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YORKSHIRE UFO SOCIETY

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**PROJECT RED BOOK**

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(Vol 6, # 5, January 2002)



**inside this document**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL EYRE  
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE PEAK DISTRICT KIND  
SUB ROSA: PART 2  
THE JENNY RANGLES COLUMN**

And much more...

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## YUFOS



Vol 6 # 5, January 2003)

## CONTENTS

### 1) AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL EYRE

*Dave Baker chats with the Research Officer of the Chesterfield Psychic Studies Group.*

### 7) PUMA-LIKE ANIMAL KILLS FARM DOG

*This story screams "Space-filler!" And you know what? It is!*

### 8) LACK OF EVIDENCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTION TO THE ET HYPOTHESIS

*John Harney with a thought-provoking and no-doubt controversial article reprinted from the pages of MAGONIA*

### 11) CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE PEAK DISTRICT KIND

*Dr. David Clarke investigates the village of Bonsall - Is it, as tabloids suggest, "The UFO Capital of Britain"?*

### 13 A VIEW FROM BRITAIN: THE JENNY RANGLES COLUMN

*Jenny asks "Just what do we know" about the UFO phenomenon after her 30 years of investigation*

### 17) UFOs - SUB ROSA (PART 2)

*Bill Chalker continues his mammoth review of the Australian Government and military's investigations into UFOs.*

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"Somewhere, an electric chair is waiting!"

## AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL EYRE

BILL EYRE has been interested in psychic phenomena all of his adult life. At the age of 31, he changed his religion and became a Spiritualist. Over a number of years, he has attended numerous Spiritualist meetings and experienced most types of mediumship.

Upon moving to Derbyshire, Bill became involved with Chesterfield Psychic Study Group (CPSG) and found that it enabled him to learn about a wider variety of phenomena than just Spiritualism: for example, he learnt how to dowse. During the early 1990s, he sat regularly in physical circles and, in one of them, was able on numerous occasions to witness the production of ectoplasm and some very striking transfiguration effects.

Through his membership of both ASSAP and CPSG, he became interested up to a point in other anomalous phenomena outside the psychical area, e.g. UFOs, although studying and researching the unexpected abilities of the mind remains his primary interest. By the mid 1990s, he had wound down his involvement in Physical Mediumship and was becoming more active in carrying out investigations into spontaneous psychic phenomena, such as hauntings.

Bill says that, "No matter how long I spend looking into the Paranormal, I find there is always something different and even more fascinating just around the corner."

(The following interview by Dave Baker was composed of questions submitted by Dave, Mark Martin & Jonathan Slater of YUFOS)

**DAVE BAKER:** Hi Bill, thanks for taking the time to talk to *Project Red Book*. Can you start by telling us about how you became interested in this phenomena?

**BILL AYRE:** Even at the age of 16, I was starting to become fascinated with unusual aspects of the human psyche, such as hypnosis and the meanings of dreams. During my twenties, this led to an interest in psychic phenomena to the extent of reading various books on the subject. You read them and you think "Does that really happen?"

Eventually, I chanced upon *The Rock of Truth* by Arthur Findlay: this was totally different from any other book I had read on the subject and went into a detailed comparison of the Christian and Spiritualist religions, using direct voice phenomena in particular to illustrate aspects of Spiritualism. It's a hefty book but as I waded through it, I found myself agreeing with every point concerning the irrationality of the Christian doctrine. So impressed was I that I sought out my nearest Spiritualist Church and attended every type of meeting to find out what went on.

Some readers will not be familiar with ASSAP, and with CPSG. Can you

explain about these groups and your involvement with them.

CPSG is a local group based in Chesterfield which, for the last twenty years, has been running a regular monthly programme of lectures and demonstrations related to the Paranormal. In addition, for some of that period, various Sub-groups have been run to research specific aspects of the subject. I joined the Group in 1989, after moving to Derbyshire, and was soon asked to take on the position of Secretary, which involved the booking of speakers. In 1996, I gave up my role as Secretary of CPSG to become Research Officer. More recently, I took on the role of Treasurer.

ASSAP, on the other hand, is a national paranormal research organisation, covering research and investigations into all types of anomalous phenomena - psychical, UFOlogical, Fortean, etc. I joined in 1992, becoming an Accredited Investigator in 1996.

Can you remember your first investigation?

My first investigation was in 1994 and concerned reports from more than one witness

of apparitions of men and dogs appearing (and disappearing) in a field at Hasland, Chesterfield. We wondered whether there had been some fatal accident at the railway engine shed that used to be located there but follow-up enquiries revealed that there had not been any such accidents since 1952. However, who knows what might have happened before that time?

I have to say that my first few cases were not investigated as thoroughly as more recent cases. However, I have since attended ASSAP's Investigator Training Course and so am well aware now of the various steps that should be taken during an investigation.

**Did you have any pre-conceptions before you became actively involved in paranormal research, and have your personal beliefs changed since then?**

By the time that I became actively involved in paranormal research, what I had experienced from my visits to Spiritualist Churches and the volume of evidence for certain phenomena of which I had read about minded me to think that it was probable that at least some alleged phenomena were actually of a paranormal nature. Becoming more involved has bolstered my opinion that psychic phenomena really do exist. However, each case is considered on its own merits.

**What are your theories of what ghosts are and why they exist?**

I find that reports of ghosts are likely to come into one of the following categories:-

- a) The witness is simply making the story up
- b) The witness is hallucinating because of taking drugs etc.
- c) In many cases, the witness reports seeing or feeling a ghost whilst he/she is in bed and in such cases, what is seen is sometimes a hypnopompic hallucination during sleep paralysis, i.e. a dream image that is overlaid on top of the physical reality of the bedroom
- d) An example of retrocognition, i.e. an image that lingers in a particular place which can be picked up by a psychically sensitive person

e) A spirit entity - either visiting or earthbound, but again in my experience it seems to be only people who are psychic who experience such a 'ghost'.

**Ufologists claim that around 95% of sightings are explainable after careful investigation. What percentage of hauntings you investigate turn out to have rational explanations?**

Of the cases of hauntings that I personally have investigated, probably only about 20% have turned out to have rational explanations.

**Have you, or any other ASSAP or CPSG investigators uncovered a deliberate hoax?**

My colleagues and I have not come across deliberate hoaxes ourselves.

**What is your most successful investigation?**

A case at a school (to which we gave the pseudonym 'Penbury School') and in particular at the caretaker's flat, which was built into the school. Not only did the caretaker's wife and son experience many frightening incidents, but phenomena also occurred each time investigators visited the premises. So bad did things get that the caretaker's family bought a small caravan, parked it in the school yard and slept in it for a while, as they were too scared to sleep in their own flat. I won't give too much away here about the case, however, as I shall be explaining the detail at my visit to YUFOS in February.

**You were in charge of an ASSAP team that investigated the infamous Lowes Cottage. What happened?**

Unfortunately we were not given permission to carry out an investigation whilst the main witnesses (the Smiths) were still in residence, although other investigators were, who drew conflicting conclusions. We did look into the matter once the next resident moved in, however.

We were shown an unedited edition of a ~~Country~~ TV interview of the Smiths and felt

that even if some of the phenomena were genuine, that they were certainly exaggerating the effects. The present occupier did, however, verify that on occasion he as well as the Smiths had experienced water inexplicably oozing out of the wall between the stairs and the toilet. The effect did not follow the pattern of general dampness that one might expect in an old house. We ran a metal detector over the wall and did find a metal spot where one of the watery patches appeared but there seemed to be no way that it could have joined up to any of the water pipes in the toilet.

We held an overnight vigil at Lowes Cottage and nothing happened that was anything like as dramatic as the events reported by the Smiths. However, there were some unexplained incidents, viz. several of us heard quite a loud noise above the dining room ceiling, as if heavy furniture were being dragged across the roof or floor above, a sound activated cassette recorder which functioned correctly in most rooms, stayed continuously on despite the absence of noise in what had been Mr & Mrs Smith's bedroom and two investigators felt strong oppressive feelings on the stairs down to the basement. We subsequently arranged for a medium to visit and from the same spot on the stairs, she saw the apparition of a distressed female.

