any other

**CASE
CLOSED**

reports for that date. Gordon Taylor (a researcher at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, but no relation to the investigator of this report) was quoted as saying... "it was a cloudy night and the effects of the light and cloud (on the Moon) would account for the changing shape". He admitted to Philip Taylor this was a hasty "off the cuff" reaction given merely on being told the story by the media. RAF Manston said "It's a mystery to me. We had no aircraft out". From these facts Mrs A, in particular, decided a cover-up was in operation. She cited the failure of the police to come back; the denial that military aircraft were in the area although she saw them (note Manston only said they had no aircraft up) and the fact that the Observatory "pretended it was the Moon".

Physiological After-effects

Both Mrs A and Janette claim severe and recurrent headaches over the three weeks following the encounter. They seemed localised over one eye. However, the main effect was felt only by Mrs A. This occurred four days after the sighting. It was mid-day and she felt tired and cold. She lay on the bed and then suffered an apparent "blackout", remembering nothing until she woke up at 2.30 am, over FOURTEEN HOURS later. She feared a stroke, having never had such a blackout before, and called the doctor. It has not recurred, but Mrs A definitely connects it with the encounter and in the light of the SUNDAY MIRROR tale of police officer Alan Godfrey's "abduction" (which came a month later) seems to think she may have been "contacted" during this loss of time. Both witnesses are firmly convinced they observed a spacecraft piloted by aliens. Mrs A describes it as a "miracle", that she was chosen and "called" to look out of the window. She regards the side effects as accidental and that "they" are protecting her. She feels a great deal more confident about coping with the world.

Investigation

Investigation began on the premise that Gordon Taylor's hasty evaluation had to be checked as, in such a long duration incident, it could have been viable. Facts that were then uncovered strongly supported the interpretation: The Moon was approaching first quarter and set at 21.02 GMT locally, ie at almost the exact time the UFO disappeared. It was at 249° (ie 31° south of west). This is the direction the witnesses described the UFO to be in (the window through which Mrs A first observed it faces south west). Direction of disappearance of the UFO was westerly, in keeping with the setting of the Moon. Cloud cover at the time was as follows: 1 okta cumulus, 5 oktas strato-cumulus, 8 oktas altostratus (an okta being one-eighth cloud cover). This means that low cloud was about 50% covering the sky, allowing the object (the Moon) to periodically be covered and uncovered. The high altostratus formed a thin "veil" through which the Moon could shine and change shape. This was so high it would not appear to move relative to the low cloud, thus creating the illusion of "smoke" generated by the UFO. Philip Taylor was forced to conclude (as would any reasonable investigator) that the stimulus for this observation must have been the Moon. Both witnesses strongly dispute this possibility, saying they saw the Moon "over my shoulder". The Moon was not in the part of the sky indicated by them.

Concluding Remarks (Jenny Randles)

In my opinion this investigation is extremely important. Not only does it illustrate the enormous value of IFO cases, but it poses many disturbing questions. Not the least are these:

- a) If a straightforward stimulus can be distorted as grossly as this by two witnesses, how can we ever be sure that any UFO report is valid? It could be a further example of gross exaggeration, fuelled by witness beliefs.
- b) Just what psychological process can create such a fantastic experience from such an ordinary starting point? Can we dismiss all the subsequent effects as coincidence? If the 14 hour time-lapse did occur as Mrs A has stated then does it have significance?

I have a suspicion (really little more than that) that cases of this nature may actually have more in common with UFO close encounters than they do with ordinary, well observed and reported IFOs. The underlying mechanism that creates the gross distortion and close encounter (as this undoubtedly is whatever led to it) may well be the same as leads to apparent cases not obviously based on an identifiable stimulus... and the effects on Mrs A and Janette are clear enough. They were not hallucinations, whatever else they

**CASE
CLOSED**

were. I think this type of case merits more study than investigators have been willing to afford it in the past, for it is disturbing that it is not unique. The above case has considerable similarities with the one at Bignall End in Staffordshire, in December 1976, which appears to have also been stimulated by the Moon, and which Tony Pace (now of OSEAP) has written a good deal about in SKYWATCH. One of my causes for concern stems from the following facts. As I was typing up this report for THE PROBE REPORT, Mark Brown (BUFORA RIC - Midlands) has quite independantly submitted another excellent investigation report into an incident that occurred on October 11th 1981 (exactly 1 week after the case just discussed). This was in Leicestershire, involved two witnesses and an apparent car-stop (at Belchars Bar, where in 1971 there was a classic UK car-stop at exactly the same place). The report had concluded (with no knowledge of Philip Taylor's study) that the stimulus had been an observation of the near full Moon in the south-western sky, the car-stop being just "coincidence".... I wonder.



Janette's sketch of the UFO immediately before it disappeared.

SIGNALS

letters to the editor

Dear Ian,

An issue in Vol 2 No 4 I would like to comment on - resource centres. This argument closely resembles one I was vaguely involved in quite a few years ago between amateur astronomy societies and their Federation. Many people felt that only those who had, or at least regularly used, telescopes, should be able (allowed?) to call themselves astronomers. The arm-chair types were out. Since, at the time, I was implementing quite a useful information retrieval system for use by the local society on a nearby computer, I was classed as 'arm-chair' and looked down upon by many. The whole argument was ludicrous. With astronomy, just as UFO research, paranormal research, ley hunting or whatever, there are those who love to get cold and uncomfortable outside, and those who do equally useful work inside, many migrating between the two groups. A well handled resource centre can be an extremely valuable addition to any and all nearby groups. The emphasis of course, is on the word 'can'. After all, at the most prosaic level, all these case histories, both UFO and IFO produced by organisations are only of use if others, researchers or merely interested bystanders, have access to them. This relates to my major criticism of BUFORA - the legendary dusty unopenable research drawer into which case reports seemingly vanished for all time. This is the context in which a resource centre can help, if it has support from local groups, individuals and so on. And, of course, if it is handled by responsible people.

Regards,

Paul Wilson, Richmond, N. Yorks.

Sir,

We noted with interest and dismay the comments, and attitudes displayed, in your Editorial published in THE PROBE REPORT, issue 8. By your uninformed remarks, you may have caused OSEAP and the RESOURCES CENTRE irreparable harm and to put our side of the argument to your readership, we claim the right of reply within your pages and would ask them to consider the following points lest they labour under an illusion as to

OSEAP's intentions. Over 35 organisations, publications and individuals have supported the Centre since the publication, in April of last year, of the Centres fact-sheet. Also, as a result of this, over 1700 donations of material have been sent in. In all the workings of the Centre, in print (see UFO INSIGHT), a breakdown of the hoarding dogma by UFO buffs, into positive action, has been upmost. The enlarging of the scope of reference, from the one 'collector', to anyone who cares to take the trouble of making contact with the Centre for assistance. In this respect, PROBE could have made good use of the Centre when investigating the Westbury Circles. Useful background material, for example, from three back issues of Flying Saucer Review, could have been available and prove the usefulness of the Centre.

