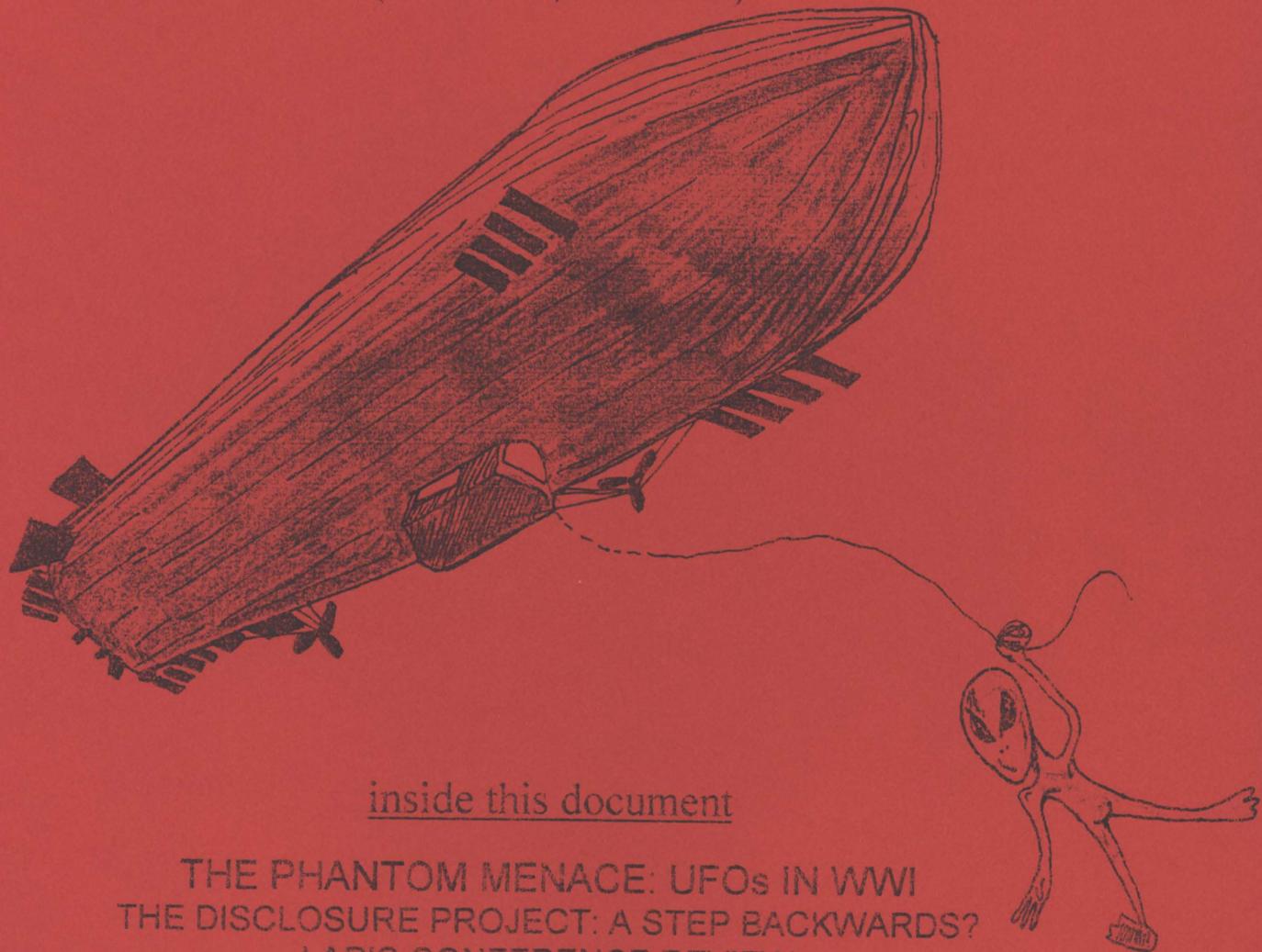


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YORKSHIRE UFO SOCIETY

PROJECT RED BOOK

(Vol.4 # 12, June 2001)



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THE DISCLOSURE PROJECT: A STEP BACKWARDS?
LAPIS CONFERENCE REVIEW

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"...Because it's a spot-monster from outer space. I didn't say that..."

THE PHANTOM MENACE: UFOS IN WORLD WAR ONE? (part one)

BY DR DAVID CLARKE

"...the first days of [the First World] war passed, and the Zeppelins did not come. Not the real ones, that is, though fear created their image in many places. Zepps had been definitely seen off the coast, over the Channel, shadowing ships at sea...Londoners watched the sky uneasily and lay at night waiting for the new terror of twentieth century war to come, snarling and roaring overhead..."

Kenneth Poolman, *Zeppelins over England*.

The study of UFO reports is a relatively new phenomenon. Today UFOlogy is by and large the province of enthusiastic amateurs who have little if any grounding in the social sciences. The vast majority of UFOlogists accept the raw data at face value within the context of the predominant cultural mindset which interprets aerial phenomena in terms of alien or paranormal visitations. Few are aware, or would even acknowledge the role played by socio-cultural factors and perceptual psychology upon the form and content of the "testimony" which provides the raw material used by UFOlogists. Fewer still are aware of the historical precedents for rumour inspired panics even in the recent past which bear close comparison with the waves of media-inspired UFO reports which became such a feature of late 20th century culture.

Before the mid-20th century there were no UFOlogists to process and interpret reports of unusual objects in the sky. This allows us to examine what have been erroneously described in recent times as the first "UFO waves" of the late 19th and early 20th century without the distractions produced by the belief-systems imposed by contemporary commentators. The "phantom airship" sightings of this period were not UFO waves in the form we are familiar with today, but rumour-inspired social panics. I believe that both were and are created and sustained by similar underlying human factors. During the Edwardian era speculation about life on Mars and other worlds was confined to the new fiction genre which became known as sci-fi. As a result novels such as H.G.Well's *War of the Worlds* (published in 1898) did not greatly influence the interpretation of aerial phenomena as science fiction would in the later "flying saucer" era.

In Britain during the six-year period beginning in 1908 there was a more immediate perceived

threat in the form of the approaching war with Germany which would result in the slaughter of millions in the mud and trenches of Europe's battlefields. The decade which preceded the outbreak of the First World War had seen a great escalation of both diplomatic and military tension between the empires of Great Britain and Imperial Germany. This competition manifested itself in the form of the arms race and the rapid production of dreadnought warships. From 1909 there was growing public concern about the threat of a German invasion of Britain and hysterical fears that a highly-organised and widespread spy ring was operating to prepare the ground for that invasion. Alongside the spy mania was the firmly held belief that the Germans were so advanced in the field of aviation that their Zeppelin airships were capable of visiting England; indeed many believed they had *already* done so secretly under cover of the night. Rumours tend to divide society into two camps composed of sceptics and believers, as we find today in UFOlogy. The Zeppelin rumour was so ingrained upon the British psyche before the outbreak of World War One that "eyewitness testimony" - in many ways identical in its form and content to modern UFO reports - was often produced as "proof" in a fashion which appears all too familiar to us today.

These latent fears were encouraged by politicians and their friends in the Press at a period when the wireless telegraph was in its infancy. Newspapers and word-of-mouth were the primary source of public information in pre war Britain, and the rumours concerning Germany's intentions were easily manipulated by the state. Newspapers transmitted rumours which soon became rooted in popular belief, making it acceptable for patriotic citizens to report their "sightings" without fear of ridicule. In one specific incident, the claimed overflight of Sheerness Naval dockyard by a Zeppelin in

1912, there is good evidence to believe the initial rumour was concocted by politicians to warn the population of the coming war and the possibility of aerial bombardment which was expected. Those fears were not entirely without foundation, as by the Armistice of 1918 there had been 57 airship raids on Britain which killed 564 people and left thousands more injured and homeless; many hundreds more died in the raids by the first German heavy bombers on London and southeast England in the last two years of the war. Although these casualties have been overshadowed by the horrors of the Second World War, this was the first time in the world that a civilian population had been systematically terrorised by aerial bombing.