Most of the investigators in my team concluded that at least some of the activity at Lowes Cottage was of a paranormal nature.

#### Have you ever been scared during an investigation?

No. The only combination of events that seems to result in someone being scared is if there is someone who is naturally very psychic living in an abode also occupied by a malevolent earthbound entity. Thus the caretaker's son became very scared in the Penbury School case.

#### Would you say that ghosts have been \*scientifically\* proven to exist?

I would say not, although a scientific explanation of some ghosts seems to have been produced by a researcher at Coventry University. He has found that when a fan is blowing at a particular angle to the subject, it causes an optical illusion whereby the subject thinks that he has seen a ghost out of the corner

of his eye, which disappears when he looks straight at it. Certainly reports of a ghost only being seen 'out of the corner of the eye' are relatively common, in my experience. But of course they are often seen where there is no fan. So this does not explain all sightings.

The problem with obtaining concrete scientific proof of this phenomenon is that the experience is frequently subjective. From accounts I have heard of, and from my own investigations, I would say that you need to be psychic to be able to see a ghost. If the phenomenon is only experienced on a psychical level, is it very difficult to prove its existence using scientific instruments, which of course measure or record physical happenings.

However, we may be getting somewhere, as on some occasions both in our investigations and those of other investigators, there have been some signs of correlation between electromagnetic fluctuations and the occurrence of psychical effects.

#### Why do you think that, apart from a few individuals and organisations, "serious" scientists shun study into ghosts, psychic powers and the paranormal?

There is a great reluctance amongst the scientific community to seriously consider any finding that goes dramatically against the accepted thinking. This applies not only to Parapsychology but to Chemistry and all sorts of other areas. Acceptance of psychic phenomena would involve a radical rethinking of the mechanisms of Physics, although it would seem that Quantum Mechanics may offer some light at the end of the 'psychic tunnel'.

#### Do hauntings happen only at night, and if so, why do you think this is?

No. They happen at various times. Certainly apparitions are often reported as being seen in broad daylight. However, some phenomena seem to be more likely to occur in relative darkness, e.g. spirit lights. When investigators hold a vigil to try to witness, measure or record anything out of the usual, an overnight vigil is most common, but this is partly because the noise and bustle of the daytime would make observations, especially audible ones, difficult

then. Ideally a vigil should be held to span the window of time during which phenomena have been reported.

UFO photographs are generally considered to be mis-identifications, camera anomalies, or hoaxes, with only a few exceptions which appear to show something genuinely "unexplained". What do you make of ghost photographs?

The bulk of them seem to be misinterpretations. ASSAP has found, through carrying out relevant tests, that many vertical white lines appearing on photographs are caused by the strap of the camera falling down over the lens (but not the viewfinder) while the picture is taken. Being so near the lens, the effect of the flash on the strap is to produce what looks like a strange vertical image. It has also found that digital cameras taking flash photos will produce images that look like 'orbs' if there are any particles of dust in the air. Some hoaxes have, of course, been produced via double exposures.

A small proportion of ghost photographs, however, are, I would say, genuine. The best example I have seen was an official wedding photograph which showed the wedding group in the right-hand two-thirds of the photo and, separated from the rest of the group, an image of an elderly lady, with her feet missing. The image was identical to a photograph also shown to me of the bride's deceased grandmother.

**What is the best way to photograph a ghost? (if there is one!)**

Leaving an infra-red video camera linked to a VCR during a protracted period of time in a room in which a ghost has been seen is worth a try. However, the best ghost photos seem to be produced spontaneously and unexpectedly (as in the case of the wedding photo just mentioned).

**What sort of equipment do you use during a typical investigation into a haunting?**

Electro-magnetic sensing equipment that measures changes in the E-M field compared with the general background radiation, infra-

red video camera (connected to a VCR), standard camcorders, still cameras, audio cassette recorders, torches, and, most importantly, pen and paper!

**Is it your belief that ghostly apparitions are more likely to be in a place with stronger electromagnetic fields, or that "ghosts" cause such electromagnetic anomalies?**

Some experimental research by John Hutchison in Canada has shown that deliberately producing a roomful of many varied frequencies of electromagnetic radiation can result in classic poltergeist effects, such as levitation and throwing of non-magnetic objects, and there does seem to be a particular incidence of PK effects in properties lying close to electricity pylons.

However, if the term 'ghosts' is taken in its widest meaning, to include objective clairvoyance, i.e. psychically seeing a spirit presence as if it were a real person in the room, then many clairvoyants can achieve this wherever they are, regardless of E/M levels, and they frequently do so in Spiritualist Churches.

**Do you think Poltergeists are discarnate entities (ghosts in the traditional sense) or due to subconscious psychokinesis from the "focus" ?**

Probably sometimes one and sometimes the other. If, for example, objects are being thrown around randomly and electrical devices switched on and off randomly, I would suggest that it would be due to the latter of these explanations. However, if, say, an object is moved carefully from one position to another with the signs of intelligence behind the movement, then I would suspect the former explanation.

The trap that some Psychical Investigators fall into is that they associate one set of symptoms with one specific explanation when in reality there is more than one. I find that it is best to acquire as much data about a case as possible and to consider all possible explanations before coming to a conclusion in a particular case.

For example, a frequent scenario reported is seeing/feeling a presence whilst the subject is

in bed. Again, I am definitely of the opinion that this is sometimes due to sleep paralysis, with the presence of a hypnopompic hallucination, and sometimes due to an interaction with an earthbound spirit entity, and the Investigator really needs to ascertain whether any other overtly paranormal phenomena have occurred at the location before coming to a sensible conclusion.

**Have you ever experimented with Ouija Boards, and what is your opinion on their use?**

A small group of CPSG members have for a while been experimenting with deliberate PK, using the table tilting method. Apart from one evening, very little was achieved, so recently we have tried using the tumbler and alphabet method (i.e. a makeshift ouija board) and, whilst there has been much vigorous movement of the tumbler, hardly any meaningful communication has so far taken place.

However, we are persevering. I think that the ouija board can be used as a serious research tool, to look into the matter of whether such communications come from discarnate spirits or from the sitters' unconscious minds. One needs to go about it in the right frame of mind, of course, as it is well known that youngsters using this device frivolously often 'get their fingers burned'.

**Have you ever experimented with Electronic Voice Phenomenon?**

Yes - at CPSG we have experimented at one time or another with most phenomena but we did not obtain a result with EVP. However, on three occasions whilst sitting in Mrs Edith Farrow's physical circle, we did obtain EVP on the cassette in use. Once it was the sound of monks chanting plainsong, once the sound of drums (on an evening when a Red Indian spirit had been addressing us via trance mediumship) and once a voice saying "We are here.", followed by a second sentence which was unintelligible apart from the word "God" in the middle of it.

**What is the best equipment to use in an EVP experiment?**

The unexpected EVP was obtained using a small recorder that used micro cassettes. However, to deliberately experiment with this phenomenon, I would suggest a radio recorder, with the radio tuned to white noise (in-between stations) and the cassette set to record.

**AT CPSG you have delved into such fields as Cristos, Psychometry and table tilting. What sort of results did you have?**

We have had mixed results. We have had some startlingly accurate telepathy (when using picture/photo cards) and I recollect that Mark Martin from YUFOS achieved some very accurate psychometry once, whilst under hypnosis.

Having carried out many experiments using a normal state of consciousness, we spent a period of time repeating the experiments with the subject in a hypnotised state but, disappointingly, found the overall results no better. Certain members have had the sensation of travelling through space or time via the Christos method but we have not been able to acquire objective evidence that a part of them was really at the remote place or time.

Of all the phenomena experimented with, dowsing has probably produced the most consistently good results. It seems to require rather less psychic ability than some phenomena.

**Are there any dangers in any of these activities, either mentally or physically?**

Everything in life has dangers and practising psychic phenomena is no different. The most dangerous activity physically is physical mediumship. If sitting for this, all sorts of precautions need to be taken to avoid the medium being injured, e.g. keeping out all white light, not touching the medium during the séance, etc.