UFO GROUND EFFECT by L.Cramp/Mail Bag - FSR Vol 13/No 2. Mar-Apr 1967/page 19.

THE WHIPPINGHAM GROUND EFFECTS by L.Cramp/FSR Vol 14/No 3. May-June 1968/pages 3 - 9.

NORTH QUEENSLAND UFO SAGA by Stan Seers & W.Lasich/FSR Vol 15/No 3. May-Jun 1969/
pages 2 - 5.

The Centre could have supplied PROBE with either xerox copies of items, or in the case of two issues, sold them the original magazines. You fail to mention that ASSAP (who produced a document entitled 'ASSAP Archive Programme' - a preliminary manifesto by Bob Rickard, in Sept, 1981), an organisation PROBE supports, has one of its main objectives the setting up of data bases, also NUFOIS in Nottingham have for several years been working towards an archive. Do you class these projects as private collections, or wastes of resources?

Yours faithfully,

M.A.Tyrrell, on behalf of OSEAP, Crewe.

(I fail to see how a personal viewpoint (which markedly differs from yours) can be treated as "uninformed". "Uninformed" would postulate that I was oblivious to the facts whereas I was merely stating my point of view. "Uninformed" is what you are, when you make reference to the proposed ASSAP library. From what I understand, ASSAP are not intending to create a new library but instead hope to utilise existing libraries and catalogue the locations of other material that could be of use. As for your RESOURCES CENTRE, I still stand by my feelings that it is another posh title for David Rees' personal collection. You say you have received over 1700 items over the past year, but what you don't say is the exact nature of these donations. They may well entirely be newspaper cuttings for all we know, in which case you are more than welcome to them. In actual fact, I expect PROBE has a few on file that you can have as well. What you won't get from us are books and magazines that have been hard-earned over the past few years. If you manage to convince others to part with them, good on you. Perhaps you could tell me what would happen if OSEAP should fold up? Would you send all the donations back to the donors? Would you pass on the entire contents to another organisation? Face the facts, despite what intentions you may have, or what you may call yourselves; you are only a local group (as is PROBE) plus a couple of individuals. Local groups come and go with alarming regularity - people change, and in small groups that can make a big difference. So I don't see the OSEAP RESOURCES CENTRE as a firm, long-standing establishment. With regards to the Westbury Circles investigation:- we carried that out in late 1980, making your offer of this background material somewhat late. In any case, if this material in any way is of the same calibre as the Mystery Circle article in FSR Vol 27/No 5 (pages 13 - 15), it would have been of no use whatsoever. Finally, I like your comment about PROBE supporting ASSAP, (written in a manner that makes it sound like an affliction). I can only assume you arrive at this by the fact that PROBE has attended several of their conferences and meetings. On the strength of this, as you and your colleagues were present at the April conference in Leicester, OSEAP must also support ASSAP(?). Besides, ASSAP have been a great deal more co-operative than OSEAP have shown themselves to be in recent months. -Ed)

Dear All,

I would like to express my congratulations to all members of PROBE. What a pleasure to read an objective, well-written and informative magazine such as THE PROBE REPORT. For too long, cases have been left open without conclusion, allowing speculative ufologists fuel for wild theories. But the depth and thoroughness of your research may help to stir others into a reappraisal of past 'UFO' cases culminating in a better ufology. Damn your critics (or subscribers who seek cheap sensationalism), you are illuminating the only way forward for ufology and I earnestly hope others have the courage to follow.

Yours faithfully,

Mark F. Brown, BUFORA RIC, Midlands.

(That's better - Ed).

BOLs

HILARY EVANS

1 T H E S I S

I propose that we have sufficient evidence to postulate the existence of a natural, intelligent, protean (= able to change its shape) entity, generally if not exclusively air-inhabiting, native to our atmosphere. It may exist in more than one form, but as it is most frequently reported as a ball of light, I propose we label it a 'BOL' for the time being, with the proviso that this may not be its true appearance.

Appearance. The shape most often reported (which may not be its 'true' shape) is a sphere, but it displays an ability to shift in an instant to oblong, delta or more complex shapes. The size, though very variable, is most often close to 1 metre diameter. It is often luminous, in whole or in part, and its luminosity is often pulsating.

Behaviour. It is usually seen hovering or moving in the air, and even when it approaches the earth it is likely to hover slightly above the ground rather than land. It can hover ; it can travel slowly or at immense speed ; it can change direction instantly ; and it can appear and disappear seemingly at will from human sight, though whether our inability to see it means that it is no longer present is uncertain.

Motivation. The BOL displays an ability to respond to humans, and frequently acts in ways which indicate intelligence and purpose. Its actions are seldom if ever malevolent, and occasionally distinctly benevolent. Its habitat and life-style are totally unknown, but it seems to have a partiality for power sources such as power lines, and also for certain geological configurations and types of terrain.

2 D I S C L A I M E R

BOLs have been with us longer than UFOs have, and there is nothing new about theorising a link between one and the other. Jessup, one of the earliest UFO-authors, recognised their potential significance (14) and Helms postulated their existence as specific entities in an interesting article. (13) But because the information-content offered to the investigator by LITS (= Lights In The Sky) is relatively so meagre, they have been largely ignored over the last decade or two in favour of encounter cases which, because of the seemingly structured appearance of the objects involved, and the complex behaviour of their alleged crews, have seemed to offer greater investigative potential.

It is a purpose of this paper to suggest that this is not necessarily so, and that the simple BOL could be the true key to the UFO enigma. But to appreciate the force of this possibility, it is necessary to put aside presuppositions, and see the BOL-UFO as part of a phenomenon which ranges beyond the boundaries of ufology proper. The relevancy of some of the cases cited below may be more apparent than real ; nonetheless, they will help us to define the phenomenon.

So let us see what has been reported of BOLs, whether as UFOs or simply as Fortean anomalies of no attributed kind.

3 MYSTERIOUS SPHERES

In probably a majority of UFO sightings, no distinct shape can be discerned. Naturally, investigators tend to concentrate on those which offer a structured shape such as a triangle or disc : hence those handy charts of 'UFO shapes' which adorn the pages of the naiver ufo-books, but which any experienced ufologist knows are virtually meaningless. (Indeed, the very fact that they are meaningless is itself an ironic comment on the nature of the UFO problem !)

I think it reasonable to postulate that in many cases where no distinct shape is reported, it is because the UFO has no distinct shape. But it is also likely that because the spherical shape is so basic, it tends to be ignored by the witness or the investigator or both.