The first airship raid took place in East Anglia in January 1915, but such was the fear and expectation of attack from the air that reports of "phantom Zeppelins" poured into military headquarters from the first day that war was declared. From 1913 the image of the Zeppelin had become transformed into a "folk devil" comparable in terror to Napoleon's "invasion barges" which had alarmed an earlier generation. Upon the outbreak of the war persistent reports and rumours describing airships and airplanes flying secret night-time missions began to reach the War Office, particularly from northwest England and the Scottish borders. On 7 August lights were put out in the important Vickers shipyard at Barrow in Cumbria when an airship was reported in the vicinity, and several soldiers opened fire at unidentified flying objects they believed were enemy aircraft in the tense days which followed the war declaration. At this stage the British public had been psychologically prepared for the arrival of the Zeppelins, either to take part in spying upon Britain's coastal defences or in attempts to bomb military targets and instil fear and panic into the civilian population. A frame of reference, comparable to the modern belief in alien visitors, was firmly established. Rumours became transformed into belief systems and soon "eyewitness" testimony appeared in support of these beliefs.

From the opening of hostilities, reports of unidentified aircraft and "floating lights" in the sky, which were supposedly the work of spies signalling to the enemy, were received by military sources from various parts of the British Isles. The responsibility for investigating them fell upon two senior War Office officials, Lt Colonel W.S. Brancker the Assistant Director of Military Aeronautics and

Lieutenant Colonel Vernon Kell of Military Observation Department Five. Kell was head of the Home division of the newly-formed Secret Service Bureau renamed MI5 in 1916. Brancker and Kell supplied each other with copies of incoming reports and decided which ones were worthy of further investigation. The extensive files preserved at the Public Record Office illustrate the close liaison between MI5 and the police which continues to exist today. From the outbreak of the war, Chief Constables were directed to report sightings of unidentified aircraft directly to "K" at MI5 who was worried about the growing numbers of the reports. On a number of occasions senior detectives and Intelligence officers were sent to interview witnesses who reported sightings of unidentified aircraft or moving lights in the sky.

On several occasions during August and September 1914 reports of nocturnal visits by airships to the northwest coast led Brancker and Kell to order widescale searches of remote areas of northwest England and Scotland. Soldiers, yeomanry and boy scouts were ordered to search Lakeland fells and parts of the Lancashire Pennines because it was feared the Germans had established a secret landing strip for a Zeppelin somewhere in the mountains. On 16 August Lieutenant B.C. Hucks of the Royal Flying Corps flew a Bleriot II monoplane across the length of Pennine hills from Sheffield north to Penrith searching for the airship's "secret base." On 19 August he telegraphed to the War Office "...have searched the hills touching the following places - Lancaster, Sedbergh, Hawes, Askrigg, Brough and Appleby but with no results, am now at Penrith. Many reports reach the Chief Constable here of mysterious aircraft." Hucks left Penrith for Newcastle on 24 August and immediately the Chief Constable of Cumberland telegraphed to Brancker reporting "...an aircraft seen from 9.30 to 12.45 last night east of Carlisle flashing red and white lights...11.45 another aircraft seen travelling very fast, came apparently near the first one from the south." Brancker wrote: "I cannot account for this. It seems unlikely that hostile aircraft would use lights." He wrote privately to the Chief Constable asking "who actually saw these aircraft and what reliance can be placed upon their reports."

Another telegram, from the Chief Constable of Lancashire, described a sighting of an aircraft carrying red and green lights and occasionally flashing a very brilliant searchlight which was both seen and heard above Ashton-under-Lyne

as it flew towards Manchester on the night of 6 September. A War Office file report states bluntly: "...this was not one of our aircraft either naval or military. He [Brancker] cannot understand why lights should be shown unless for signalling to agents below...suggest someone be sent north to investigate closely these repeated reports from Lancashire."

At the same time Kell at MI5 had received reports from commanding officers both in Ireland and Scotland reporting "strong rumours" that hostile aircraft were operating from secret bases in the remote hills in Galloway and asking for searches of the suspected areas by the Royal Flying Corps. Kell wrote that "lights from an aircraft have been repeatedly reported at night in the neighbourhood of the First of Forth...[and] I am getting nightly reports from the Chief Constable of Lancashire that enemy airships are constantly being sighted between Liverpool, Manchester and Preston. This might be the same aircraft?" On 21 September Captain G.H. Cox of the Royal Flying Corps was ordered to investigate these rumours and visited Edinburgh, Dumfries and Liverpool before completing his mission. Unfortunately, the results are not known because his report cannot be found among the military intelligence records preserved at the public record office.

Further bizarre rumours appeared in 1915 at the time of the Zeppelin raid upon Norfolk on the night of 19 January. During the raid, the German airship L4 came over the coastline south of Mundesley at 7.55pm and set a course to attack King's Lynn while its sister ship L3 crossed the coast five miles further south just after 8pm and bombed Great Yarmouth, killing two people and injuring others. During the night there were no raids by German aeroplanes which did not have sufficient range to reach the Norfolk coastline, and no British aircraft were airborne from the Royal Naval Air Service base at Yarmouth. However, coastguards claimed they saw four Zeppelins cross the coast, while fishermen put the number at six. In Yarmouth itself, police and other witnesses swore the raiders were aeroplanes and one report asserted "...the night was fairly clear and the outlines of the machines were visible; two of them came in from the direction of the sea and dropped four bombs...at 11.45 another came over the town from inland. It was flying very fast and disappeared over the sea without dropping any bombs."

Even more bizarre was the story sent to *The Times* by the King's Lynn MP Mr Holcombe-Ingleby which claimed the raiding Zeppelins had been accompanied by two mysterious motorcars which used searchlights to help them locate targets. The occupants of these cars "occasionally sent upwards double flashes and on one occasion these flashes lit up a church on which the Zeppelin attempted to drop a bomb." The MP went further, claiming that in King's Lynn itself the course of the Zeppelin was shadowed by "a car with powerful lights" which at one point were directed upon the town's Grammar School. "The car then stopped in the town and attention was called to the lights as a breach of the regulations," he asserted. "Having put them out, the driver turned his car quickly round and made off at a rapid pace for the open country."

Investigations later showed these "eyewitness reports" had no basis in reality. An official War Office history of the raid completed in June 1918 found no evidence to support the popular belief that cars were used to help the Zeppelins to navigate. "There were a good many reports of signalling to the enemy from motorcars during this raid, as also during other raids during 1915," it concluded. "They do not, however, seem to have been substantiated." Further phantom air-raids were reported in February 1916 when lights in railway stations and munitions factories were extinguished after false reports that Zeppelins were attacking Britain spread like wildfire through the population. Although the real raids when they came were small in comparison with bombing during the Second World War, they brought panic and great concern at the highest levels of Government which led directly to the creation of the RAF as an efficient defence against aerial attack.

Dealing with reports of "phantom aircraft" were an additional duty for MI5's staff which wasted manpower and added to the burden of providing an effective defence for the exposed British coastline. The surviving records from this period make it clear that the Directorate of Military Intelligence, as it became known in 1916, concluded the vast majority of the reported sightings of unidentified aircraft and moving lights in the sky were "false" and had been generated by rumour alone. In May 1916 the General Headquarters of the Home Forces issued a confidential Intelligence Briefing which summarised the findings of its investigations into reports of enemy signalling activity which was widespread throughout the first two years of the war. Under the section

"moving lights in the air" the report says phenomena such as these "are often difficult to explain satisfactorily" but notes that the planets and very bright stars, searchlights and optical illusions all played a role in creating them. It added that "at least in one case there are grounds for believing that these lights have been based on hitherto improperly observed phenomena of marsh gas or 'ignis fatuus.'"

The circular concluded that "there is no evidence on which to base a suspicion that this class of enemy activity ever existed" and states that the percentage of cases satisfactorily cleared up was 89 percent. This is a figure which bears close comparison with the percentage of contemporary UFO reports which have been categorised as "explained" in mundane terms today, and suggests that similar factors are at work in both contexts. Military intelligence identified the important role of rumour in the transmission of false reports of air raids and enemy signalling activity and the dangers this posed for the effective defence of the country in time of war. Newspapers were the main medium for rumour transmission, and action was quickly taken to severely restrict what journalists were allowed to publish concerning air-raids after 1916. By the end of the war, censorship was so strict that newspapers were not even allowed to publish the name of cities and towns which had suffered damage as a result of Zeppelin raids. In March 1916 the General Headquarters of the War Office went further, issuing an order attacking "the groundless rumours regarding the presence of hostile airships over Great Britain (which) have of late become very frequent." It imposed severe measures to combat "irresponsible" people who it said were helping to spread disruptive rumours, ordering that "persons originating such reports or assisting to circulate the same should be dealt with under the Defence of the Realm Regulations." It is not surprising that the official records contain few reports of "phantom" airships after this order was implemented.