In the case of ouija boards, there is a danger that if the practitioner repeatedly gets good answers to questions, that he may become addicted to the use of the board, consulting it before making any decision in his life, leading in the worst case scenario to him going out of his mind.

I would advise anyone already suffering from a mental problem to avoid becoming involved with this subject.

I became involved in an investigation into multiple alleged psychic and UFO phenomena occurring around a man and his son in Nottinghamshire. It transpired that the man was a mental patient but he seemed to actually be psychic as well. The main problem in this case was that he interpreted so many things as being related to ET aliens that this obsession must have rubbed off onto his son and I have just learned that the son has now been admitted to a mental hospital.

A healthy interest in the subject is fine but one needs to keep one's feet on the ground and to be careful to distinguish fact from fantasy.

**You obviously cover a wide and varied field. Are there any aspects of the paranormal which you reject as pure bunkum?**

I would tend to place some of the New Age phenomena into this category, e.g. divination via rune stones, tarot cards etc. To my mind, if a stone or card is picked out at random, a random piece of information will be elicited. I think that the most this type of activity achieves is that in some cases, where the practitioner is psychic, the use of such devices perhaps helps to concentrate the practitioner's mind on what she is trying to achieve, i.e. to obtain psychic impressions about the sitter. A good clairvoyant, however, would be able to achieve this without the need for such props.

**Have you had any experience with mediums or psychics? What convinced you that they were genuine, and not con-artists or tricksters?**

I have witnessed a very large number of mediums demonstrating. Most commonly this has been the mental types of mediumship, i.e. clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience, psychic art and trance mediumship. However, I have also on a number of occasions witnessed some of the physical (and somewhat rarer) types of mediumship, i.e. direct voice, transfiguration, apportation.

My observation is that a few mental mediums are absolutely superb (e.g. the late Gordon Higginson) and can come up with names,

addresses, specific medical conditions, etc. of the 'Other World' communicators, but that many such mediums are mediocre in their abilities.

As regards physical mediumship, I have had the opportunity to witness things at very close distance from the medium on occasion. Close observation sorts out what is genuine from what is not. For example, two so-called transfiguration mediums that I have encountered merely just 'pulled faces' all of a sudden and the faces tended not to be recognised.

However, at a Queenie Nixon séance, I saw something the colour of flesh floating near the medium's head with gradually joined up to her chin, producing the effect of a long, pointed chin - surely this was ectoplasm? Similarly, whilst the fingers of Dronfield medium Judith Birks were elongating, I observed a white fluid running along the edge of them - again, presumably ectoplasm.

Few mediums these days seem to be out-and-out frauds: today's audiences are usually too sophisticated to fall for trickery.

**What exactly is the "Michael Bentine" trophy?**

Until his passing in 1996, Michael Bentine was the President of ASSAP and so from 1997 onwards, each year, a trophy dedicated to his memory has been awarded by ASSAP to the member writing the best investigative report during the year. I was the first recipient of this trophy for a report written on the Penbury School Haunting, on which I shall speak at the YUFOS meeting. This year the trophy has been jointly awarded to me and to Colin Randall.

**Are your interests solely in the realms of ghosts and psychic study, or are you just as interested in UFOs, cryptozoology etc?**

I have a general interest in all aspects of anomalous phenomena, to the extent of reading about them, etc. However, my main interest is in psychic phenomena and that is where I become involved at a practical level. Not being psychic myself, I approach the subject from a research and investigation angle. Of extra special interest to me are Physical

Mediumship, Altered States of Consciousness and Spontaneous Psychic Phenomena (such as Hauntings).

Do you think that there is a link between such different forms of unexplained phenomena?

Sometimes. For example, there is scope for potential explanations for alien abductions in terms of sleep paralysis and OOBES. Another

obvious overlap is the possibility of ET intervention in the area of crop circles.

Lastly, where would you like to see your research take you in the coming year?

Ideally I would like to make progress through table tilting and/or the ouija towards getting to the bottom of whether such communications really emanate from the spirits of the departed.

## PUMA-LIKE CAT KILLS FARM DOG

Farmers working near the latest alarm are being urged to patrol in pairs and carry powerful torches as a way of protecting themselves from possible attack.

The animal which killed the dog, believed to be a whippet, made no attempt to attack the dog's owner but police are urging caution in any case.

A puma-like animal is thought to have attacked a dog.

The farmer saw the wild cat while checking his sheep. His dog attacked the animal, which turned and killed it.

The cat then began to start eating the dog before another cat appeared, which is when the farmer called the police.

One officer has reported seeing a Puma-like animal at the site, which is between the villages of Llangadog and Myddfai in the Tywi Valley.

The dog's carcass has been taken away for veterinary examination by the Welsh Assembly's wildlife advisory unit.

A police spokesman said: "It is important to stress that a shotgun will probably be ineffective against the cat which can cover ground very quickly.

"Farmers are advised to be extra vigilant in the hours of darkness when it is believed that the cat is more active. Farmers should at best be in pairs and carry high-powered torches.

"We ask that local residents do not attempt to search for the cat as this action is both

dangerous and will adversely effect the police operation."

In September 2002, a major search was carried out after two large unidentified 'cat like' animals were spotted by police in south east Wales.

Two helicopters fitted with thermal imaging cameras scoured the area above farmland at Goldcliff on the edge of Newport.

Police marksman searched the Gwent levels and experts from Bristol Zoo were alerted.

Despite the detailed search of the area, no further sightings of the cats were reported and the search was scaled down.

Last August, the British Big Cats Society said it had received more than 800 reports of animals including pumas, black panthers, leopards and so-called Fen tigers over a 12-month period.

Experts believe big cats in the UK are the offspring of beasts released by owners in the 1970s, after the introduction of stringent new laws governing wild and dangerous animals.

# LACK OF EVIDENCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTION TO THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL HYPOTHESIS

BY JOHN HARNEY

*(Originally published in Magonia Supplement No 41. 22 October 2002  
on-line version available at: [www.magonia.demon.co.uk/arc/00/ms41.htm](http://www.magonia.demon.co.uk/arc/00/ms41.htm))*

It is generally agreed that most UFO reports can be explained if sufficient and accurate information about them is available to investigators. It is said, though, that a small number of reports remain unexplained despite careful investigation, and that it is reasonable to suppose that these are sightings of extraterrestrial spacecraft. This is known as the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis (ETH).

The ETH is superficially attractive and apparently rational. Among the great mass of UFO reports are some genuine sightings of ET spacecraft and these are discovered by a process of elimination, rather like separating gold from gravel. Problems arise when a report seems impressive and is touted by believers in the ETH as definitely or probably a genuine sighting of an alien craft. When this happens, any further investigations or critical examination of the evidence and testimony tend to be unwelcome.

In cases where seemingly impressive reports have been subjected to further investigation, though, evidence usually emerges to show that there are mundane explanations available, or that there are serious flaws and inconsistencies in the evidence and testimony.

We are often told that certain cases cannot be explained as misperceptions or hoaxes because there were multiple witnesses, so they must be genuine UFOs. In the first issue of this newsletter, I briefly discussed the Trindade Island case of 16 January 1958, in which a UFO was allegedly seen and photographed from the Brazilian navy vessel *Almirante Saldanha*, and noted that there was no agreement as to how many witnesses there were.

Anyone who reads the literature on this case will also note that there are no statements available from these witnesses. It was simply asserted that there had been many witnesses,

even though the US Assistant Naval Attaché, when he boarded the ship, could not find anyone who claimed to have seen the UFO.

Since I published this, no one has been able to produce any statements made by these alleged witnesses, only statements by the principal witness, and by one or two people who were not even there at the time, assuring us that many of those on board the *Almirante Saldanha* actually saw the object.