Here, however, are some cases in which relatively small spherical objects were specifically reported :

C1. Antwerp, Belgium : September 1944. A soldier named Yorke saw five glowing 'globes' about 1 metre diameter. They looked as though made of cloudy glass, with a light inside. He was sure they were under intelligent control. (6)

C2. Near Union, Oregon : 29 June 1947. Kenneth Arnold, whose sighting started the modern 'flying saucer' era, five days later, while flying, encountered a cluster of 20-25 brass-coloured balls, which he reckoned to be about 2/3 of a metre in diameter. (6)

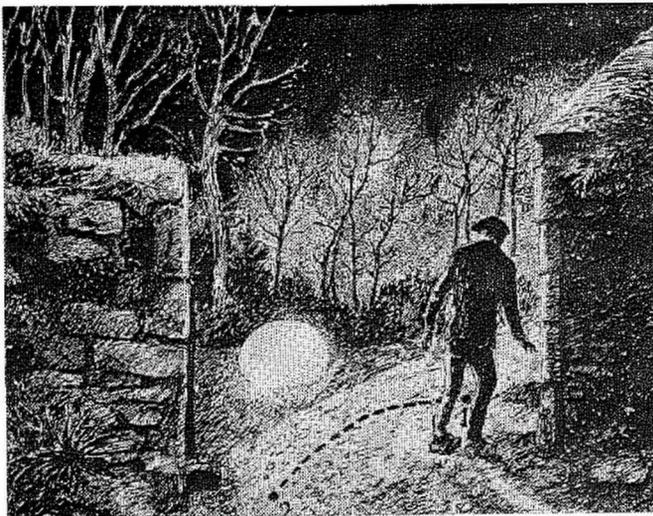
C3. New Zealand : 13 January 1957. Two men, West & Liddell, in the early hours of the morning, saw a bright fluorescent object hovering a metre above the ground. It was rectangular at first, but changed shape to a sphere about half a metre in diameter. They tried to seize it but it eluded them like a balloon would. (6)

C4. Alliance, Ohio : 20 July 1970. A housewife looked out of her window at night to see a gold-coloured oval object, under half a metre in length, in her garden. For about 15 minutes it sat pulsing larger and smaller, then suddenly it disintegrated without trace. (6)

C5. Bournemouth, England : 21 October 1969. Lt. Cdr. Mackenzie and his family saw a hovering ball about 20cm diameter, translucent, greyish-white and pulsating at the centre. After about 30 seconds it moved away at high speed. (6)

C6. Larchant, France : 22 November 1978. Three quarry workers saw three spheres, metal-grey in colour, below them in the quarry, about 30 metres distant. Then a larger one, 3-4 metres diameter, emerged from the clouds and joined the others : all gave off a misty surround suggestive of condensation. After about 10 minutes the larger one seemed to land about 500 metres away while the smaller ones flew off at immense speed. (5)

The reader will recognise these as typical ball-of-light cases, of which there are hundreds if not thousands in the files. Compared with a nice, meaty encounter case they are, admittedly, somewhat insipid. But set them aside some other types of phenomena, and some piquant parallels emerge.



15th June 1966, AVEYRON,
FRANCE. Several members
of a farming family saw
this typical BOL on their
farm. Its behaviour
seemed purposeful.
(cr. Lumieres dans la nuit)

4 N A T U R A L C A U S E S

Ever since the notorious Hillsdale sightings of March 1966, when Hynek was sadly misquoted as suggesting 'swamp gas' as an explanation for some college girls' alleged UFO sightings (24), there has been a healthy reluctance to accept natural explanations for UFOs too readily. The association of 'will-of-the-wisp' lights with marshy ground does admittedly seem to point towards a natural explanation in terms of ignited gas ; yet even the hard-headed director of the Condon Report admits 'exactly how it occurs is not known, and could well be the subject of further investigation' (2), and Curtis Fuller writes in Fate :

'We challenge the swamp gas theorists to produce a little swamp gas under laboratory conditions, ignite it spontaneously, and produce their own little fireballs that go bouncing merrily along for minutes at a time'. (7h)

So just because an explanation is 'scientific' is no reason why it should be accepted without full examination. A case such as this must make us pause :

C7. Queensland, Australia ; date unknown. A Mr Pike, walking in marshy terrain, saw a light hovering and dancing about 50 metres in front of him. By the time he had approached to about 20 metres he could see it was a huge glowing ball, hovering about 2.5 metres over the ground. Suddenly it soared to one side, The witness realised that the light was leading him into dangerously marshy ground, and halted. The light stopped too, 'hesitated' awhile, then glided a little closer to him, as though tempting him to follow. (7b)

This witness, for one, had the impression of encountering something with more intelligence than you'd expect from a flame of gas : he had a feeling of being played games with, and his account is full of words which anthropomorphise the object. Nor is this unique : it is an essential feature of the 'will-of-the-wisp' folklore that unwary travellers are lured into danger by the lights. The implication is that we are dealing with something with at least as much intelligence as a poltergeist, and activated by a similar spirit of mischief.

5 ' G H O S T ', ' S P O O K ', A N D O T H E R R E C U R R E N T
L I G H T S .

The 'Min-Min Lights' of Australia, of which Mr Pike so nearly became a victim, are just one of many such throughout the world. If the greater number have been reported from the United States, this may be a geographical fact, or it may be a sociological one, the citizens of America being more inquisitive by nature, or blest with a more effective reporting system. (Eberhart's Geo-bibliography offers us more than 80 references. (4))

Because the similarity of such lights to UFOs is self-evident, UFO debunkers have felt called upon to debunk the ghost lights too, and have cheerfully done so in terms of car and train headlights and so forth, though they haven't found it so easy to deal with lights which have been reported since the 18th century. Arch-sceptic Klass explained the noted Brown Mountain lights to his own satisfaction, (15) but his explanation (headlights and townlights + refraction) hardly solves this incident :

C8. A local filling station proprietor went with a group of friends one night to investigate the Brown Mountain lights. They were just starting to return home after several fruitless hours when a strong light, as long as his outstretched arm, formed a few feet over the heads of the astonished group. It hovered motionless for a time, emitting a sizzling sound : then it began to pulsate, alternately growing longer and shorter, before finally vanishing. One girl fainted. (7a)

In fairness to the debunkers, there are other accounts of the ghost lights that are somewhat less credible. Ralph Lael tells (16) how he went into the Brown Mountains to investigate the lights, and found that they are extraterrestrial beings, who proceeded to give him the customary warnings about the future of planet Earth. The story of how they took him to Venus, where he met beautiful Venusian ladies averaging 2 metres in height, with lovely figures barely concealed by scanty panties and bra, is, alas, irrelevant to this article.

It is also untypical. Most ghost light accounts are sober reports by puzzled people who have often devoted a great many man-hours to the investigation of the phenomena. And from these reports there is one feature which emerges time and time again : the elusiveness of the lights, and their seeming awareness of the investigators' movements. To take just one example : William Kingsley says of the Watersmeet Light (22) 'It cannot be approached or it will "go out".'