Copyright David Clarke

(Part two of this fascinating article will be in the next issue of Project Red Book)

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UFO CENTRAL

By

Jonathan Slater

I received the following UFO sightings after I advertised on the 'Knowhere' boards on the Internet. This is a place where you can find long lost relatives and advertise anything you want.

I placed an advert saying, *"Have you! Seen any mysterious lights or strange objects in our skies lately? A non-profit making scientific research group requires serious reports."*

BIRMINGHAM SIGHTING

The location was Pershore Street in Birmingham, just before the main roundabout on the inner ring, floating over the police station.

It was on Easter Monday morning just before 7.00am. I went out to catch the bus to the city centre.

It was a cloudy day and when I arrived at the bus stop there was a Chinese couple waiting also the girl (named Sunny) said "what's that?" and pointed to the sky.

I looked to where she was pointing and there was a dark squarish object floating along. At first I said it was a bag or something caught in the wind but then another appeared.

And another etc.... within a couple of minutes the sky was full of them. Sunny counted them and said there was 26 altogether. I was just standing dumbstruck.

They seemed to be floating along. It was as if we were standing under water and they were bobbing along on the surface. One of the objects was bobbing more erratically than the others and as it rocked to and fro, we saw that the top end was of a golden yellow type colour.

They moved at a steady pace, not too fast. They seemed to be made up of four squares with maybe a circle in the middle (not sure about the circle). The corners were rounded. I have the Chinese couples' phone number, although I have not contacted them since that day.

This wasn't a scary situation, just sort of puzzling. I became a bit shaky later when I fully realised there was no explanation. I contacted the police and civil aviation authority but they were not interested.

have you heard of anything like these before or do you have any explanations for me?

I am glad to have had this experience but it is also quite dismayed that my questions about it will never be answered.

All the best

(Norman Peacock)

SCOTLAND SIGHTING

Ordnance Survey Map No.26 Grid Ref:
NH598575

I noticed on a website that you were seeking information on UFO sightings, well I can help you out here.

I live in a rural part of the Highlands about twelve miles North of Inverness. Returning home one evening in the hours of darkness by car, as I approached the lane where my house is situated, I noticed a dull glowing light (not too dissimilar to the glow of glo-worm), travelling about twenty feet from the ground and some one hundred feet away.

It was about the size of a tennis ball travelling parallel to the ground in a straight line at a speed of around fifteen-mph. As the object was approaching the field behind my house, I raced home and then scanned the field.

Even at a distance of several hundred yards it was easy to locate it, the same light intensity as though it was right close to me, still at the same height and on a straight line course.

I had a clear view for quite some distance over a neighbouring field before it went out of sight. This was my one and only sighting and some things you never forget especially the unexplainable.

(Phil Richardson)

THE DISCLOSURE PROJECT – A step backwards?

By Dave Baker

Thursday, May 10, 2001, ought to have been one of the most momentous dates in human history; or according to CSETI's Dr. Steven Greer, who conceptualised and hosted the event "...a moment of historic, indeed planetary significance."

Greer had hired the main ballroom of the National Press Club in Washington DC, to be the venue of his long-gestated baby 'The Disclosure Project', his attempt to lift the lid on the U.S. and indeed the world-wide cover-up of the existence of extraterrestrial life and their activities on our planet. The two hour press conference was broadcast live via the Internet and reached an estimated 250,000 people, although some gremlins in the system were attributed not to server problems of computer glitches, but to an attempt by the ultra-black cover-up agencies to jam the signal.

And perhaps 'They' had good reason. At the conference, military insiders promised to open up a real can of worms; the world would hear of intercepted UFOs, crash/retrieval teams, back-engineered alien technology, 'free-energy' and 'anti-gravity' machines kept from the public, hybridisation of human and alien genes from abductions, and an on-going dialog between human and alien representatives.

Steven Greer, a Charlottesville, West Virginia emergency room physician, is the director of CSETI (Centre for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence) The group, formed by Greer in 1991, describes itself as; "a world-wide organisation dedicated to establishing peaceful and sustainable relations with extra-terrestrial lifeforms". The group will be familiar to viewers of such US television shows as *Sightings* for their attempts at contacting alien spacecraft by standing in deserted UFO 'hotspots' and telepathically beaming messages of peace and love, with the aid of sounds allegedly recorded in the middle of crop circles, into the night sky. At the same time, other CSETI members flash high-powered torches into the sky in an attempt to convince UFOs to land. Although they have never succeeded in taking this idea to it's Spielberg-influenced conclusion, they do claim

that hovering UFOs have flashed back, 'communicating' with the skywatchers via light signals. They have even extended J. Allen Hynek's classic classification system to include a CES: communication with UFOs and their occupants.

Several years ago, Greer and his associates in CSETI started The Disclosure Project, in which they invited experts from "military, government or government contractor personell" to come forward and spill the beans about what they know about the alien presence and the Governmental cover-up. According to Greer, around 400 people came forwards, a quarter of these agreeing to make testimonies before video camera.

Although many of those who came forward had incredible stories to tell, many more – the *real* "deep throats", were either unwilling to speak openly about what they knew, or were unable to come forwards at all because of security oaths. Many of these "deep cover" operatives feared prosecution – 25 years or more in jail - if they spoke of what they knew. It was Greer's hopes that if enough evidence could be gathered by those who *were* willing to speak openly, the US Congress could be persuaded to hold open hearings and offer these other witnesses immunity from prosecution.

Greer's opening gambit of the Disclosure Project was this press conference, at which 20 of his willing whistle-blowers would start the ball rolling. Each of his guests was allowed ten minutes to put their case forward, although Greer presented extracts from some 70 witness statements in his summary.

The witnesses who spoke at the conference included John Callahan, a former Division Chief of the Accidents and Investigations Branch of the US Federal Aviation Authority. Callahan related a tale from 1986, in which a Japanese Airlines 747 was trailed by a UFO for over half an hour, before turning it's attention to a United Airlines flight, which it followed until it landed. This UFO was confirmed by both air and ground-based radar.

According to him, an emergency meeting was held the following day with representatives of the CIA, FBI and the President's Scientific Study Team.

Also present was retired Air Force Lt. Col. Charles L. Brown, who had run a study of UFO sightings and had seen two UFOs himself, Graham Bethune, a retired Navy pilot who witnessed a circle of lights with a dome in Iceland in 1951, and Robert Salas, a retired Air Force captain, who told of a "bright, glowing red object" which hovered outside a nuclear weapons site in Montana in 1967 and caused the weapons into a "no go" condition.

There were other claims too, some old hat to seasoned UFO researchers, such as the story that the newly inaugurated President Jimmy Carter, who had made a pre-election promise to "find out the truth about UFOs" was refused access to top-secret files by the then director of the CIA, George Bush.

Many tales revolved around the notion that the cover-up and alien-related projects, whether crash-retrievals, back-engineering or alien liaisons, are implemented by ultra-secret compartmentalised groups within the government and military, who are answerable to no-one but themselves and that even the President is "out of the loop", with the exceptions of those such as Bush the elder, Reagan and Eisenhower.

Another of Greer's guests, 'space missile defence consultant' Carol Rosin, told the audience that in the 1970s, Werner Von Braun, the German rocket scientist who developed the V-2 rocket, warned her that the Americans would attempt to control space in order to defend itself from such threats as other nations on Earth, rogue, planet-destroying asteroids, and hostile ETs.

Greer claims, however, that the verdict of most of his whistle-blowers is that the aliens mean us no harm, and that president Bush's desire to implement the multi billion dollar National Missile Defence System (NMDS), is part of a plot to defend the Earth from otherwise friendly alien spacecraft. Greer is far from happy about this. "Our visitors may be quite neutral but may not be so happy about our military adventures." Greer said.

A fly in the ointment for many UFO researchers, if not journalists or the general public - was the inclusion of one 'key' witness, Clifford Stone, a retired U.S. Army

sergeant. Stone, if we are to believe him, has been involved in more UFO and alien black-op shenanigans than *The X-Files* Cigarette Smoking Man. Stone's claims include seeing actual aliens; both dead and alive in crash/retrieval operations he was part of - that there are more than 57 alien species visiting our planet, including three varieties of "Greys", and that many of these species are humanoid, at least one completely indistinguishable from humans.