This is the way UFO events tend to be treated when investigators wish to bolster their belief in the ETH. They are inclined to accept any details that point to exotic explanations and do not inquire too closely into the reliability of the evidence and testimony. Perhaps it would be helpful to those who are puzzled by the rejection of the ETH by many ufologists, if I try to set out the serious objections to it. Some of the objections that are made are false or irrelevant, so I think it is a good idea to try to compile a list of genuine ones. I'll start with a list which includes what seem to me to be a mixture of valid and invalid objections, given by Dr J. Allen Hynek in a lecture in 1983, (2) with my comments added:

## 1. "Failure of Sophisticated Surveillance Systems to Detect Incoming or Outgoing UFOs."

This seems a fairly sound objection. Spacecraft entering orbit, and space shuttles and satellites re-entering the atmosphere are routinely detected and tracked, as are many meteors. Yet UFOs are not tracked and spectacularly bright UFOs somehow fail to appear on satellite pictures. It is, of course, claimed by some ETH believers that UFO tracking information is kept secret, but surveillance is carried out by different nations. There are also many amateurs who track satellites and observe satellite re-entries and meteor showers, and would surely notice and make careful records

of anything unusual and share them with other enthusiasts.

## 2. "Gravitational and Atmospheric Considerations."

Extraterrestrials could not function on our planet as the beings in CE3s are said to do. They could not walk about with ease or inhale our air or, even more to the point, levitate.

CE3 sightings rarely have independent witnesses. This is not a problem unless we choose to believe such stories and take them as being real physical events rather than delusions. Before we start to explain or theorise about a UFO event we need to establish the facts of the case. Only if we can satisfy ourselves that the incident really took place as described should we include it in a list of UFO reports requiring explanation, by means of the ETH or otherwise.

We do not know what beings from other planets could or could not do if they landed on Earth, as we have no information about them. Anyway, if any of these CE3 sightings could be authenticated, then we would just have to accept them.

## 3. "Statistical Considerations".

Distant worlds would not -could not - dispatch as many spacecraft in the numbers UFO reports indicate.

Here we have to assume that a certain proportion of UFO reports are sightings of ET spacecraft. But even if we assume only about one per cent of reports to be genuine, this amounts to a large number (which somehow escape detection by surveillance systems).

This is not a valid objection because it is purely speculative. Assuming that intelligent beings exist elsewhere in the galaxy, we have no knowledge of what they are capable of doing. For example, it has been suggested that a sufficiently technologically advanced civilisation could produce a self-reproducing universal constructor, known as a von Neumann machine after the man who first showed that such a machine is theoretically possible. Once these machines got going they could produce as many spacecraft as required at no extra cost to their inventors. (3) So, at least in theory, there is no limit to the number of alien spacecraft that could be

visiting us, if we are willing to consider the possibility that they might exist.

## 4. "Elusive, Evasive and Absurd Behaviour of UFOs and Their Occupants."

The beings and the craft that bear them do not act as we would were we to travel to a faraway planet.

As with objection 2, we have no good reasons to take such observations too literally, and even if we do it is not reasonable to suppose that ETs would behave as we would expect them to.

## 5. "Isolation of the UFO Phenomenon in Space and Time: The Cheshire Cat Effect".

UFOs appear and disappear, staying visible for no more than brief periods of time; their being observed at Point A does not mean that they will be seen at Point B even if last spotted heading in that direction.

It is not easy to interpret this. Presumably Hynek was referring to what Jenny Randles has called the Oz Factor where the UFO is seen only by a single witness or a small group of witnesses, and other people in the vicinity at the same time notice nothing unusual. To most rational ufologists such reports suggest a psychological explanation should be sought.

## 6. "The Space 'Unworthiness' of the UFO".

Most UFOs are too small to sustain a crew over the vast distances of the cosmos.

This does not make sense. Obviously, interplanetary or interstellar spacecraft would be too big to land on or to enter the atmospheres of planets but would go into orbit and launch smaller craft for this purpose. This is familiar from accounts of manned and unmanned space missions, as well as science fiction stories.

## 7. "The Problem of Astronomical Distances".

Extraterrestrials could not get here in any reasonable time. (Hynek considered this to be a fatal objection.)

A number of answers to this objection have been suggested by scientists and science fiction writers, including suspended animation and

generation starships, where those who arrive at the intended destination are descendants of those who originally set out on the voyage. It can be argued that the vast distances involved make interstellar travel unlikely, but they certainly do not make it impossible.

Most of the objections to the ETH raised by other scientists also have no validity. For example, Carl Sagan argued that even if only a very small fraction of UFO reports were genuine, then there would have to be an unfeasibly large number of interstellar spacecraft. (4) All of Sagan's objections are purely speculative, and he dismisses UFO reports simply because he was able to explain a few which he investigated.

So far we have only one valid objection to the ETH which is that UFOs are not detected entering or leaving the Earth's atmosphere. If such observations were obtained and authenticated it would surely go a long way towards convincing many sceptics that we are indeed being visited by ETs. The other objections are incapable of being verified or are simply wrong, or purely speculative.

The main practical objection, which we have not yet dealt with, is that after 55 years of UFO investigations we not only have no verified observations of UFOs entering and leaving the Earth's atmosphere, but we also have no other clear, accurate and undisputed observations which strongly suggest ET visitations, and no undisputed physical evidence to be linked with the alleged activities of ETs and their spacecraft. We should also take into account the fact that all those who have claimed contact with ETs - whether they are called contactees or abductees - have failed to provide any new and important facts about other planets, etc. which were not already known and which could eventually be verified. For example, if the contactees of the 1950s had published precise, detailed descriptions of other planets, and if these descriptions had been found many years later to have been true and accurate, then they would have to be taken very seriously. But, as we all know, the vital information which will confirm the truth of the ETH always slips from our grasp, usually just when it seems it is about to be revealed to the world.

Many ETH believers insist that the evidence is kept secret by US government agencies. They never explain how these US agencies manage to persuade every other government in the world to keep the saucers secret also. They

never explain how any government agency can keep secret something which it does not control. Of course there is some government secrecy about UFO reports, but this concerns UFO investigation projects, not the UFOs themselves. Any individual or organisation, official or amateur, can conduct secret UFO investigations. Many of them do this so that they can work undisturbed by news media, cranks and the idly curious. They also do it because they wish to respect the rights of witnesses to privacy.

If there are genuine, ET, UFOs they can appear anywhere at any time and be seen by anyone. If there is physical evidence to be had it can fall into the hands of any individual or organisation. To maintain total secrecy about vital UFO evidence is simply impossible.

Thus, while many objections to the ETH have been put forward, it is at least logically possible. The only valid and important objection to it is simply lack of evidence.

### Notes

1. *The ETH and its proponents*, Magonia ETH Bulletin, No. 1, March 1998

2. Hynck, J. Allen, *The case against ET*, in Walter H. Andrus, Jr., and Dennis W. Stacy (eds), MUFON 1983 UFO Symposium Proceedings, 118-26, Mutual UFO Network, 1983 (quoted in Clark, Jerome, *The UFO Book: Encyclopedia of the Extraterrestrial*, Visible Ink, Detroit, 1998, 212)

3. Tipler, Frank J., *Extraterrestrial intelligent beings do not exist*, in Regis, Edward, Jr., *Extraterrestrials: Science and Alien Intelligence*, Cambridge University Press, 1985. Tipler's argument is that as ET spaceships are apparently not present in our solar system even though there has been plenty of time for ETs to evolve and develop von Neumann machines, then they don't exist. However, he admits: "But the evidence is not utterly conclusive; beings with extremely advanced technology could be present in our solar system and make their presence undetectable should they wish to do. The point is that a belief in the existence of extraterrestrial intelligent beings anywhere in the galaxy is not significantly different from the widespread belief that UFOs are extraterrestrial spaceships. In fact, I strongly suspect the psychological motivation of both beliefs to be the same, namely 'The expectation that we are going to be saved from ourselves by some miraculous interstellar intervention...'"