Clearly, a purely natural phenomenon could not respond in this way. A purely optical one might seem to - but then, in the case of the Watersmeet Light, Kingsley eliminated all purely optical explanations. So again the implication is that we are concerned with a phenomenon possessing some degree of control or intelligence.

6 E S T A B L I S H I N G T H E R E A L I T Y

C9. When, in 1973, residents around Piedmont, Missouri, began reporting strange recurrent lights in the hills, the head of the Physics Dept. at the local university, Harley Rutledge, decided to subject them to scientific scrutiny. He took a team of scientific colleagues and a truckload of instruments up into the hills, expecting to come back with an explanation after two or three weekends.

After seven years, he has just published his findings. They comprise sightings, scientifically recorded by instrumentation including radar and photography, of 178 UFOs on 157 occasions, whose physical presence is clearly established, and for which no explanation in terms of natural causes or man-made artifacts seems forthcoming.

Most of the sightings were of simple lights : there were no close encounters. The objects displayed the usual UFO characteristics - abrupt changes of direction, instantaneous acceleration from stationary hover to very high speed, &c. But Rutledge's study also established that, on at least 32 recorded occasions, there was a high degree of coincidence between the movement of the UFO and the actions of the observers. These actions could be as physical as switching a car light on and off, they could be a verbal or radio message, they could be (though not of course on the instrumentally confirmed occasions !) an unspoken thought. Somehow, though at a distance of three kilometres or more, the UFOs seemed aware of the observers' actions, and responded to them by modifications in their own behaviour. (23)

The implication of Rutledge's field study has to be that there exists a category of UFOs, with no observable characteristics other than a generalised 'ball-of-light' appearance, which are capable of intelligent response and extra-sensory data-collecting. The similarity to some of the phenomena we have already noted goes without saying.

7 FIREBALLS

Thousands of meteorites enter our atmosphere daily, and for the most part are burnt up as they plummet towards earth. Given that a majority fall over the oceans ; that of the balance, a high proportion fall over uninhabited regions ; that of the balance, a high proportion fall where they can be seen only by people too ignorant to take note of what they see, even if they should happen to see it ; given that of the balance, most will fall where those who see them are not concerned to report them... we are left with only a tiny fraction which are liable to be reported as anything, meteors, UFOs, fireballs or whatever.

But when such reports are received, it is generally considered scientifically sound to ascribe them as meteorites ; which perhaps a majority are. Any aspect of their behaviour which seems inconsistent with that of meteorites is ascribed to defective observation ; again, doubtless correctly. And yet cases occur for which the blanket explanation seems inadequate :

C10. Tucumcari, New Mexico : 13 December 1951. Several witnesses saw a fireball plunge to earth : it destroyed a water tank which caused four buildings to collapse and killed 4 people. A classic meteorite fall - except that meteor expert Lincoln La Paz found no evidence of a meteor at the site. (11)

C11. St Helens, Lancashire : 27 July 1938. A blinding ball of blue light fell on Bold Colliery, causing an explosion which killed one and injured two. Not very remarkable, except that two weeks later a similar ball of bluish light fell just two miles away. Given the random trajectories of meteorites, given the distance the earth had moved and rotated in those two weeks, this repeat fall is, to put it mildly, an astonishing coincidence. (11)

C12. Canada : 1913. Of all aerial anomalies, few surpass the great Canadian Fireball Procession, wherein a line of lights majestically crossed the Canadian sky and disappeared over the Atlantic. The spectacle aroused wonder and alarm across the continent : it also posed some staggering questions.

In the first place, the course followed by the Procession was the only course which would enable it to traverse all five of the Great Lakes in a straight line. The map will show you that to do this accidentally would be an astonishing feat, for direction and alignment have to be exact to within a mile or so.

Secondly, while to do so once would be remarkable enough, in fact the feat had to be performed three times - for there were three sets of lights : one about 9pm on February 9, the second in the early hours of the next day, the third during the following afternoon. Yet all, despite the movement of the earth, despite the rotation of the earth, followed the same precise path. If they were indeed meteorites, it follows that each part of the Procession must have followed a different course through space, only to end up flying the same course on reaching the earth ! (17)

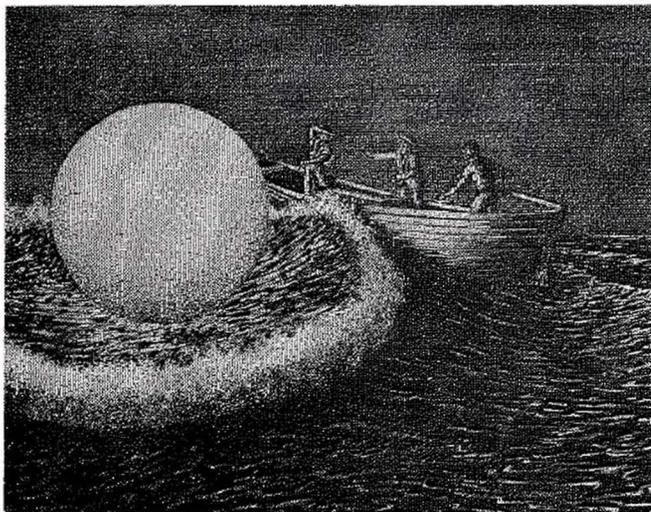
Although many observers at the time, impressed by the majestic Procession, took them to be airships, I don't propose to raise that possibility here. But the incident does show, once again, that a seemingly scientific explanation for an anomalous phenomenon may leave unexplained as much as it explains.

We should note, too, that the term 'fireball' is not a scientific description, but a convenient label for something whose nature is unknown. It tells us nothing about the object involved in this case :

C13. Newfoundland, 12 November 1887. The crew of the steamer Siberian saw a huge ball of fire rise from the sea and soar into the air. It floated against the wind and headed towards the ship. Just when a collision seemed certain, it changed course, shot into the sky, and disappeared within a few minutes. (1)

Yet again, whatever the nature of the beast, it is hard to avoid the suggestion of intelligent behaviour,

Fench fishermen encounter a fireball which caused waves as it moved. April 1968.
(cr. Lumieres dans la nuit)



Along with swamp gas and meteorites, ball lightning has been warmly welcomed by UFO debunkers eager for any natural explanation, no matter how improbable. And ball lightning is very, very improbable : so infrequently does it occur, so elusive is it and so little documented, that its claim to scientific respectability is by no means universally admitted. It is ironic that sceptics like Klass should be offering, as a 'scientific' explanation for UFOs, a phenomenon whose very existence is still questioned by many scientists !

Nor, even when its existence is recognised, is it easy to say what is ball lightning and what is some other kind of 'fireball'. (If this paper does nothing else, it will surely demonstrate how inadequate are current lines of demarcation between these phenomena !) Broadly speaking, however, it generally takes the form of a short-lived luminous sphere, apt to be fuzzy round the edge, frequently observed in association with electric storms, liable to explode on contact with objects, sometimes damaging property and sometimes passing through solid objects without leaving a mark, sometimes killing animals but with a surprisingly good record in regard to injuring humans.