UFO researcher and author Kevin Randle had a lot to say about Stone, and none of it good. In a posting to UFO-Updates, Randle said,

"...(Stone claims that 4 years of his 22 ½ years in the military were spent in Vietnam)... I must say that makes him one of the men who spent the most time there. Even Special Forces troops rarely could relate more than 3 tours, yet Stone has four. I only managed one.

"When I first met him, he showed me the sticker for 'on base privileges' that was on the front bumper of his car. He asked me why, if he was really a sergeant, his was blue because blue was reserved for officers. I didn't tell him that about five years earlier they changed the system so that all the stickers were blue, and the colour code had been reduced to the little sticker that named the base. Officers were blue and NCOs had red, and the base sticker Stone had was red..."

Randle is not the only one who doubts the claims of Clifford Stone. Don Ecker, in the October 1998, Volume 13, No. 6 issue of *UFO*, points out that if Stone had actually done what he claimed, he would have been AWOL, at the very least, and so shot full of holes that he would have whistled when he walked.

Ecker has little time for the claims of Carol Rosin either, and cites an interview with Von Braun from the early 1960s, in which he answers a question about UFOs by stating that the only ones he knew about were the ones his wife threw when she got really mad!

So what are we to make of all this? There are already a number of conspiracy theories floating around,

*That there is some truth to the alien cover-up, and that deep-cover operatives such as Stone have infiltrated Greer's confidence in order to be later exposed, and thus debunk the whole notion of cover-ups and alien activity.

- That the idea of an alien threat has been implemented in order to justify the NMDS and help the USA control space.

I'm sure you can think of some yourself.

In essence, none of the speakers disclosed anything that was new or earth-shattering; or at least, nothing that was verifiable. Randle has done much investigating into Stone's past, and found nothing to verify his wild claims. If Randle can do this, then so can anyone who can be bothered to do so. And down will come Greer's house of cards.

The worry of most researchers is that *if* there is any truth to any of these stories, and *if* there are other witnesses who are awaiting a chance to freely and safely come forward, the Disclosure Project has destroyed any chance they will ever be taken seriously, or that a similar project will ever reach Congress.

UFO - IS THIS THE BEST PROOF YET?

(*London Daily Star, Friday, June 1, 2001*)

This picture could be the best evidence we've had that there really is life out there in space. Even NASA experts want to see the amazing video footage, which shows a three-mile-wide UFO hovering over the Derbyshire countryside.

And it has earned the housewife who filmed it £20,000 from an American TV company. The sighting is among 20 which have been made in a tiny village UFO hotspot.

Housewife Sharon Rowlands has pocketed £20,000 for video footage of a UFO that has stunned American space scientists. She was filming throughout her close encounter with a flashing object up to three miles wide as it hovered over her Derbyshire village for six minutes.

The American TV company that paid her the fee has described the film as one of the most important UFO sightings ever captured. Officials at NASA have asked to examine the footage, now locked in a bank vault in California, before it is screened world-wide.

They believe it shows the same type of craft

As Kevin Randle so succinctly puts it:

"The real point is if this is the caliber of Greer's insiders, then they will be exposed quickly. It's just as obvious that Greer and his team do not bother to investigate the claims being made. When they are exposed, we all look as if we have no powers of discrimination and that we all believe these tales. This is what happens to us every time we begin to make some progress. People leap on the bandwagon and we are all tarred with the same brush when these tales collapse as they always do. It won't take the journalistic community long to discover that some of these people just do not have the credentials they claim if they bother to check. Greer seems to have created a forum that received a great deal of attention and it will all unravel when some of these people are exposed. I hate to see a lot of hard work go down because someone needs his or her fifteen minutes in the limelight."

once spotted by their own cameras during a space shuttle mission.

Sharon, who lives with husband Hayden, 45, in Bonsall, Derbyshire, said: "I was a complete and utter disbeliever, but the evidence of my own eyes made me think again. I've watched all the UFO programmes. If there is such a thing as a UFO, this is as good a photo as you'll get."

She used her camcorder to video the mystery craft, which looked like a giant disc with a bite taken out. The UFO appeared to expand then get smaller as it hovered in the sky about two miles from her home. It was covered with yellow, orange and blue lights, and had a darker centre. It beamed pulses of light before blasting away in a red flash.

The Met Office have confirmed there were no freak weather conditions that night to explain the sighting.

Sharon said: "It was huge. Through the camera lens, it looked like it was going to hit me. It was like nothing I've ever seen before." Her encounter means her village now ranks alongside the Mexican desert as a UFO hotspot, with 20 reported sightings over Bonsall in the past few months.

One woman who reported seeing a UFO over

the village just weeks ago said: "The only thing I can liken it to is a huge chandelier."

Paul Hannan, 37, of nearby Bakewell, saw a dome-shaped craft in February that "seemed to be dancing in the sky."

And a 34-year-old man from nearby Wirksworth who saw a similar craft a few weeks later said: "It frightened me because I couldn't explain it. I'd never been a believer in UFOs before - but I am now."

Robert Kiviat, whose California-based TV firm Kiviat Productions paid £20,000 for Sharon's film, said he'd been asked to show it to NASA specialist Dr Bruce Macab¹. [sic]

Mr Kiviat said: "The image is the same as the one taken by NASA's own cameras. It is one of the top five pieces of footage ever taken."

On the same day, an opposing article appeared in *The Daily Express*. After debunking a number of famous UFO photographs, the paper quoted Dr Stuart Clark, an astrophysicist from the University of Hertfordshire, who gave his view of Sharon Rowlands video footage: "...almost certainly a hoax." he said, "...if an object of this size really *was* hovering above a village, people would be able to corroborate the sighting. For it to have moved so quickly it would have had to have been travelling faster than the speed of sound, which would have produced a sonic boom that would have woken up half the Derbyshire Dales. The way it changes size is consistent with this image being some form of reflection, either from a window or the internal mechanisms in the video camera."

UFO researcher Martin Jeffrey, has been investigating this recent crop of sightings in the Dales, and is less impressed. He considered the UFO could well be the lights of an aircraft filmed out of focus.

Having seen only the photograph and not the video, it strikes me that this could well be the lens of the video camera itself. This has happened on a number of cases before of so-called 'classic' UFO footage, and can usually be detected by taking the camcorder apart and examining the lens. Although the shape is generally diamond shaped, Clas Svahn of

UFO-Sweden has 'UFO' video-footage which appears to show a triangular orange object with rows of 'lights', but which was conclusively proved to be the camcorder lens.

We will have to wait until we see this footage for ourselves to make up our own minds, but as Kiviat now owns the rights, we may not see it in the UK until it appears on SKY.

It will be particularly interesting to see what Bruce Maccabee has to say about it; although many people may argue about his views on Ed Walter's Gulf Breeze photos, Bruce has exposed a number of hoaxes and misidentifications, such as the infamous Mexico City 'domed saucer' footage and generally his work garners some respect. Of course, having paid out £20,000, will Kiviat release Bruce's opinions if they are in the negative?

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 10 July, 2001

7:00pm – 10:00 pm

THE THREE CRANES

Queen Street

Sheffield City Centre

¹ They mean 'Maccabee'. Jourmos, huh?

LAPIS –

Review of Saturday's events

By Adam Bradley (YUFOS)

Saturday, May 6th, 2001 was a fresh and sunny day, the roads were clear and the journey was smooth and uneventful. Until we arrived at Lesters house and broke into two groups, it then became an hilarious comedy of overtaking each other on the motorway, getting lost, catching up with each other then getting lost again.

We eventually arrived in Preston (at least I think it was Preston, the name began with a 'P' anyway²) at the university building where the LAPIS convention was being held. It was a neat modern building, placed as it was among other neat modern university buildings which in there turn were placed next to derelict council flats. The entrance was large and bright and lined with tables. Books on one, various souvenirs and toys on another (these ranged from crystals and 'grey' alien key rings to *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* figures). The stall holders watched us mill around for a while before we set out in a random direction, then one of them leapt to his feet and advised us of the correct direction and branded us with a small green ink stamp in the design of a 'grey' alien (who would have guessed?).

We entered a very large and very dark amphitheatre, *UFO Magazine's* Graham Birdsall was in the middle of answering a question from the floor. It was clear from his tone that he was mightily pissed off about something, his voice boomed across the hall and I later learned that he was addressing an article he'd read in a popular tabloid recently. Apparently the reporter had claimed that the field of UFO study was all but dead with the instances of sightings down and one of the largest UFO study organisations disbanded. He explained in detail how this wasn't the case with sightings up and the UFO group in question being about four members strong at its height. It was definitely an enduring image of the day; he's a large man and he spoke with a great deal of passion, impressive whether you believe/agree with him or not.