4. Sagan, Carl, *The extraterrestrial and other hypotheses*, in Sagan, Carl and Thornton Page (eds), *UFO: A Scientific Debate*, Cornell University Press, 1973

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE PEAK DISTRICT KIND

BY DAVID CLARKE

(Originally published in January 2003 issue *Peak District* magazine. Copyright *Peak District Magazine*)

From outside the Barley Mow looks much like any other public house nestling in a picturesque Derbyshire dale. But on entering the bar you sense there is something extraordinary going on. Even if you have missed the life-size model alien dangling from the ceiling, you cannot ignore a sign which reads: "ATTENTION! Please report all UFO sightings to the landlord."

Puns about "seeing things" on the way home from the pub are no longer a laughing matter in Bonsall. Villagers have been seeing weird lights in the sky around the old lead workings on Bonsall Moor for as long as anyone can remember. Once upon a time local story-tellers entertained visitors with stories about ghosts and boggarts. Today, these have been replaced by tales of ET visitations.

Two years have passed since Bonsall was proclaimed by a national newspaper as "the UFO capital of Britain." The title of UFO mecca has been held over the years by a motley collection of places. In the 60s UFOs and 'crop circles' plagued the town of Warminster on Salisbury Plain. More recently it was the turn of industrial Bonnybridge in Scotland. The choice of Bonsall - with a population of just over 800 - may reflect a new trend on behalf of ET tourists, attracted by the rural charm of the villages featured on TV's *Peak Practice*.

Bonsall's UFO hotspot has since made TV talkshows and in April 2001 UFO walks organised by Barley Mow landlord Alan Webster were featured on the BBC's *Country File*. As a result the village has become the centre of pilgrimage for UFO enthusiasts from across Britain, and indeed the world. Enthusiasts from as far afield as the USA and Australia have dropped in to walk the moors and to scan the skies. On two occasions the village hall has played host to public meetings by UFO societies eager to spread the message that ET does indeed exist.

Barley Mow landlord Alan Webster, who had several "sightings" of his own, has catered for

the interest by making his pub a base for UFO-spotting expeditions. He encourages visitors to discuss their experiences and add them to a growing list of stories he can recite for visitors.

"We've had people arriving who have heard about Bonsall and want to see for themselves where these things have been seen," said Alan. "Once they know you have seen something they will open up and we've had many people who have told their stories for the first time when they visited the pub."

"The first one I saw was years ago at a football match in the village when this object came over, like a silver coloured cigar and very low down. Someone shouted that it was like an aeroplane without wings, but the game did not stop. That's how commonplace these things have become."

Alan was quick to see the potential of UFOs as an added attraction to draw tourists to the dale. For six years he has been taking groups of walkers on short guided strolls around Bonsall Moor, Masson Hill and Ible. On the way, Alan shares his knowledge of local geology, folklore and archaeology with stops at places of historical interest which include the remains of some the deepest underground lead workings in the Peak. As word spread, Alan began to include UFO stories in his walks, pointing out locations where weird sights had been reported. To date, more than 3,000 visitors have enjoyed the Bank Holiday walks, and there is no sign that interest is on the wane.

But when did the idea of Bonsall as a hotspot for UFOs begin, and is there any substance to the stories? Rumours first began to circulate shortly before the Millennium with "spooky" visions of eerie fog, columns of cloud and rainbow coloured lights on the moors above Matlock. Over a period of four months there were 19 separate sightings reported from the village and surrounding moors, all faithfully chronicled by the local weekly paper, the *Matlock Mercury*. Other strange sightings included a "ball of fire" in the sky above Matlock, a "multi-coloured disc" over

Carsington and "a pink glow, vertically shaped like a shoebox" seen by a man walking his dog.

But it was a sighting near Bonsall which propelled the local mystery into national - and international - headlines, and gave credibility to what were previously just stories. This time there was concrete proof - six and a half minutes of camcorder footage of a classic 'flying saucer.'

It was just after 9pm on a dark October night in 2001 and Sharon and Hayden Rowlands were watching TV in their cottage at Slaley, near Bonsall, when the drama began. Sharon had spotted a bright light in the dark sky through the cottage window which appeared to be above Middleton Woods. Rushing to the window, the couple could see the light appeared to come from a disc-shaped object around two miles away.

Luckily, the family camcorder was loaded with batteries and Sharon was able to capture the UFO. Sharon was reported as saying: "It resembled a giant disc with a bite taken out of the bottom. It had yellow, orange and blue lights - with intricate markings and a dark circle in the centre. It came really close at one stage and I thought it was going to land in the field...you can hear me on the video say 'Wow!' It was huge and through the lens it looked as if it was going to hit me. I can't explain it - it's like nothing else I've ever seen."

Soon the story spread around the village and the Rowlands invited neighbours to a see the footage. As a result, many who were once sceptical about UFOs were converted. Word reached journalist Andy Darlington who became one of the first - and last - to see what has been proclaimed as "the best UFO video ever taken." Andy, who admits he is 'a believer', told me: "It could not have been an aircraft because it makes no noise and it is disc-shaped. I have never seen an aircraft which looked like that. During the filming it grows, getting bigger and then smaller like she is zooming in and out with the camera. This goes on for four or five minutes and then the UFO flips over and you can see two white lights. It faces sideways and goes from right to left across the screen before it disappears."

The story even reached Los Angeles where it was seen by Bob Kiviat at Fox studios, which specialises in UFO documentaries. Kiviat was reported to have negotiated an exclusive contract worth £20,000 for the rights to the

film. He was interested because of its similarity to a UFO filmed by the crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia in 1996. Despite these sensational claims two years have passed, no documentary has appeared and today Sharon Rowlands will not, or cannot, comment further. The footage - according to local rumours - remains locked away in a bank vault and, in true X-Files style, the most promising piece of evidence remains strangely elusive.

It was this UFO footage that propelled Bonsall into the media spotlight as the place for ET visitations and in the process gave the tourist industry a welcome, if most unusual boost. But many questions remain unanswered: why would extraterrestrials be so keen to visit the Peak District?

Some have suggested that most of the sightings can be explained as natural phenomena such as aircraft, illuminated blimps and meteors. Writer Jenny Randles, who lives at Dove Holes near Buxton has penned more than 40 books on UFOs and other supernatural mysteries, but remains sceptical about the sightings. Jenny points out that both civilian and military aircraft use the area regularly. "Many people passing through on the A6 don't realise how close they are to Manchester airport and can be deceived," she says. "At night engines are throttled back so they pass over quietly, often being seen through the low mist that commonly shrouds the Peaks. This can leave just the sight of the lights - not the plane itself. Rescue helicopters and traffic spotter planes are common in the area too."

The Truth, as always, remains 'still out there,'; but perhaps the most amusing explanation for the UFO visits came from Mick Pope, landlord of the King's Head pub. "Bonsall is very high up - 1,217ft above sea level," he said. "And after all the heavy rain we've had I reckon they've had trouble with the windscreen wipers on their UFO and have had to come down low."

\*The UFO Walk leaves the Barley Mow at 11 am every Bank Holiday Monday and on the last Monday in June. The route varies but is usually around four miles, and is suitable for all ages including families with children. There is no charge and parking is available in the car park opposite the pub. Alan will also escort small groups outside of these dates by prior arrangement. For details call 01629 825685.

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# A VIEW FROM BRITAIN

## THE JENNY RANGLES COLUMN

*(Originally published in The MUFON JOURNAL, October 2001)*

(Editor's note - Please bear in mind the original date of publication. YUFOS extends its thanks to Jenny & to Dwight Connely, editor of The MUFON Journal, for permission to reproduce this work.)

### JUST WHAT DO WE KNOW?

This fall is a particularly reflective time, for many reasons. The terrible events of September 11th have probably altered history and caused us all to be more introspective. I also have a significant birthday this season so that tends to concentrate the mind as well!

As such I found myself thinking back over the years that I have been involved in UFO research and asking a question that many of us might stop to ponder. What exactly do I know now - with reasonable assurance - that I did not know when I first started to probe this mystery? In other words, I guess, what I have learned about the UFO phenomenon over 30 years that I have been actively involved?

#### There are no easy answers.

When I first took an interest in UFOs - following a sighting when I was staying with my grandparents by the seaside - it seemed a very exciting area. The questions posed by the books that I read were very simplistic -which planet did the aliens come from? Why were they here? What reason did the government have for hiding the truth? And so on.