Here are some instances of its erratic behaviour :

C14. Cheltenham, Australia : 1961. Mrs Will was in her kitchen, watching a thunderstorm, when she 'felt this great thing over my shoulder'. She turned and saw a fireball behind her. She ran through the dining room, heading for the stairs, followed by the ball which passed her in the stairwell and preceded Mrs Will upstairs to the bedroom where her brothers were still in bed. They heard a crash 'like thunder amplified ten times', and the fireball passed before their eyes through their room and out of the open window. (7i)

C15. France : 6 March 1894. A ball of fire appeared beside a Dr Dandois and threw him over a ditch into a field, where he lay unconscious for about 15 mins. When he came to he was uninjured except for a numbness. (1)

C16. Merlan, France : 6 January 1850. A fireball burst over the heads of two men in the street, but without hurting them or damaging their clothing. (1)

C17. France : November 1898. A fireball appeared in a room where a girl was sitting, crossed the floor towards her, circled round her in a spiral, then darted up the chimney and exploded out of doors. (1)

C18. France : August 1895. A fireball passed through a farmhouse room, ignoring two people, passed through the floor (making a hole as it went) into the sheep-fold below where it killed five sheep (though with no sign of burn or wound) yet left the sheep-boy unharmed. (1)

C19. Salagnac, France : 10 September 1845. A fireball came down the chimney into a room, passed through it without touching the five people in it, went into the adjoining room where it killed a pig and then vanished. (1)

C20. Italy : 29 August 1791. A fireball the size of a billiard ball appeared in a field at a girl's feet, climbed up inside her clothes making her petticoats billow out like an umbrella, but emerged from her bodice without harming her. It then exploded violently, slightly burning her but causing no serious injury. (1)

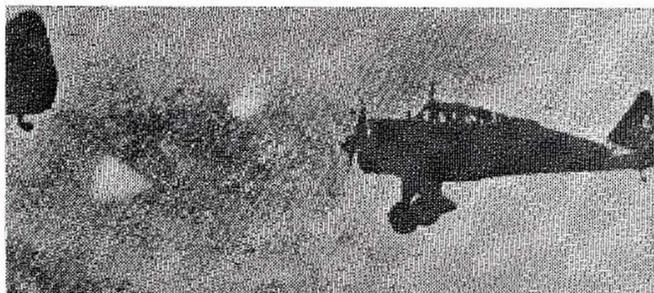
C21. Philadelphia : 1960. Mrs Matthews was lying on a sofa when a 'huge red ball of fire' came through the closed living room window and venetian blind, without damaging either, and passed through the room with a sizzling sound. It passed so close to her that her scalp was burned and the hair fell out of the back of her head. (7f)

Finally, a case which suggests a connection with that other bizarre anomaly, spontaneous human combustion :

C22. 1960, location unspecified. A man whose wife was a heavy drinker was woken at 5 am by his wife's screams : she was lying on the floor, burning fiercely. His view of her was almost completely obstructed by a fireball. He was severely burned while trying to extinguish the fire, yet the rug on which she was lying was not burnt, nor the room damaged. His wife died : we are not told what happened to the fireball. (7g)

All these cases are classified as 'ball lightning', yet not only do they display a wide disparity of behaviour, but they manifest a selectivity in their movements which often suggests control if not intelligence. True, there are many cases where people have been injured, even killed, by ball lightning : but they are very much the exception.

9 F O O F I G H T E R S



Foo Fighters photographed over the Pacific area, ca 1945-6.

C23. Over Hagenau, Germany : 22 December 1944. An American bomber crew saw two very bright lights climb towards them from the ground : on reaching the plane they levelled off and stayed on the plane's tail for about two minutes. They were huge, bright and orange-coloured : they seemed to be under perfect control. (18)

C24. Germany, same period. Bill Leet, another USAF bomber pilot, reported a ball of light which suddenly appeared alongside his plane 'like a light switch being turned on'. It seemed 2- rather than 3-dimensional, like the amber light on a traffic signal, but not like any earthly light. It stayed with the plane for about 45 minutes, then suddenly was gone, 'Our gunners wanted to shoot it down, but I ordered them not to. I told them if it was hostile, it would already have shot us down. Let's just try to figure out what it is, I told them'. (25)

The so-called 'Foo Fighters' have understandably been 'explained', by Philip Klass and others, as ball lightning. It is not easy to go along with this in view of the fact that ball lightning normally lasts for a matter of seconds : 45 minutes is way over any known duration for the phenomenon. There is also the matter of apparent control ; the fact that in C23 the ball came up from below to join the plane in a seemingly purposeful manner ; the lack of confirmatory evidence for high-flying airborne ball lightning... in short, the only good reason for believing that the foo fighters were ball lightning is that both are BOLs - but then so, as we see, are a good many other things.

And there is another significant feature of the Foo Fighters : with rare exceptions, they have never been reported except during World War Two, when they appeared only in the German and Pacific theatres of operations. It has to be a very strange natural phenomenon whose existence is so closely related to a particular phase of human activity...

10 EVIDENCE OF INTELLIGENCE

We have already come across several cases in which the BOL seems to exercise, or to be under, intelligent control. Here are three more which emphasise this aspect more specifically :

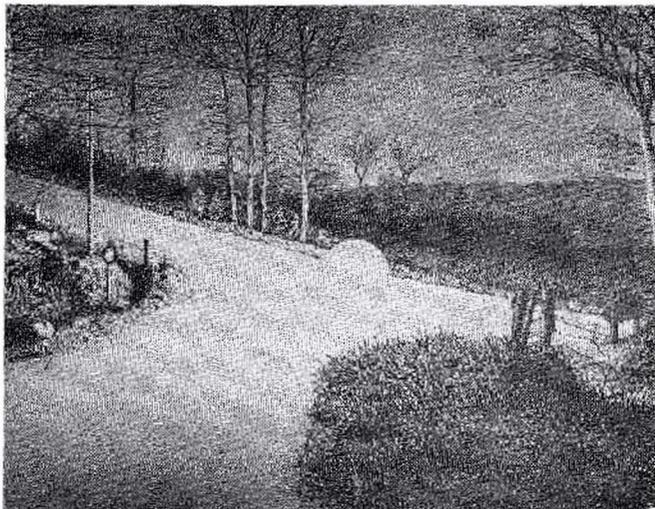
C25. Massy, France : 28 May 1974. A young man aged 18 on several occasions saw a BOL which seemed to be playing games with him - vanishing when he switched on his torch, reappearing when he switched it off, etc. On this evening, bored with the game, he lay on his bed. A few minutes later a winking red light came into view through his window ; he watched it move slowly to the left, stop, turn into a horizontal cigar-shape which proceeded to light up in four or five sections, growing progressively brighter. Fully lit, it stopped still for about 20 seconds, then - precisely at the moment when the witness decided to make notes on what he was seeing - the object reverted to its original red BOL format and continued its movement till it was out of sight. (26)

C26. Bristol, 1981-2. Currently under investigation by the PROBE team is a housewife who claims to be able to control the movement of UFOs. She has premonitions of their imminent appearance, which seems to indicate some kind of communication : and when they appear, they will move in whichever direction she requests, even though the request comes from someone else. Her family confirm her claim, and her husband, who like herself seems a thoroughly reliable witness, insists that the UFOs, though seen only as LITS, give a clear impression of being structured, spherical objects.