After this tirade against all things skeptical the presenter for the day stepped up and announced the first speaker.

DR DAVE CLARKE

Dave Clarke's talk was entitled *The Phantom Menace*, a talk on First World War UFO sightings. It kicked off with an OHP slide of a magazine cover which showed an impressive looking airship with the caption 'Have you seen the airships'. He explained that during the build up to the First World War nocturnal lights were being witnessed along with strange cigar shaped objects during the day across the UK. He displayed various newspaper clippings illustrating the fear and paranoia present in a pre-war Britain. In this environment these lights were being reported as German airships spying on the British public, occasions of the strange speaking inhabitants disembarking were also being reported. There were even claims that the military had sightings of these craft and were covering up contact with the pilots.

Moving onto a specific case of unknown aerial phenomenon, Dave spoke about the disappearance of 266 officers in Gallipoli. Led by Colonel H Beauchamp they moved into a particularly hazardous region of Gallipoli. He pushed them on until they reached some woods where they disappeared. According to some sources the disappearance was accompanied by an eerie cloud that enveloped the battalion. Another claimed that a loaf-shaped object appeared above the woods. Dave's investigation revealed several discrepancies with this tale, one being that the battalion reported in the alleged incident, the 4th Norfolks, weren't actually in the area at the time. However he found another battalion were- the 1st- and dozens of bodies belonging to this battalion were found by the military slightly beyond the woods behind Turkish lines, in all likelihood their retreat was cut off and they were ambushed when they emerged from the woods.

He then went on to 'The Angel of Mons', a popular paranormal case, where the two core, veterans of south Africa ran into 150,000 Germans outnumbering them 2 to 1 in Mons.

² This is a reference to Adam's previous conference review, which was held in Chorley, but – according to Adam – was held in Cottingley.

Battle ensued but during it a flash of light halted play and the Germans retreated. Some claim to have seen angels, while the french claimed to have seen Joan of arc over the battlefield. Investigations into this have revealed discrepancies, one of which was the fact that a story by Arthur Machin, a writer of paranormal fiction, was written just before the event and described ghosts of bowmen appearing in battle and forcing off the enemy setting the image firmly in the public imagination. However a gunner wrote to a paper at the time claiming he was present during the battle and he witnessed a strange stillness in the air followed by the appearance of horsemen in the sky causing the Germans to flee. Possibly another problem with this story is no one knows exactly where and when it happened. He was satisfied that the battle did occur however and that strange lights may have appeared over the battlefield but probably the main point of interest was the way it was interpreted afterward.

He moved back to airships and sightings pre, during and post World War One. For instance a sighting of an airship over London that travelled distances and speeds beyond those any airship of the time were capable of and a sighting of a genuine German airship.³

He finished the talk by taking questions from the floor. For me it was one of the most interesting talks of the day. I have been interested in the paranormal in general for many years but I still get bored with the subject every now again when all you hear is either UFOs are alien or they don't exist, that ghosts are the spirits of the dead or they don't exist, etc. What this talk did for me was put the mystery back into the subject. He did explain the case of the vanished battalion pretty convincingly but the Mons incident and the various airship sightings were presented in a clear, unbiased way and he simply stated that elements remained unsolved without falling to the popular temptation of hinting at an explanation.

We adjourned for twenty minutes, to allow time to digest the talk and browse the various tables of stuff. I noticed that the table of books actually contained books on the paranormal, compared to the Chorley (aka Cottingly) conference book stall that was about ten percent paranormal and ninety percent not, in fact the most paranormal thing about that book

³ Dave's article based on this fascinating talk is the lead story in this very issue.

stall was why it was there, I should have photographed it and sold it to *Fortean Times* as an out-of-place bookstall.

ANDY ROBERTS: FOO-FIGHTERS

The next speaker introduced by the presenter was Andy Roberts. His talk was on 'Foo fighters', strange aerial phenomenon dating around the Second World War and believed by many to be the precursor to the UFO phenomenon. This began with a brief explanation of the origin of the name 'foo fighter'. Often thought to be derived from a cartoon character, very popular around that time, whose catch phrase was "where there's foo there's fire". Another possibility Andy pointed out was the phrase "foo", as in "phooey" or "nonsense" was also popular at the time.

He then went on to outline the phenomenon. Most sightings of foo-fighters described them as balls of bright white or orange light, capable of incredible agility and acceleration. They followed fighter planes on missions, sometimes circling them and displaying uncanny aerobatic abilities. Andy Roberts has done this speech for YUFOS so I'll do a quick round up of the talk for those of you who weren't there or here. The first case he highlighted was one described in a book by Martin Caiden entitled *Black Thursday*. This book isn't about UFOs or the paranormal but is an account of a bomber crews flight during the second world war and mentions the event as part of a mission. The aircraft was on a mission when it encountered several small metallic disks flying directly ahead. They were only a matter of inches across without any apparent means of propulsion. They matched the aircraft's speed and direction for a while before departing at high speed. Andy investigated the story but was unable to turn up any other witnesses or documents of the sighting, though he later came across a report of the mission and found details of the sighting along with some witness statements inside. He was satisfied that the encounter was real but did admit that it could have been flak (fragments of metal released by aircraft to cloud radar signals).

He followed with another report of a sighting by a crew aboard a Lancaster bomber. Returning from a bombing mission one night the rear gunner realised they were being followed by several bright orange lights, the captain accelerated the aircraft and went into a series of evasive manoeuvres believing they

were being chased by missiles. The lights kept up without getting closer or falling behind. This lasted for twenty minutes with the lights eventually departing. This is an impressive sighting: multiple witnesses aboard the aircraft saw the lights and they stood by the report they later made, even in the face of considerable ridicule. In this report and many others of "foo fighters" the British witnesses described the phenomenon as simply "the light" and were inclined to believe they were some kind of Nazi secret weapon. Although the captain was tempted, they didn't open fire on the lights and there are no reports of the phenomenon being fired on during the Second World War. No one is sure exactly what the outcome would have been.

Military intelligence did show interest in this phenomenon, but offered no explanations as to what it could be. A more alarming case was of a bomber flying at night that encountered a large cylindrical object. It was 200-300 feet long, metallic and had windows running its length. Again, it paced the aircraft and departed at high speed. Rather than being a metallic blob or an anonymous orange light this was an impressive sighting. Andy did go through some possibilities, flak, prototype jets, etc, but he believed it could be due to some form of unknown meteorological phenomenon.

Andy then took some questions from the floor. Andy's talk was easily as good as Dave Clark's in that he'd obviously investigated the subject intensively and presented it entertainingly and with clarity. It was similar to the previous talk in that he offered possible explanations for the sightings but admitted that these were just guesses using the available evidence, preserving the essential mystery.

However it would be hard to miss the fact that he was skeptical, he did tend to go for the meteorological phenomenon explanations over the alien explanations which makes a couple of the questions from the floor all the more 'interesting'. The first was something like "Why did the American government cover-up the sightings during the war, and where were they hiding the aliens". Andy seemed a bit surprised by this question but explained that he didn't believe that they were hiding aliens and if they were covering up anything it was ignorance.

The next questioner asked. "Does all the information about UFOs go straight to the Pentagon". Andy explained some might but most were probably dealt with a bit lower

down the ladder. Then the first questioner piped up again with "I know you don't believe in aliens but I do and I know they are among us, so do you think that the aliens were trying to stop the war". Andy stated again that he didn't believe that the cause of the foo fighters were aliens, he did wrestle a bit with the odd logic of the question though.

To be fair to some of the other questioners though, one did ask if there were any reports of foo fighters from Germany. Andy replied he hadn't come across any. Good question though.

We then broke for lunch and I enjoyed an above average chicken tikka in the university cafe.

RUSSELL CALLAGHAN (*UFO MAGAZINE* -UK)

We returned to the hall for the next speaker and were entertained by film from a NASA space shuttle showing unknown objects in space and a large picture of the next edition of *UFO magazine*.

Russell Callaghan was the next speaker. He explained his intentions for the talk and then began. He started by talking at length about the article by David Plunkett claiming the field of UFO study was dead (outlined by Graham Birdsall at the beginning of the day). He then went on to talk about a man called Martin who had taped hours of NASA footage, broadcast live by NASA everyday and available to anyone who subscribes. He'd watched footage of the Mir Space Station and several shuttle missions.

