5 20 PENCE

APRIL 1978

REPORTS HOT UP

by RICHARD BEET FRAS

UFO reports are coming in at the rate of two a day at the time of going to press. Sightings in the Farnborough area of Hampshire, together with reports from all over Surrey are contributing to the biggest flap in the area since the spate of sightings around Basingstoke last year.

The *Daily Express*, (of Close Encounter serialisation fame) carried a centre spread in its 7 April issue. It linked sightings from Farnborough, Ash in Surrey and Ashdown Forest, implying that the same object had been seen travelling from west to east. Investigations were however soon to prove that this was not the case, and that sensationalism was to be the name of the game.

We first got to hear of these reports through member Alan Franklin, a journalist living at Alton. The first event was reported by a caretaker at Ash Walsh school, who telephoned the police after observing a multi-coloured object for over an hour. Constable Alan Craggs was called out after the caretaker had telephoned Mount Browne police HQ to report the object. Mount Browne claimed that they were unable to put him in contact with a UFO organisation, and so sent a constable to the scene. PC Craggs, with the caretaker, watched the object for about 20 minutes on(5 April in the evening). It changed colour "through the spectrum", moved erratically in the sky over Twesledown, Aldershot, travelling north.

At about the same time, a woman at Farnborough telephoned police to say that her young son had been frightened by an oval-shaped object which gave out golden flashes as it hovered over playing fields in the area. Towards the east, at a farm near Kingstanding in the Ashdown Forest area of Sussex, at about 22.30 hours again on 5 April, an object was reported as breaking in two as it fell from the sky. On impact, the object started a gorse fire, and appliances were sent to the area.

Of course this was just what the *Express* had been waiting for - an event to substantiate the publicity they had given to the subject a few weeks earlier. Under the banner "Close Encounter of the REAL Kind" the paper went mad. The impression was of a multi-coloured UFO which had swept in from the west, over Aldershot, past Guildford, and had finally crashed in flames in a Sussex forest. A picture showed police the following day searching the Ashdown Forest, armed with geiger counters in the event of radioactivity. Real science fiction stuff.

But what are the facts?

* The Farnborough lady's son had run indoors from a local recreation field to say that he and two friends had seen a "large, cigar-shaped object'HOVERING' over the playing fields. Time - 21.00 hours. Itwas not moving. She ran out to see lights flashing she could not explain.

* The police at Guildford received a call from the Ash caretaker at 21.50 hours. The caretaker had already been observing the light for an hour and a half.

* In Sussex, the flaming object hit the ground at 22.30 hours.

This period of observation, from about 20.20 hours at Ash, to 22.30 hours in the Ashdown Forest does not give the impression of a consistent trajectory.

The object also appears to have undertaken some remarkable shape changes.

At Farnborough it was "cigar-shaped"; by the time it reached Ashdown forest it was a flaming object; while in Ash, the caretaker and the policeman were looking at a stationary, or near-stationary object changing colour.

From the information that Sigap has (we have interviewed both the caretaker and the Farnborough woman), it would be illogical to assume that what was reported that night in three locations, was due to the same object. Our preliminary conclusions are that:

* The son of the Farnborough woman did see something strange, something similar in appearance to the recent local reports of disc-shaped objects with a kind of fin. The flashes she observed may have been caused by an army flare, or by military exercises in the area which we understand were taking place that night. We also understand that some night flying from the Royal Aircraft Establishment was under way on that Wednesday evening.

* The school caretaker and the policeman from Guildford were looking at the planet Jupiter, now at a magnitude of -1.7 in the constellation of Taurus. Atmospheric aberrations caused by moving dust particles and tiny crystals of ice high in the atmosphere can cause an observed distant source of light to appear to change colour. Observing the light source for more than a few minutes, particularly by using binoculars, would give the impression of erratic movement for two main reasons. First, the difficulty in establishing a suitable reference point (Jupiter's elevation above the horizon would have been about 40 degrees). And second, but not least, would be eye fatigue. By the time the constable arrived on the scene, the witness would be so convinced of movement and colour changes, his description (we suggest) would influence even a policeman's reasoning.

* Both Bufora and the British UFO Documentation Centre have carried out investigations into the report from Sussex. At the time of going to press, Bufora's investigation results were not known, but both BUDC and the local police force were convinced that the cause of both the UFO and the fire was an army flare, possibly fired as part of a local exercise involving army cadets.

There are lessons to be learnt from this series of experiences.