This was not really a complicated situation. You either believed UFOs were real, thanks to the weight of evidence, or you were a skeptic (aka the enemy). If you believed then the explanation for these visitors was straightforward. They came from an advanced civilisation for some reason or another.

I guess, looking back, I am struck by the naivety of what then (in the mid sixties) was a view probably forged from the thrill of the space age that unfolded all around us. Each month some new discovery about the cosmos was occurring. We were watching on TV feats that people will be reading about in history books centuries from now. It was all very infectious and easy to get carried away with the urge to transplant this mood of an

interplanetary community onto those flickering lights in the sky.

Probably the most important lesson that I have learned is one of realism. If the answers had been simple then I reckon that by now we would have proof of them. In truth we are probably little closer to that than we were when Neil Armstrong took that one small step.

I never dreamt back then that there was a third way to look at UFOs -but it was something that time and experience dragged me towards. A recognition that you did not have to assume that aliens were coming here at all in order to accept the reality of unexplained UFO sightings. Nor that you must deny UFO reality if you conclude that there are no aliens. That it is a perfectly legitimate view (indeed one that in many ways is dictated by the confusion of evidence) to take a middle road. It is good sense to regard UFOs as a genuine scientific anomaly and seek other possible explanations that stretch our knowledge other than the ETH (extra-terrestrial hypothesis).

So, I find the broadening of the search for answers that has occurred one of the most telling differences. I never expected to be researching and writing about topics as diverse as near death experiences, precognition, spontaneous human combustion, strange marks in crop fields, quantum physics and so on - all in some way connected with the UFO mystery.

But I have and I think that many things seem important today that all those years ago I probably would not have contemplated. The apparent psychic track record of close encounter witnesses. Their ability to recall very early life (suggestive of differing brain chemistry). The way that many encounters appear to occur in an out of body state. The physical power of the energies involved in some cases and what this tells us about the nature of the phenomenon involved.

UFology has diversified, just as science has done. Once everyone was just a philosopher on life, the universe and everything. Now there are thousands of specialist science disciplines. Similarly I don't think there are really UFOlogists any more, but people most interested in hunting down specific phenomena.

Actually, accepting this is very necessary. A lot of the antagonism that occurs within UFology arises because of lack of recognition of this diversification. UFOlogist A says that I believe UFOs are such and such. Skeptic B says, no they are not they can be explained away as something else. Conflict appears to arise, unless you understand that in UFology it is perfectly possible for both views to be correct simultaneously.

We should treat alternative ideas as interesting possibilities not as feared rivals to our own beliefs.

### There's only one flying saucer.

Which brings me to the above unspoken litany - an assumption I made and many people still make - but one that is wholly unfounded. The idea that there is just one answer to the flying saucer mystery - that someone will crack like the unified field theory and earn the UFOlogical equivalent of the Nobel Prize. This has acted like a road block on progress.

I think it is one of the most important things that I did not see back then. There is no such thing as 'the UFO phenomenon'. Its a term - like 'the weather' - that we use for convenience, but which becomes a hindrance if we mistake that generic term for being something more than it is.

Think of the weather. We can ask a question - such as 'what is the weather like?' - and answer it with - it is sunny or raining or a bit windy or whatever. Similarly we can make statements about the UFO phenomenon that it has one characteristic, or another, and from this think that we have defined the mystery. But we have not. As with the weather all that we have done is to describe the UFO phenomenon. These are not the same thing at all.

If we want to know what being sunny or what rain is then we have to dispense with the concept of weather generically - and look for causes of these individual phenomena. For various processes are at work within the

atmosphere creating a range of things that we see as different kinds of weather. And generally speaking you will not understand one by studying the other. You will only start to do so once you realise that weather is a word we use to conveniently describe a number of different physical phenomena that each require separate explanations but all get mixed together in human perception.

They do, of course, interact from time to time. The study of climatology, for instance, is a cohesive one that brings these independent weather phenomena together and looks at their effects on the world's eco systems.

This is a model I think we can usefully apply to UFology. We need to be aware that there are various things that each describe certain kinds of UFO. There may well be nothing directly connecting - say - the reason for an alien abduction and a ball of light that stalls a car engine. Our problem often comes in not accepting this well demonstrated fact. In our desire to find the connecting thread even when there is no overwhelming reason to conclude that one must exist.

We regularly work on the presumption that a mythical 'UFO phenomenon' bonds together what are likely to be disparate things and in need of utterly different interpretations. Because we spend so much time in pursuit of the glue that will bind these together we miss the greater need - to find individual answers to each of these possibly quite unique phenomena.

The analogy with the weather goes deeper still, for there is a UFOlogical equivalent of climatology. Although there may be various different phenomena that are behind a range of reported UFO mysteries, something links them together within our culture. Socio-ufology is certainly a valid type of research to investigate the social and psychological forces that underpin the reporting of and belief in UFO mysteries.

There is a tendency amongst some UFOlogists to look down on this field as if it is little better than treason to study belief systems not UFOs proper. Equally some socio-ufologists probably have a rather inflated view of their subject, which in of itself seeks not to explain the causes of UFology but the consequences. However, there is clearly a need for both to live together and much that can be mutually gained

## Other lessons learnt.

Of course, the above thoughts are far from being the only things that I have concluded after so many years. There are plenty of other realities that I now can see that I did not see at first.

For example, the importance of solved cases. These are not just stories to be tossed aside as 'failed UFOs'. They are very important. If you stop and think just a moment you will see why. Unsolved UFO cases are just that - unsolved. You can never prove a UFO is a UFO. Certainly not a specific type of UFO (such as an alien spaceship). If you do not find an answer then the case is incomplete and must remain in limbo as potentially explicable, probably forever.

On the other hand IFOs - solved cases - have a start, a middle and an end where the answer is found. Not only do these cases account for up to 95% of all reported UFO sightings (so hardly inconsequential) but they are the only ones that offer us the chance to fully see UFOlogy in action from woe to go.

Through a study of IFOs we can gain enormous amounts of understanding about why people see something in the form of a UFO - data about perception, reporting, investigating and so on that can be invaluable if properly applied to all our other cases.

It is time we accepted IFOs as the invaluable weapon that they are - one of the most key pieces of data in our quest for answers. I suggest a change in mind set, perceiving IFOs as successes and the unsolved cases as the real failures - as, whilst seemingly insoluble UFOs are important, this way of viewing things is in reality closer to the truth than the way most of us regard any explained sighting.

When Dr David Clarke, Andy Roberts and I wrote our book on solved cases (*The UFOs that Never Were*) back in 1999 we were trying to make this point to UFOlogy. Predictably, of course, nobody was listening and the book's total disappearance from bookshelves could probably offer useful lessons in cover up tactics to the powers that be. Yet, even if nobody is ever likely to read it I still think it makes a vital point, as noted above, that needed to be stressed.

## What next?

So where do we go from here? The point of

learning lessons is to do something about things that seem wrong and try to do things better. But, of course, you first have to admit that the current methods are not working. I think that ought to be self evident, but I doubt many of you agree otherwise we would not still be arguing about it. We would be implementing big changes to the structure and approach of UFOlogy to replace the methods that have patently failed for so long with new ideas that just might work. At least we would if we do not want to still be having the same discussion years from now.

Unfortunately, I fear, some people may actually prefer that. UFOlogy is fun as a mystery. But as a collection of solved mysteries its an ex subject!

However, if we are serious about learning lessons and progressing I have in previous columns suggested some ways we might go. For instance, recall when I discussed the need for far more meaningful conferences than the ones that we have today. UFO conferences are not used as opportunities to further research, but as social gatherings. Whilst I do not deny that the latter are fun and also useful - without the former progressive breed of conference UFOlogy will just continue to stagnate.

Sadly there is precious little sign that this nettle will be grasped.

I also think that we need to reassess what kind of evidence we are seeking. In fact, in some ways, these days hard evidence for UFOs has almost become an irrelevance. It has not been very forthcoming in the past and so people have stopped looking for it.