C27. Maryland USA : 16 July 1952. Two policemen saw a yellow light, just above ground level, heading directly for their patrol car. They took it to be an approaching vehicle, but it came on at them in the centre of the road, and they swerved to avoid a collision and halted at the edge of the road. Thereupon the BOL also stopped, and hovered in the light of their headlights, about seven metres in front of them. They moved slowly forward : the BOL retreated. They varied their speed : the BOL matched them for a while then, as though tired of the sport, it took itself off with a sudden burst of speed. (13)

As so often in BOL cases, the witnesses find themselves compelled to use phrases like 'playing a game', 'took itself off', which unavoidably imply consciousness on the part either of the object or of who/whatever is controlling it.

AVEYRON, FRANCE, Another picture. A BOL 'waits' at a crossroads, then 'follows' motorist. (cr. Lumieres dans la nuit)



In many cases we seem to detect evidence not simply of intelligence but also of purpose :

C28. New Mexico : summer 1953. Mrs Hight and her husband were prospecting for uranium in desert country. He was away on a week-long exploration trip when she became very ill and felt herself on the verge of death. 'As I lay there one afternoon wondering what would become of me, a small light appeared in one corner of the cabin. It grew in size, and within moments expanded into a large glowing light. It moved slowly towards me, changing from a solid ball into a geometric wheel which whirled through my body, leaving a wonderfully clean and refreshed sensation. I felt a surge of vitality and well-being. I arose and realised the light had completely restored my health'. (7c)

It would be easy enough to dismiss Mrs Hight's experience as the exteriorisation of an interior fantasy (not that that would make it any the less remarkable !), but the same could not have been true of this case :

C29. Egryn, Wales : 1905. In the course of a religious revival spanning several months, aerial lights appeared hovering over chapels where a prominent preacher, Mrs Mary Jones, was due to preach. They were seen by many people on many separate occasions, including hard-headed London journalists and other sceptics. The evidence, submitted to the Society for Psychical Research, leaves little doubt that the lights were a reality. (19)

The conclusion, that the BOLs were directly associated with Mary Jones, seems inescapable : their manifestations seem both controlled and purposeful. And yet there is a complication : lights, seemingly similar, had been observed in the same area long before Mary Jones' lifetime, and in no specific religious context. We can dismiss this as coincidence, or we may construct a hypothesis that the BOLs were native to the region, that most of their time they got on with their own affairs, but that they took a particular interest in Mary Jones and so manifested in this manner : if something along the latter lines is true, then we could go farther and surmise that it was the force of Mary Jones' enthusiasm which activated the BOLs, which not for the first time suggests a parallel with poltergeist manifestations in which the subject's emotional state seems to act as a trigger. Whatever the process, the evidence for both control and purpose is inescapable.

C30. Rangiroa, Pacific. This island is just one of many parts of the world in whose folklore BOLs play a part. Here the natives believe in a fireball named Kaha, half man and half animal, which is normally buried underground, but which emerges from time to time, flying to the tops of coconut trees, changing colour as it goes, and often described as having human features. It is interpreted as an omen of menace. (10)

The human features may reasonably be accounted for as some kind of hallucination, projected onto the phenomenon from the witness's unconscious in consequence of his beliefs about what the fireball is. A similar phenomenon occurs among UFO-witnesses who, while seeing the Moon or Venus, claim to see domes, windows, and even the faces of the crew. If such embellishments can be added to natural objects, no doubt they can also be added to BOLs : it is not unlikely, therefore, that many reports of structured UFOs in fact relate to simple BOLs.

Alternatively, however, we must at least consider the possibility that the BOL actually assumes a human aspect, in response to the expectations of the witness. Clearly BOLs have the capacity to alter their shape, or at any rate their apparent shape : knowing so little about them, we cannot set any limits to their ability to transform themselves. Consequently we should be prepared to admit the relevance of cases such as these :

C31. Sweden : 18th century. The psychic and mystic Swedenborg claimed to receive frequent visits from angels. He stated that, while approaching him, they often appeared as balls of light, and only later assumed their angelic form. (20)

C32. Bavaria, about 1950. A German lady, climbing in the Bavarian Alps, got lost and was in a dangerous situation. 'All of a sudden I noticed a sort of a big ball of light, and this condensed to the shape of a tall, rather chinese-looking gentleman... He bowed, spoke a few words, led me by a small path to the tourists' way, and disappeared as a ball of light'. (private letter)

Anomalous BOLs frequently occur during spiritualist seances, and are often the initial phase of materialisation. They also manifest in such spontaneous cases as this :

C33. Brussels : 24 January 1970. A M. Herbosch, walking in the street in early evening, saw at about 20 metres distance a sort of luminous spot on the ground, 7-8 metres long, 1.5 metres high. It grew brighter as he approached, and the colour became a phosphorescent green. At 12 metres distance it not only became still brighter but began to vibrate. It then proceeded to change shape to that of a bell, about 5 metres high : the inside seemed formed of thousands of tiny luminous particles which moved agitatedly in all directions, giving an impression of great nervousness. There was no heat, smell or sound, but it lit up all the neighbourhood. Then the object moved off along the ground and disappeared behind a mound. (12)

13 B L O B S

If something can change shape at will, can it be said to have a 'true' shape at all ? Several BOLs seem to be quite shapeless :

C34. Oxfordshire : winter 1976. Len Franklin saw an amoeba-like UFO with a bright middle, continually changing shape. Its size was about 10 cms, at arm's length. The background and stars could be seen through the object. After about 5 seconds the centre began to glow bright orange, and the shape became a clearly defined delta. Hitherto it had been moving at 3-4 mph, but now it shot off at tremendous speed. (8)