The first video footage played showed a view from the rear of the shuttle, a conversation between mission control and the pilot of the shuttle outlined what was going on. The clouds and seas of earth rolled by when a series of lights or specks appeared. The pilot asked mission control what the lights were, they paused then replied that the lights were merely ice crystals.

He then showed some footage of a metal rod being pulled behind the shuttle by a tether several kilometres long. Apparently, this was an experiment to draw energy from the upper atmosphere by dragging a rod over it and collecting the static charge. Unfortunately the tether broke and the rod floated off into the void. NASA attempted to reclaim the rod by grabbing the rapidly disappearing tether, while

they lined themselves up for this ultimately futile grab, they filmed something interesting.

Hundreds of little specks were moving about before the camera, they were mostly circular in shape and bore an uncanny resemblance to jelly fish or plankton. He showed a close up of one apparently moving behind the rod before beginning his talk in earnest.

Now I must be completely honest about this talk, it was not unlike overhearing somebody gossiping. That's not such a bad thing because sometimes you have to tell it like it is and that can sound gossipy. Unfortunately however it is very hard to translate to text and because I'm not a reader of *UFO Magazine*, I got completely lost at times.

It centres around a man called James Oberg, a NASA representative and UFO skeptic, who has been communicating with *UFO Magazine* about the NASA footage. He had at first expressed interest in the footage but then went on to debunk the film as nothing more than ice crystals floating about in front of the lens. James also claimed that he had never met the man that had recorded the event, Martin, but actually had; something he later claimed to have forgotten. The speaker showed footage of Martin saying that he had spoken to NASA but they had refused to talk about certain footage he had recorded. He then went on to speak about another NASA rep, Joe Nuith III head of extraterrestrial physics(?), who had corresponded with *UFO Magazine* by e-mail and had expressed interest in the NASA footage, implying he would take it to some of his colleagues to investigate further. But when questioned by the press later he denied ever seeing the footage.

Russell showed some further footage this time from our side of the sky. The first was of some lights in the sky accompanied by a young man enthusiastically reporting the sighting to his girlfriend. "Good lord Doreen, this is a truly uncanny event" and words to that effect. It was almost un-watchable, but what you could see was unusual (perhaps not as unusual as the young man's lack of expletives though).

The next was a little better. It started with a film of a walk around the area where the witness filmed the footage from, with the witness explaining what he was doing when it was being filmed. They then played the footage, which showed three lights moving slowly across the sky. It didn't look that impressive but the tour around the area made it

a lot easier to place it and understand what was going on.

The final footage came from an area which had been subject to many UFO sightings and showed an entire neighborhood coming out to watch. Again this one was just a dot of light moving across the sky, but there was a lot of light pollution from the street lights and the camcorder wasn't even picking out the stars. I guess you had to be there.

He showed another film from an American chopper. It started with a film crew spotting a disk hovering behind a building, they try to zoom in but it shoots off. One of them shouts that its stopped and they pan round to see it hovering about a hundred meters away. "Its coming right at us", a man shouts. The image of the craft grows then it flips on its side showing its underbelly, an Adamski craft type globes flashing past as it darts up. The camera-man pans up to the sky just catching it disappearing behind a cloud and a long smoke trail. It turned out to be an advert for an Internet website but was absolutely brilliant.

He then went on to describe a visit he and Graham Birdsall made to Mexico. Apparently their arrival was much celebrated and the media came out in droves to listen to their talks. He pointed out the lack of media interest in the Preston Conference by the British press. He told how when leaving they were followed around by some French men that ended up searching their bags at the airport. His luggage took a long while returning to him on their return, but when it did, it bore a tag which showed it had been mis-directed to Russia. And a pair of his trousers were missing...

He then began a film showing various antique paintings, mostly biblical, featuring anomalous aerial craft. He explained that UFOs had been with us since the dawn of time.

My impression of the talk was that it did have that gossipy tone. On several occasions the speaker conferred with people in the audience, presumably his friends, and Graham would every now and then add comments too. But you couldn't deny the passion he had for the subject and I am more convinced now that they are dedicated to this field as committed investigators.

We had our final break then returned for the final speaker of the day.

JON DOWNES

John Downes is a famous cryptozoologist, Fortean, and writer. He has appeared on the *Big Breakfast* and had an episode of *To the Ends of the Earth* dedicated to his search for the Chupacabras.

The presenter introduced him to the audience saying that John didn't use visual aids or music but had today decided to use a visual aid in the form of three cans of Stella, which earned hearty applause from the audience.

I now recognised John as the gentleman sitting with a half bottle of whisky and selling John Downes books during the breaks. He asked the audience whether there were any children present, people shook their heads and looked about them. "Thank f**k for that", he said and opened his first can.

He first outlined his speech. The first part he would dedicate to the subject matter of his latest book, the relationship between socio-political unrest and paranormal activity and he would spend time briefly on the filming of *To the Ends of the Earth* as there were a few things they'd missed out (putting it politely).

He began by giving examples of paranormal activity during periods of civil unrest, cattle mutilations during the Irish crisis and tiger sightings during political upheaval in Japan. Apparently a sighting of an out-of-place tiger signified the arrival of a new emperor in imperial Japan. He recounted a story of an out-of-place tiger shot near a POW camp during the Second World War. It was photographed by one of the prisoners as the guards bought it in. Some observers believe that it was stage-managed to frighten the people, by elements wishing to remove the emperor in place at the time. Cattle mutilations were also being reported and strange balls of light.

John then began to explain how he became known as a famous cryptozoologist. He quit his job and decided to write a book, as he already had extensive knowledge of zoology and a burgeoning interest in things Fortean. Unable to find a publisher he decided to print the book himself. This took his last few pounds and, nearly bankrupt, decided to sell it at the Fortean Times Unconvention (*Fortean Times'* yearly conference). He hitch-hiked down with his wife but found, much to his chagrin, that he had no money to get in. So he snuck in through the fire escape. He sold a few books and decided to celebrate by spending the money in the bar. While drinking he was approached by a journalist from the *Independent*, who asked

him if he was a popular figure in the world of Fortean studies.

"My boy" he cried "I am a leader in the field of cryptozoology". The journalist dutifully scurried away to write his comments as fact in the next days paper. And so John has been known ever since.

He took a healthy swig from his can and began to talk about the filming of *To the Ends of the Earth*. When he arrived in Puerto Rico he didn't believe in the chupacabras. He believed that it was most probably the product of a kind of mass hysteria or urban legend but after only a few days he was convinced of its existence.

He explained that Puerto Rico is an unusual place. It is bordered on one side by Haiti and the other by the United States. The United States has dumped large quantities of chemical waste in this country due to more relaxed laws on dumping and Puerto Rico has also accused U.S. citizens of taking advantage of the country for cheap drugs, alcohol and prostitution. Many Puerto Ricans believe that the chupacabras is a genetic experiment by the American government.

Puerto Rico has a long history of paranormal activity from pterodactyls, a bigfoot like creature and even vampire activity.

Chupacabras sightings started during the 1990s. Most Chupacabras attacks are identified by certain tell-tale signs like very deep puncture wounds which sometimes go directly into the bone, Victims can be completely drained of blood and sometimes vital organs like the liver are taken. John investigated a case where a chicken had been found dead on a farm (yes apparently these things do happen). The farmer, a breeder of fighting birds, had reported a series of attacks by the chupacabras. On finding the bird John was struck by its condition; Puerto Rico is a very hot country with many natural predators and scavengers, but although it had been dead in the sun for many hours, it was untouched. Within 24 hours an animal would disappear through accelerated decay due to the heat and action of insects and scavengers. It did however have tiny puncture marks on its neck and breast-bone. John explained how he did an autopsy on the chicken but this never made it to the final cut of the documentary as the producers believed it to be too gruesome. With a beer in one hand and a knife in the other he found the chicken had no blood and the liver had been removed; remember that the only incisions it had were those tiny puncture wounds.

The presenter waved at him to indicate time was running out. John then went on to tell us how he had filmed a lamb that had been attacked by the Chupacabras. In the film the lamb staggered about much like film of a cow infected with Bse. A veterinarian he had met while working in Puerto Rico, who was also familiar with the Chupacabras, examined the lamb and found it had no vital signs. It later died and she examined its corpse. Making an incision in its side she entered a white cotton glove into the body cavity and pulled it out clean, not a drop of blood clung to it. Apparently it was also missing several major organs the liver being among them.