Where today is the flood of cases involving landing traces, physiological effects, car stops and so on? People seem to have lost interest in reporting or researching these. Instead we are swamped with dubious videos for TV specials, most of which show useless squiggles of largely explicable light, or we pursue vaguer questions such as the meaning behind abduction stories.

I do not deny that these are part of UFOlogy. But I do wonder about priorities.

That, to me, has been one of our greatest mistakes. We are concentrating far too much effort on having theoretical arguments about phenomena that are irreproducible and unprovable. Whilst I do not suggest there is no place for this kind of exploration, it has

overtaken objective research to such a degree that virtually none of the latter is taking place.

We need to reconsider our objectives and ask just what it is that we are trying to establish. For whatever we think it is right now we are not succeeding in doing it and an admission of that will be the first step on the way towards progression.

There is a fascination with the great unknown that sees us obsessed with the big issues - such as trying to persuade the powers that be to disclose things when in my estimation they cannot do. I believe that they know less than we do about what is going on - and once they have disclosed that reality - if indeed anyone will believe them (!) (indeed they already have and most UFOlogists predictably remain distrustful) then this is pretty much a massive waste of energy to hunt down non-existent conspiracies. Fun as seeking smoking guns might be we would be far better employed seeking smoking UFOs.

What we should be doing is returning to basics using the vastly improved technology of the 21st century to aid in our quest. Ghost hunters - for example - have moved with the times. They are not sitting around counting their stories about phantoms or demanding that the Pentagon open up their spook files so as to reveal the truth! Ask yourself why. But you will not like the answer!

Instead, ghost hunters have developed technology to take account of some of the patterns they have found within apparitional data. They have devices that measure changes in the moisture content of a room, alterations in electrostatic fields and cameras adapted to respond by automatically filming a location where these changes are occurring.

Yet in UFOlogy we are still by comparison very lazy. We sit here waiting for a spaceship to crash or the government to do our job for us by revealing 'the truth'. In fact the government has way more important things to do these days than fret about UFOs. That is supposed to be our job.

After 30 years I reckon it is about time we started doing it.

## NEXT MEETING

Tuesday  
11 February 2003

7:00pm – 10:00 pm

YUFOS presents

*Special guest speaker*

### BILL EYRE

Of the Chesterfield  
Psychic Studies Group  
(CPSG) and ASSAP

*Bill will be talking about his  
years investigating ghosts,  
hauntings and the paranormal,  
and the investigation into the  
"Penbury School" case...*

*Ring for admission details*

UFOs:  
SUB ROSA\*  
DOWN UNDER  
THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY & GOVERNMENT  
ROLE IN THE UFO CONTROVERSY (part 2)  
BY BILL CHALKER  
(Copyright © B. Chalker - 1996)

The author is a leading Australian UFO researcher and a contributing editor to the International UFO Reporter. An industrial chemist with an honours science degree from the University of New England he has worked in quality assurance and laboratory management. His book, *The OZ Files - the Australian UFO Story*, was published in 1996. He coordinates the NSW based UFO Investigation Centre (UFOIC).

Bill has allowed his work to be published in Project Red Book on numerous occasions, and it is now my pleasure to begin a major series on Bill's research into the secret investigations of the Australian government and military of UFOs.

- Sub Rosa: refers to "under the rose", meaning "in secret".

### STRANGE LIGHTS AND VANISHINGS IN 1920

The official files do not confirm military activity before 1950, however research has confirmed involvement by the military, albeit in some cases, cursory in nature, back as far as 1920. The Navy submarine depot ship, the *Platypus*, was involved in the search for a missing schooner, the *Amelia J.*, in Bass Strait. Mystery lights, thought at the time to be "evidently rockets", were observed. Two aircraft left the flying training school and aircraft depot at Point Cook to join in the investigation. One was piloted by a Major Anderson and the other by Captain W.J. Stutt - an instructor for the NSW Government Aviation school at Richmond (a forerunner to the Richmond RAAF base, established soon after the birth of the RAAF in 1921). Stutt and his mechanic, Sergeant Dalzell, were last seen by Major Anderson flying into a large cloud. Their plane and the schooner were never found. Fifty-eight years later the Bass Strait became the centre of another extraordinary plane/pilot disappearance, namely the Valentich affair of 1978.

### AUSTRALIA'S FIRST OFFICIAL UFO INVESTIGATION?

In 1930, an Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) officer, Squadron Leader George Jones, was sent to Warrnambool, Victoria, to investigate reports of mystery aircraft flying

over the coast. No explanation was found in this first official RAAF UFO investigation. Further "mystery aircraft" reports were made in the near Pacific and Papua New Guinea area in 1930, and in 1931 the RAAF was denying any of her planes were the explanation for "mystery planes reported widely in Tasmania." Jones was to become RAAF Chief of the Air Staff during World War Two, and subsequently Air Marshall Sir George Jones. He was himself to become a UFO witness in 1957. He also became a valuable advocate of serious UFO research, being a patron of the short lived national civilian UFO research organisation CAPIO - Commonwealth Aerial Phenomena Investigation Organisation, and a member of VUFORS - the Victorian UFO Research Society.

### MILITARY MATTERS

On October 10th, 1935, an off duty military man took what was possibly Australia's first UFO photograph at Nobby's Head near Newcastle, NSW. Although the photos are now apparently unavailable, investigators who saw the photo during 1968-69 reported it showed "a definite circular object with details seen well at enlargement."

We have already seen that Bass Strait was no stranger to extraordinary UFO mysteries. The crew of a Beaufort bomber flying at 4,500 feet over Bass Strait, during February, 1944, bore

witness to what may have been Australia's earliest "electromagnetic" (EM) case.

At about 2.30 am the plane gained a most unusual companion. A "dark shadow" appeared along side the plane and kept pace with it, at a distance of only some 100 to 150 feet. The Beaufort was travelling at about 235 miles per hour. The object appeared to have a flickering light and flame belching from its rear end. Only about 15 feet of the rear end of the UFO was visible to the bomber crew, apparently due to "reflection of light from the exhaust." T

The strange object stayed with the bomber for some 18 to 20 minutes, during which time all radio and direction finding instruments refused to function. It finally accelerated away from the plane at approximately three times the speed of the bomber. Upon landing, the pilot reported the incident to his base superiors, but he claimed he was only laughed at. Such a reaction seems extraordinary in retrospect since it turns out that Beauforts figured heavily in official RAAF list of planes that "went missing without trace" during World War Two in the Bass Strait area - an area that was not linked to any significant enemy activity. I have been told that the Beauforts had a mechanical problem that may have accounted for some of these losses.

### 1950 - THE EARLIEST DAFI FILES

We have already seen evidence of earlier cursory interest by the military. However, the earliest still extant sighting report in the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence (DAFI) files was a nocturnal light account at Bass Point, NSW, on July 16, 1950. The growing number of reports that involved official agencies and highly regarded sources served to heighten official interest, initially from two quarters, namely the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA).

### 1952 GAF PILOT ENCOUNTER

The following report is striking not only because of the contents and the calibre of the witness. Just one day earlier, the Minister for Air, William McMahon (a future Australian Prime Minister) had stated in parliament that the "flying saucer" reports were "probably based on flights of imagination". The chief test pilot for the Government Aircraft Factories was not given to "flights of

imagination" and yet at approximately 1200 hours on August 14th, 1952, while flying in a Vampire aircraft, between 35,000 and 36,000 feet, near Rockhampton, Queensland, he observed something he could not explain. Looking east, towards the coast, the pilot saw a large circular light at a lower elevation which could not be estimated due to bad ground haze. The light was the colour of an ordinary incandescent light globe.

After approximately one minute a number of small lights (6 to 10) appeared to come from the main light. The smaller lights appeared to surround the bright light for about 2 minutes before disappearing. After a further 2 minutes the big light also disappeared. That report did not become public knowledge. It may have been embarrassing for the Minister if it had. The report remained classified until I found it in DCA UFO files I was permitted to examine at the offices of the Bureau of Air Safety Investigations during November, 1982.