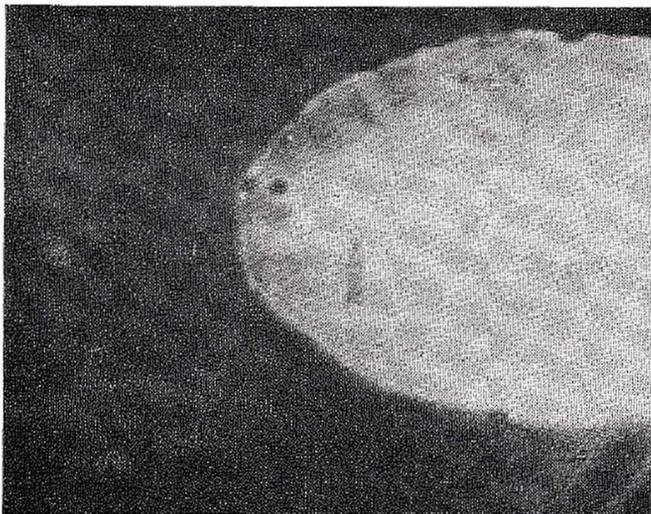
C35. Rhyl, Wales : 9 August 1981. More than fifty observers saw a UFO the size of a whole hand at arm's length, resembling a jellyfish. It was charcoal grey in colour, with internal multicoloured flashing lights : it changed shape continuously. It moved in a Z pattern, stopped, moved on, disappeared and reappeared, during a period of about 5 minutes. (21)

C36. Philadelphia : 26 September 1950. Patrolmen Collins & Keenan sighted an airborne object which fell to the ground while they watched from their patrol car. Examined by torchlight, the object was about 2 metres in diameter, with a misty purple glow. When Collins tried to pick it up, it dissolved in his hands leaving a sticky, odourless residue. The entire object evaporated before their eyes. (26)

C37. Miami : 28 February 1958. Something the size of a football fell on police detective Gallegos' back lawn. He, his wife and his mother ran out to find a ball about 50 cm long and 25 cm high, spread out on the ground, moving as if alive. It was clear like glass, glittered like crystal, and seemed to be made of thousands of tiny cells like a honeycomb : it pulsed over its entire body. 'We couldn't feel it. It was there, we could see it, but there was no sensation of touch when we poked our fingers into it'. He gathered a portion in a jar to take to the police station, but it evaporated during the 20 minute journey. (7d)

For what it's worth, this report sparked off a letter from a Mr Robertson of California, to the effect that 'Glop is a substance that people of our neighbouring planets are sending to help neutralise our contaminated atmosphere. Our angelic brothers in space are far superior to Earth people in wisdom, they love the people of Earth and consider helping us their duty to the Infinite Creator'. (7e)

14 ORGANIC UFOs



One of Trevor James Constable's photographs of an 'organic' UFO. Mojave Desert, California, 25th August 1957. The thing was invisible except to the camera; all the eye could see was a 'vibration'. (High-speed infra-red film).

As early as 1947 John Philip Bessor proposed an organic theory of UFOs, trying to convince the USAF that flying saucers are 'various species of extra-terrestrial, highly attenuated life-forms or craft propelled by telekinetic energy or by sheer will or thought. Possibly originating in the ionosphere, they have been forced to "migrate" to denser atmospheres periodically because of solar or cosmic disturbances. They are capable of changing shape in flight and possess the intelligence of the octopus, porpoise or chimpanzee'. (7j)

C38. Bessor's ideas were picked up by Trevor James Constable of New Zealand, who confirmed to his own satisfaction that some UFOs, at least, are invisible organic creatures inhabiting Earth's atmosphere. Under the right conditions they can be photographed on infra-red film, which reveals them as shapeless blobs. (3)

Constable's research seems to have been confined to non-interactive photography, combined with a deal of philosophising. If there is a physical basis to it, it remains unconfirmed by others, a curious by-way in the history of ufology.

15 CONCLUSIONS

The diversity of cases cited here - and they are just a handful, picked almost at random, from the great number that have been reported - demonstrates that it is unrealistic to look for a hard line between ball-of-light UFOs and other ball-of-light phenomena. At what height off the ground does a ghost light become a UFO? When does a fireball earn the label of ball lightning?

Clearly there are dangers in treating all these different reports as though they relate to a single phenomenon: yet I think we stand to learn more by doing that, than by treating them as separate, unrelated categories (even assuming we could agree on how to separate them!). These reports only start to make sense when we postulate the existence of some kind of creature or entity, inhabiting our atmosphere; possessing physical properties - albeit very different ones than those of any known earth creature; and endowed with a degree of intelligence, or controlled by someone/something possessing intelligence, which extends to the use of ESP.

This much, and no less than this, is dictated by the observed facts. From there on it is largely speculation, yet even then it can be speculation supported by reported facts. For example, we have good grounds for assuming at least an absence of malevolence towards humans, and there is good evidence to go further and attribute a positive benevolence. We have the right to assume an ability to respond to human minds, and there is evidence for a much greater concern with human affairs. Knowing as little about the creature as we do, we cannot place any limitations on its capabilities: it may, as Bessor theorises, possess the intelligence of a porpoise; it may have much more; or it may have intelligence of quite a different kind than anything we know.

Seen from the standpoint of, say, the New Scientist, a hypothesis such as this will seem so far-out as to deserve dismissal along with Cosmic Brothers or UFO bases in the Welsh Triangle. Certainly it is the most far-fetched hypothesis I personally have ever put onto paper. Yet I have done so only because the array of evidence seems to me to demand nothing less. For too long we have been trying to explain the unidentified in terms of the known, and it hasn't got us very far. I suggest that it is time we put aside our preconceptions, add up the evidence, and follow its implications wherever they lead us.

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CONGRESS 1983

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS - 1983

It is anticipated that BUFORA will hold its third International UFO Congress on the Bank Holiday weekend of August 1983 on 27 - 28 - 29 August. The expected venue is the Lorch Foundation, Lane End, near High Wycombe, Bucks. The proposed venue is about mid-way between London and Oxford and close to the M40 motorway. It is possible that this will be the first full three-day event to be arranged by the Association. It is hoped that by giving the dates comparatively early, overlap with other organisations can be avoided. A PICUR meeting is also planned.

Lionel Beer, FRAS, BUFORA, London.

ADVERTISEMENTS

PROBE & SCUFORI now have available their publication UFO/IFO: A PROCESS OF ELIMINATION. This booklet contains articles by experts in their own fields of study on the identification of supposed 'UFOs'; case reports where unknown objects were eventually tracked down and identified; and case reports where even after applying these rigorous techniques the object remains unidentified. Fully illustrated with photographs and diagrams, 44 pages, 21 cm x 15 cm. See back cover for further details.

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BOOKS

GEOFF BIRD & IAN MRZYGLOD

EXPLAINING THE UNEXPLAINED by Hans J. Eysenck and Carl Sargent, published by WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON. 25.5cm x 20cm, 192pp, fully illustrated. Price £9.95.