The presenter stepped on stage at this point and asked for questions from the audience. After the questions John enthusiastically announced that there was a link between paranormal activity and socio-political unrest and that the alien hypothesis was a load of horse s**t but that all weirdness was somehow connected.

John Downes talk was a bit of a paradox for me. Reading this part of the article it may sound like he sat dryly recounting facts from the stage but that couldn't be further from the truth. His character filled every part of the

auditorium. He spoke with conviction and force but also with humour and sparkling vitality. That's something you (or at least I) can't replicate in an article. The other side of the coin however was that John was drunk for the best part of the talk. Not falling over, being sick type of drunk. Just that part where you start getting a bit rowdy. Now before you start yelling 'hypocrite' at this bit of paper your reading, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with being nice and tipsy but the talk did meander a bit at times, the bit about the chicken autopsy actually came out in bits across the entire talk. He is a fascinating character however and I would rather spend several hours in his presence while he where drunk than a few minutes with a lot of people sober.

The presenter rounded up the day thanking all the speakers. Although we could only make one day of this conference (there were talks on the following day) I believe it was a well organised event with most of the talks being of a particularly high quality.

We left the Preston conference with the sky still clear and had another hilarious round of car hide and seek.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD...AND BEYOND!!!

UFOs, conspiracies, fortune and paranormal events compiled by Dave Baker

MONSTER ELUDES LOCH HUNT

(Times of London | 7 May 2001)

The latest expedition in search of the Loch Ness monster ended in disappointment at the weekend. Before heading home yesterday, Jan Sundberg, leader of the investigation, said: "We spent 50 hours on the loch using sonar and achieved very little. The results were meagre, to say the least."

The team's high-tech sonar equipment found no recorded traces of a large creature in the loch and the huge lobster-pot-style Nessie trap which they had set was hauled up empty.

Mr Sundberg, 53, from Sweden, dismissed suggestions that a protective spell cast over the loch by a white witch, Kevin Carlyon, had led

to the disappointing results. (See last issue-DB)

BOOM MYSTERY AS PLANE AND A QUAKE RULED OUT

(Scarborough Evening News (North Yorkshire) 17 May 2001)

RAF investigators deny military aircraft was responsible for the apparent sonic boom which rocked Scarborough in February.

The announcement has only deepened the mystery of what caused the noise which was felt along the East Coast from north of Whitby to south of Filey.

The Ministry of Defence denial means there could only be a handful of explanations for the boom.

It could have been caused by a meteorite, the wildest theory being aliens from outer space. Experts at the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh said its instruments proved conclusively the noise in Scarborough on February 21 was not caused by an earthquake.

They said the most likely cause was a sonic boom, but did not know what had caused it.

The Ministry of Defence said in a letter to Evening News reporter Chris Nixon: "After a thorough investigation into this incident, the RAF Police concluded that military aircraft were not responsible for generating the noise you heard.

"Although a number of aircraft were operating in the area, radar evidence has shown that at no time did they operate at supersonic speeds."

A sonic boom can occur when an aircraft breaks the sound barrier at supersonic speed during certain weather conditions.

The only civilian aircraft capable of supersonic speeds is Concorde - all the fleet has been grounded since the Paris air disaster in August last year, apart from a Concorde test flight from the French capital to the south of France.

Glen Ford, a seismologist at the British Geological Survey, said that on the day of the incident in Scarborough "a spurious signal" had been picked up on equipment in Leeds.

"We had an earthquake last Sunday in Dumfries in Galloway, but there has not been an earthquake in Scarborough," said Mr Ford.

He said the earthquake was felt over a circular area.

The incident in Scarborough was most likely a sonic boom because it was felt in a straight line down the coast, said Mr Ford.

"A pressure wave can travel great distances. In this case it seems to have gone across the North Sea and then smacked into the East Coast. Something definitely whacked the coastline.

"A sonic boom can be caused by a meteorite entering the earth's atmosphere and in the past there have been reports of spectacular lights being seen on the north-east [coast].

"In one case this effect was caused when a Russian satellite broke up and entered the

atmosphere.

"On one occasion off Hartlepool there was a sonic boom caused by RAF Tornados exercising which caused buildings to be evacuated."

The Evening News reported the same week as the apparent sonic boom that a meteorite shower was seen off the East Coast, but it seems we will never know for certain what caused Scarborough to "go bump in the day" rather than "bump in the night."

WANTED ALIVE: BIG BLACK CAT THAT WAS CAUGHT ON CAMERA
(*Eamonn Duff, Sydney Morning Herald {Australia} 13 May 2001*)

Wildlife authorities will travel to the Blue Mountains this week in the hope of learning more about the mystery big black cat caught on video camera.

But there will be no shoot-to-kill policy because of concerns about killing a creature that was considered long extinct.

NSW Agriculture technical director of exotic animals Bill Atkinson said: "This is not the time to be going out there with guns blazing. This is a completely new thing for us and so the first priority must be to identify exactly what it is and where it originated from.

"Only when we have identified it can we then sit down and decide the most appropriate course of action. You cannot dismiss the possibility this could in fact be something that was deemed to be extinct."

Panther speculation resurfaced a fortnight ago when details of a massive Blue Mountains-based cat became public through a Freedom of Information document request by big cat researcher Michael Moss.

The NSW Government released a series of documents that acknowledged "something is out there". The secret files also revealed that in 1999 wildlife officials sent an expert to track down the creature after fears it could refocus its attention from livestock to humans - including tourists. A letter from the Minister of Agriculture's Office read: "I would like your assistance in providing a suitably skilled person to enable this animal to be tracked, located and identified.

"To not to do so could bring into question Government's duty of care if these alleged attacks happened to result in injury to a person."

Mr Atkinson yesterday played down that threat but suggested there had been a change of thinking about just how many of the giant cats might be roaming Sydney's fringes.

"Yes, there may be more than just the one," he said. "Because this creature has finally been caught on film, we must now take seriously all the eyewitness accounts that have been flooding in over the past 40 years. These types of cats don't generally live for 40 years - so you must draw your own conclusions."

One Grose Vale resident, who has spent the past five years compiling a thorough database on the black cat, said she was ecstatic that film footage from Lithgow had finally proved to the Government that "local residents are not bonkers".

"National Parks can bloody well return and finish the half-hearted job they started a few years back," she said.

"This may be a great conversation piece in the city end of Sydney, but us locals are the ones who have had to put up with the livestock carnage, the marauding and the day-to-day threat."

A Lithgow resident filmed a "black panther" last Wednesday.

Mr Atkinson admitted that finding the creature would be difficult.

He said: "Planes go down in that region and are not recovered for days. People get lost and want to be found but they're not traced for days, either.

"So imagine trying to track one of these creatures when it simply does not want to be tracked.

"That's the task we face."

FISH RAIN DOWN ON GOLF COURSE

A torrential downpour of goldfish and Koi carp has amazed golfers on a Wiltshire golf course.

Four golfers, playing on the Netherampton course, took cover in a shelter when it started raining.

When they came out, the fairway was strewn with fish.

It is thought a mini-whirlwind may have sucked up the fish from a garden pond before depositing them on the course.

Course manager Caleb Horrax said: "I admit that it's not a particularly believable story. But I drove over that area of the course about ten minutes before I got the call, so if someone had dropped them they would have been seen.

"It's not possible that it was a prank."

The fish, which all died, have now been buried.

RIPPING YARN

Jack the Ripper was an archeologist, say two British amateur sleuths. Crime writer Tom Slemen and criminologist Keith Andrews say they have found new evidence proving that Colonel Claude Conder -- an archeologist, writer, map-maker and a trained killer who worked for British Intelligence -- murdered five prostitutes in London's Whitechapel district in 1888.

They cite clues that include cryptic messages carved on the victims' bodies and scrawled on a wall at the scene of one of the murders, reports the *Gloucestershire Echo*.

The two say the messages are written in ancient languages that Col. Conder would have known from his archeological work in the Middle East.

"He was not suspected of being the Ripper at the time of the killings and even so-called 'Ripperologists' will not have heard of him," says Mr. Slemen.

Col. Conder and fellow archeologist Sir Charles Warren gained worldwide fame by discovering the remains of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, from which they took artefacts and rings.