### THE DRURY AFFAIR - "the holy grail of Australian ufology?"

While civilian interest was growing, extensive official interest focused on a daylight movie footage of an extraordinary unidentified "missile" over Port Moresby, taken by Tom Drury, the Deputy Director of the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) in Papua New Guinea, then an Australian territory.

On August 23rd, 1953, Tom Drury was taking pictures at about midday. The sky was clear, when a small cloud began to form. After a few minutes a silver object came out of the cloud. Drury had started filming. The object climbed very fast, with a vapour trail behind it clear marking its trajectory. It was gone in a few seconds. A handwritten note in DAFI files specifically states that the object was not a secret missile-firing from Woomera.

The Drury UFO film became a controversial and famous mainstay of the Australian contribution to the UFO "cover-up" argument. It became all the more controversial when it was claimed that the UFO section of the film was missing and the RAAF were denying any knowledge of its whereabouts.

Late in 1982 when I was given permission to examine the Department of Aviation UFO files, I specifically requested to see any holdings on the Drury affair DoA file 128/1/208 part 2 was created in 1982 to enable

me to examine Drury documents extracted from a separate DCA file, 99/1/478 classified SECRET, which apparently held folios about possible enemy activity in the Papua New Guinea territories. These extracts contained some copies of folios from the original DAFI file, 114/1/197 Part 1, opened on 30/10/53 and entitled *Photographs of Unexplained Aerial Object over New Guinea forwarded by T.C. Drury*. It was also originally classified SECRET and was "lost" over the years.

It seems clear that the Australian military were looking at the Drury film in the light of possible prosaic threats to security, i.e. the communist "red" peril. Within a year the high tide of McCarthyism swept over the Australian landscape in the form of the Petrov affair. Soon the hunt was on for "reds" under the bed (communists) and in the skies (the "Martians" of the 1954 UFO wave to come).

It should not be underestimated the level of possible manipulation of the UFO controversy by intelligence organisations who feared the hand of more prosaic forces than those sort by the wild eyed "saucer" enthusiasts of the day. Evidence for this will be encountered later.

Tom Drury himself indicated to me he felt that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) (which is responsible for internal security in Australia, including counter espionage) was involved. I interviewed the two ASIO operatives who were in Papua New Guinea at that time.

Predictably neither were terribly informative, with one of them stating only that if they had any involvement it was only as a "courier" for the film's passage to Melbourne, the then headquarters of the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence (DAFI), RAAF, and for that matter the headquarters for DCA and ASIO. An ASIO document dated January 15th, 1973, states that "copies of the film were passed to the USAF and the RAF. Drury is said to have received back a print of the film but without any UFO shots."

Mr. Drury feels that the processing and analyses required to study his film while it was in the hands of the intelligence community may have destroyed it. It is known that the film did go to the United States for study. There it appeared to have come under CIA scrutiny via Art Lundahl's photographic analysis group. A 1955 RAAF UFO file indicates that DAFI had sold prints of the 1953 UFO pictures "at 4/9 a pop" to civilian researchers. Edgar Jarrold and

Fred Stone were among those who secured copies of these prints.

Edgar Jarrold's own publication, the *Australian Flying Saucer Magazine*, stated in its February, 1955, issue that:

"94 prints examined reveal conclusively the existence of a shiny, disc-like object whose behaviour could by no wildest stretching of the imagination be attributed to a bird, balloon, orthodox aircraft, hallucination, piece of windblown paper, natural phenomena, or a meteor. The cloud from which the silvery object ... emerged is distinctly visible. On emerging from it at a right angle with no other clouds apparent in a clear sky, still pictures reveal vivid confirmation of Mr. Drury's report that an object, looking at first like a tiny brilliant sun, dashed rapidly from the cloud, heading north-west. The object flashed brightly in the sun as it made an abrupt right-angle turn soon after emerging from the dark cloud, zooming straight up with no reduction in speed. Upon reaching a greater altitude, it levelled off again, with another *abrupt right-angled turn* [Jarrold's emphasis - B.C.], resuming its north-west flight thereafter until out of camera range altogether.... On effecting such turns, a greater expanse of the object's upper surface becomes visible, causing it to present a featureless, disc-like appearance, which is in sharp contrast to first glimpses showing an object somewhat blurred in focus, and shaped like a theoretically fast moving, very bright star."

Jarrold wrote years later;

"...I was able to view blown up still pictures made from this film before it left Australia due to the American request and am still, I think, the only civilian ever to have seen them. The pictures show what could only be accepted as an extra-terrestrial object, the flight path and behaviour of which, rule out any man made object or meteor. The film was made about midday against a cloudless sky and unfortunately the object was filmed from a distance, thus providing little real knowledge of the object's shape and composition, main importance being attached to its most unusual actions and behaviour."

It should be noted that Drury himself observed no discontinuity in the UFO's flight path. Whether the claims of 90° turns were legitimately recorded on the film, or were due to camera movement, or were artifacts of processing, analyses or just plain extravagant

interpretations based on limited or poor data, we may never know. The references to 90° turns all stem from Jarrold. No one else, who either saw the film or prints, made such claims. The limited prints I have make any analysis impossible. They are very poor in quality.

Documentation I examined in the DCA and DAFI files contradicts Jarrold's claims to have been the only one to have seen the prints and to have seen them before the original footage was sent to the United States.

A letter to Jarrold from Mr. E.W. Hicks, secretary, the Department of Air, dated December 2nd, 1953, states that "the film has been sent to the United States for technical processing, and it is therefore, not possible to accede to your request [for contact prints - B.C.] until its return, which, it is anticipated, will be early in the New Year..."

The Minister for Air, Mr. McMahon, was quoted in the press during late January, 1954, that he "had the film flown to the U.S to be enlarged." He further stated that the object "was so small that a detailed study of the film was not possible until technicians had enlarged it." (McMahon, 1954). The official files also records a letter from DAFI to Mr. Wiggins of the DCA dated 12/7/54 which states, "The 'Flying Saucer' film taken by Mr. T.C. Drury, at Port Moresby in 1953 and forwarded by you on 22 Sept. is returned here with. We have subjected the film to detailed study and processing but have been unable to establish anything other than the blur of light appears to move across the film. In spite of this disappointment we would like to thank you for your co-operation in this matter."

Thus the evidence suggests that Jarrold would have not got his prints until July, 1954. probably during a meeting he had with Air Force intelligence. Fred Stone also received copies of the same prints late in 1954 during a meeting he had with Air Force intelligence.

In a letter Stone wrote to the Director of Air Force Intelligence in 1973 he stated:

"The original film was much clearer to view when shown on a screen and I can only presume that the use of them by the bodies of the US Air Force, then their Navy Dept. plus our own Air Force and Navy caused them to get into the state they were when the blow up copies were made. I might add that I kept my promise to the official at the time when I was interviewed in Melbourne regarding same and

they have never been shown publicly and only to executives of UFO Groups and Societies and then on a very select basis..."

The original Drury film, which allegedly held the UFO image, became something of a "holy grail" for Australian ufology. A number of efforts were made over the years to secure the film and further information about the affair. All largely met with failure.

A previously confidential RAAF document handwritten in 1966 and entitled *Summary of the effort made to rediscover present whereabouts of the allegedly 'excised' frames of Mr. T. Drury's Famous 1953 movie film of the Port Moresby 'UFO sighting'*, concluded: "

"The upshot is that the 'excised' frames either still in DAFI archives, have been destroyed or (perish the thought) have been lost."

Further civilian enquiries in 1973 prompted yet another file search. This time, as we have already noted, DAFI determined that they had made available prints of the film to civil researchers back in 1954. Through Fred Stone the RAAF managed to gain a copy of the same prints the RAAF had provided him back in 1954. It is these third generation copies of prints from several frames of the Drury film that now reside in the RAAF files. I arranged for the RAAF to send copies of the prints (albeit poor in quality) to Tom Drury. The affair does not speak highly of the much vaunted "cover-up" claims.

*(Continued next issue)*

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