Paranormal research has always had its detractors, and a somewhat tarnished image has done much to hamper progress in the investigation of anomalous phenomena. Consequently, to the paranormal researcher, a request to review a book on the unexplained, especially when the title includes the word "explaining", written by two eminent scientists, sounds at least a small alarm bell. However, on reading this book the serious researcher is pleasantly surprised, for the authors have accumulated a mass of evidence which leads them to the conclusion that the scientist is duty-bound to examine such subjects as clairvoyance, telepathy etc., since the evidence for them is so strong. Subjects such as the above-mentioned are examined searchingly and evidence presented without fear or favour. The authors have put forward the strongest possible case for the parapsychologist having his place in serious paranormal research, and I would unhesitatingly recommend this book to all serious students and researchers in the field of anomalous phenomena. I particularly liked the chapter entitled "Who is Psychic?", for a critical examination of the human factor is meat to the serious investigator. The faith and scepticism question is tackled first of all, which makes for an honest introduction to this thorny question. The results of top-quality research in America and elsewhere are presented in a clear and concise manner, with an excellent use of statistics which characterizes the whole book. Social influence, personality, the brain-arousal theory and neuroticism are examined in a manner which will give the serious student an excellent introduction to a study of the human factor. Altered states of consciousness are investigated, although I feel the section on hypnosis could have been made more comprehensive, for this important and controversial subject merits close scrutiny from qualified commentators if only for the fact that it tends to invoke a fascination in the researcher which must be tempered with caution if that person goes on to become an investigator. UFOs are dealt with only fleetingly in the context of alleged spontaneous ESP, which is unfortunate since without being partisan I can surely say that ufology is an important if not vital facet in the study of anomalous phenomena. However, this criticism does not detract from the overall merit of EXPLAINING THE UNEXPLAINED, which earns a well-deserved place on the bookshelf of serious paranormal researchers and investigators. (GB)

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM MYSTERY by David Hughes, published by Gorgi, paperback, £1.75. This excellent book consists of fascinating and exhaustively researched material on a subject that has excited speculation from laymen and scientists, and believers and non-believers alike. The question of the Star of Bethlehem, as well as the Three Wise Men and the flight into Egypt are examined in a precise and methodical manner, backed by a wealth of relevant historical material to support the author's conclusions. Hughes concludes that the explanation for the Star of Bethlehem lies in a planetary conjunction between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces, thus destroying the faint hopes and beliefs within some people that the Star was a biblical UFO or spaceship, heralding the birth of Christ. This topic is brought up year after year, especially around Christmas time on 'The Sky at Night', but THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM MYSTERY offers it more thought than previously afforded by others. (IM)

SPACE WEAPONS, SPACE WAR by John W. Macvey, published by New English Library, p/b £1.75. This fascinating book examines the possibility of Earth having one day to face an invasion by advanced space aliens. Possible applications of super-sophisticated hardware such as teleportation, energy beams and the like are examined, and tactics and strategy discussed. This book certainly makes a change from the usual epistles on the horrors of nuclear war between the nations of Earth, and the book does explore some intriguing possibilities. However, much of this subject is pure speculation, and much of the technology described is impossible given the present level of scientific knowledge, although the author admits, for instance, that the concept of teleportation is far beyond our current frame of scientific reference. SPACE WEAPONS, SPACE WAR is an interesting book and we must hope that there are no envious extra-terrestrial eyes cast on our poor little orb, just as we must hope that the rulers of that same globe do not provoke a conflict that would leave Earth unable to support any life whatsoever. (GB)

THE INTERRUPTED JOURNEY by John G. Fuller, published by Corgi. Paperback, 392pp, £1.50
On the night of September 19th 1961, Betty and Barney Hill were driving back from Canada when they sighted a UFO. Later, under hypnosis, a remarkable tale arose which revealed that the couple were abducted aboard the UFO and medically examined. This accounted for the missing two hours of their journey, a mystery that had puzzled the Hills when first arriving home in New Hampshire. Or so the story has been understood for twenty years. In fact, this book may be recounting the most incredible non-event in UFO history, as researchers are still investigating this case in every detail, uncovering evidence that may possibly show that there was no UFO experience at all. It has been postulated that the 'UFO' as sighted by the Hills may have been the planet Jupiter and the subsequent tale was nothing except pure fantasy. (Refer to this issue's CASE CLOSED where the Moon initiated another fantasy). Nevertheless, this book is good reading material, and to be fair to all concerned, it does publish the facts 'as known'. Whatever the final outcome of the Hill case, if there is to be one, Fuller's contribution is a useful one. (IM)

UFOs-~~AFRICAN~~ ENCOUNTERS by Cynthia Hind. Published by Gemini, PO Box MP 49, Mount Pleasant, Salisbury, Zimbabwe, Africa. Paperback, 236pp, illustrated with photographs. South Africa has had its fair share of major UFO encounters over the years, but the UK press understandably do not offer anything more than a brief mention in the newspapers when something occurs. Take for instance the example of Meagan Quezet, a housewife in her thirties who reportedly encountered a landed UFO in her with her 12 year old son in her home town of Krugersdorp. This case was extensively investigated by the author, who is Co-ordinator for Africa in MUFON, and further enquiries through the aid of hypnosis (which the author does not wholeheartedly rely on) revealed conversations with 'aliens'. Although it was reported in the British press, the only article can be traced to a small half-dozen line entry in a popular daily. Another case which has received notoriety outside of South Africa, and this is given coverage in two chapters. That case being of course, the Elizabeth Klarer encounter. There is little doubt that endless hours have gone into compiling information for this book, and the information is not distorted by wild theories that some writers easily manage. UFOs-~~AFRICAN~~ ENCOUNTERS is not price-marked, but it should nevertheless be worth enquiring about. (IM)

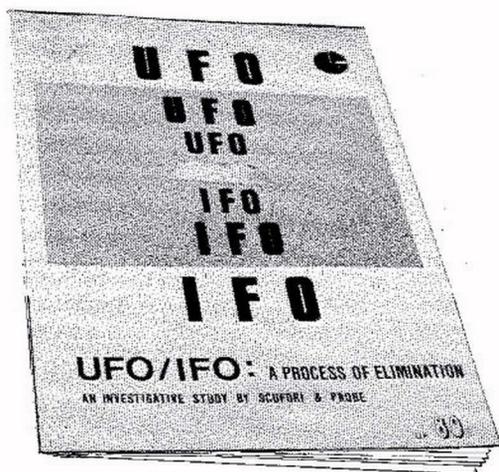
Finally, two books which have nothing to do with ufology as such, but will probably sell more copies than any serious book on the subject. First off, there is E.T. THE EXTRA-~~TERRESTRIAL~~ by William Kotzwinkle which is the-book-of-the-film by Steven Spielberg. This film marks Spielberg's return to the UFO scene and I am sure that it will not need any extra publicity here. Similarly, FLYING SAUCERS is a compilation of SF tales, each of which is UFO-orientated and edited by Isaac Asimov amongst others. That name should guarantee large sales. Both these books are at the moment published in the USA.

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