According to the new theory, prostitute Annie Chapman, who was killed by the Ripper, stole the rings and other valuables from Col. Conder's house. Mr. Slemen says all the

Ripper's victims were connected with stealing or selling the rings. Sir Charles went on to become head of London's Metropolitan Police, which investigated the Ripper murders. The two researchers say Sir Charles knew his friend was the killer but took the secret to his grave.

LEGENDARY BEAST ATTRACTS REWARD

(Sarah Galashan, Vancouver Sun, 22 May 2001)

A local monster-hunting club is offering a \$500 reward to anyone who catches a rare serpent-like sea creature the group says lives along the Pacific coast, between Alaska and Tacoma.

Cadborosaurus is generally described as being up to 3.5 metres long with a camel-like head, a long body of serpentine proportions, fins, and a tail, says John Kirk, president of the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club--an organization devoted to seeking and researching animal phenomena discounted by mainstream science.

The creature is believed to sometimes bob above the water surface when it travels, piston-like, curving its tail and then extending it to propel itself forward.

"Posters are up all over the place in Victoria and I've been going down to the docks in Steveston to talk to fishermen there," says Kirk.

Most recently, Kirk returned from an expedition to the forests of northern Africa where he had hoped to find a living dinosaur. While his crew didn't locate the Mokele M'Bembe, stories from locals were enough to convince him the animal is alive and well.

As is the case, he says, for the many Cadborosaurus that migrate annually through the waters of the northwest Pacific Ocean, stopping near the shores of Vancouver Island, near Saanich Inlet, to breed.

The Cadborosaurus, Caddy for short, was named for Cadboro Bay by a Victoria journalist in 1933, when several sightings were reported in the area.

The beast is something of a legend in and around the fishing port. A concrete statue has

been erected in a nearby park to lend veracity to the story of Victoria's own Lock [sic] Ness Monster.

But for many locals the tale is nothing more than a fantasy that draws tourists.

"Every now and then you get some supposedly credible people saying they've seen it," says Max Andersen, the owner of a local bed and breakfast.

But Andersen says most of the descriptions he's heard amount to half a tire floating on the water's surface.

"I've never seen it," he says, with a chuckle.

And he won't for at least two more months, insists Kirk.

According to the club's migratory charts Caddies won't return to breed until July. At that time it's hoped the Caddyscan, a Web-cam that captures an expanse of the area 24 hours a day for broadcast on the World Wide Web, will provide video evidence of the mysterious beast.

Either that, or someone will catch one.

"You've got to hope that once in a blue moon a fisherman will pull one up," said Kirk, reached at home in Vancouver. He says that two years ago a fishing crew did catch a living Cadborosaurus, but threw it back, not recognizing the creature's scientific value.

Kirk hopes a monetary reward will draw attention to the mysterious beast.

"In 1967 a whaling captain got one and actually realized what he had," says Kirk, earnestly describing some of the gaudiest accounts from British Columbians living in coastal communities." But that animal was in so much distress on his boat that he realized he had to let it go or else it would perish. He did the wise thing, he let it go back in the sea."

But now he recommends keeping the animal. Without proof to substantiate their otherwise "documented" sightings, there are few financial supporters backing the Cryptozoology Club.

"If they get one now we want them to hold on to it," Kirk says.

"We're quite happy to come anywhere to pick it up."

THE GREEN CHILDREN OF WOOLPIT

(Feature Story *FATE Magazine* 2001-05-01)

BY DR. KARL P. N. SHUKER

Dr. Karl P. N. Shuker is a cryptozoologist who lives in West Bromwich, England. He is the author of *Mysteries of Planet Earth*.

English medieval history and legend are sometimes so intricately interwoven that it can be exceedingly difficult to delineate with any degree of certainty the facts from the fantasy. The fascinating story of the green children of Woolpit is a particular case in point.

The date was the 12th century a.d., but has been variously placed by chroniclers within the reign of King Stephen (1135-54) or King Henry II (1154-1189). The setting was the small Suffolk village of Woolpit, named after the deep trenches in which wolves were formerly captured. One day, the villagers were amazed to see two very unusual children crawling out of one of these trenches. A girl and a slightly younger boy, they were both dressed in strange clothing and spoke an unintelligible language. But by far the most striking characteristic of these children was their skin - it was green!

Unable to communicate with them, and thoroughly perplexed as to what should be done, the villagers took the girl and boy, who were weeping and very forlorn, to the home of Sir Richard de Calne, a local landowner. Here they remained, treated with great care and kindness by Sir Richard and his servants. But the boy fell ill, and in less than a year he had died. Happily, however, the girl survived, and as she grew older her skin's green hue gradually disappeared. She eventually married a man from King's Lynn in Norfolk, a senior ambassador of Henry II according to some sources, and became known as Agnes Barre.

During her years in Sir Richard's household, Agnes learned English and was eventually able to reveal something about where she and her brother had come from and the manner in which they had reached Woolpit. She claimed that they were from a Christian place called St Martin's Land, where it was always twilight (and also where, according to one medieval chronicler of this story, everything was green), and which was separated from a much sunnier place by a

wide river. One day, while tending their father's flocks in a field, Agnes and her brother had been led away by the sound of church bells into an underground realm, and then somehow found themselves in Woolpit.

This peculiar account has lent itself to many different interpretations. Eminent British folklorist Dr. Katharine Briggs noted in *A Dictionary of Fairies* (1976) that it contained a number of themes prevalent in Faerie lore-the color green, a twilit land, subterranean worlds. Could this entire story thus be nothing more than another legend of elves or fairies visiting mankind?

In 1997, astronomer Duncan Lunan, assistant curator at Scotland's Airdrie Observatory, offered a much more dramatic solution. Speaking in London at the annual conference (UnConvention) held by the popular British magazine *Fortean Times*, he proposed that the green children were actually aliens who had accidentally been transported to Earth from another planet by a malfunctioning matter transmitter.

Other theories proffered at one time or another include:

- The possibility that our planet is hollow and that the green children had emerged from a hidden world contained within Earth's interior.
- They were immigrants from northern Scandinavia, where there is less light than in sunny Suffolk.
- They are personifications of Nature, hence akin to the Green Man or Jack-in-the-Green.
- Traditional Woolpit belief claims that they were real-life "babes in the wood," having been abandoned in the nearby forest by an evil uncle seeking to claim their inheritance for himself.

According to their most persistent researcher, however, the origin of the green children is

much more straightforward, and local, than any of those mentioned above. In an extensive paper published by the scholarly periodical *Fortean Studies* in 1998, Paul Harris produced the following scenario as a comprehensive explanation of the green children episode:

Prior to the time of Henry II (and the most popular date for the green children's appearance is 1173, which falls within his reign), eastern England had witnessed a steady influx of Flemish merchants and weavers from Belgium. Once Henry II became king, however, they suffered great persecution, and at a battle near Bury St. Edmunds in 1173, many were slaughtered. Harris proposed that the green children were of Flemish parentage and had probably originated from or near the village of Fornham St. Martin (thus explaining their mysterious St. Martin's Land), situated just a few miles northwest of Woolpit and separated from it by the River Lark.

According to Harris's theory, it could be that their parents had been killed, but the two children had successfully escaped the carnage by fleeing into Thetford Forest. Its shadowy depths would certainly seem like twilight to two young, scared children. And if they had lingered there for any length of time without obtaining much food, they may well have suffered from malnutrition - one effect of which, called chlorosis, is a gradual greening of the skin.

Eventually, following what Harris believes to have been the sound of the church bells at nearby Bury St. Edmunds, they may have wandered into one of the many underground mine passages associated with Thetford and ultimately leading to Woolpit. Here, when they later emerged in a bewildered state, with starvation-induced greenish pallor, disoriented by the bright sunlight after having spent so long in the forest and underground passageways, dressed in unfamiliar Flemish costumes, and speaking an equally unfamiliar Flemish dialect, they would certainly have presented a very strange spectacle to the Woolpit villagers.

Harris's theory is very interesting and provides convincing explanations for many of the story's enigmatic facets. Today, the green children, like the wolves, are long gone from Woolpit, but their memory lives on in a beautiful village sign here, and also in the banner of Woolpit's church. They may also live on in a much more literal manner. While conducting his own research, Duncan Lunan was contacted by an American who sent him a

copy of his family tree, which suggested that he was a descendant of Agnes. If this is indeed true, then the saga of Woolpit's green children may still have some notable surprises to unfold even today.

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