1 Don't believe everything you read. National newspapers are fighting for survival, and they will do anything to increase circulation. Already this year, national dailies have lost 27,000,000 copies due to strikes.

2 Don't believe your eyes. What you think you are seeing is not necessarily the reality.

3 Policemen can get it wrong too.

4 Out of bad, comes good. The publicity given to these incidents have provoked a spate of reports which are still coming in. We have at least four further reports which tally with that of the Farnborough boy. These reports are being investigated.

It is possible that a large-scale military exercise was taking place on the Wednesday night. If so, it would account for much of the aerial activity, friendly or hostile! We are surprised that we were not contacted sooner by the police, and we shall be taking steps to ensure that communications between Sigap and the police are improved.

SIGAPNEWSSIGAPNEWSSIGAPNEWSSIGAPNEWSSIGAPNEWSSIGAPNEWSSIGAPNEWS

NEXT MEETING

The next Sigap meeting will be held as usual, at the Prospect Club, Prospect Road, Ash Vale, Aldershot.

Our speaker will be:

ALAN WEST--Director, British UFO Documentation Centre

who will be talking about the work of his organisation.

Alan is a past Director of Bufora, and for a short time was Liaison Officer for that organisation. All members and friends are welcome.

Date: WEDNESDAY 19 APRIL - 8.00pm

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Omar Fowler and Richard Beet were invited as representatives of Sigap to the press preview on 3 March of the film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Its a film not to be missed by ufologists, and unless you are prepared to wait until about August, you will have to travel to London for the privilege. Star perfomances from Richard Dreyfuss and four-year old Cary Guffey add the human touch, while the special effects are out of this world. The optimism of this friendly encounter, and the blind faith of the hosts is perhaps a little too much to hope for but who cares? I hope to include a full review in a future issue of *Sigap News*. *(Richard Beet)*

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

It is Sigap policy to withhold the names of witnesses when discussing sighting reports. This is to save them from any embarrassment and also to prevent them from further visits from other organisations or individuals. Unfortunately, owing to the rush to get the last issue of 'Sigap News' into print, we failed to edit the names out of the reports. It was consequently published without consultation in a local trade promotional newspaper. This caused embarrassment to the witnesses and their families for which we apologise.

Sigap News is protected by copyright, and although we are usually happy for extracts of any length to be used or adapted, we do ask for an acknowledgement to be printed, together with notification of intended publication. (Mike Prewett)

SIGAP FILM

The 16mm film about Sigap, reported in the last issue of *Sigap News*, is about to be born. Director/Producer David Furmage from the West Surrey College of Art and Design will begin filming later this month in a number of locations in Surrey, Hants and possibly in London. *(Richard Beet)*

BUFORA CONFERENCE - NOTTINGHAM

We hope to report on this event in the next issue of 'Sigap News'.

SKATEBOARD UFO CASE S804

In issue 4 of *Sigap News* we reported that two boys at Basingstoke had heard a whirring noise and had seen a UFO on 30 January. A Case summary, by Omar Fowler follows:

On Monday 30 January 1978, at approximately 20.00 hours, two boys, one 13½ and the other 14, were playing on their skateboards on a quiet road in the Brighton Hill Estate area of Basingstoke, Hants. A few street lamps lit the scene and there were few people about.

The boys were playing with two others when they all happened to notice a bright light in the sky moving in their direction. One of the other boys commented that it was most likely an aeroplane, and at that stage, the other boys moved off leaving the two, Tony and David, by themselves.

The light had by now moved closer, and the two could begin to make out a round shape in the middle of the glowing orangy-yellow light. As it approached, the whole glowing light seemed to be spinning. It continued to come closer and began to hover. Only a series of lights around the centre of the body continued to rotate.

The boys gave the following details:

* The object approached to about 100 feet from the ground.
* It was oval in shape
* It had a row of yellow lights rotating around the centre (subsequently estimated at 80 revolutions per minute).
* As the lights spun, a small green light could be seen at each revolution.

The yellow lights were clear in outline on the leading section, but were blurred on the trailing part of the light, that is, half round in front and blurred at the back. The green light could be seen in the line of yellow lights, appearing regularly.

Other lights could also be seen, and a red dome was situated on top of the body. Behind that, a red light seemed to be suspended just above the body, as though on some kind of aerial, although no details of aerials could be seen. A white light was positioned on the forward part of the body, and a rhythmic doning noise, like that of bees, was heard.

The object was seen to reverse a little, then came forward again and continued to hover. Tony and David described the object as being the length of a house roof. By this time they were scared and began to run for home. One of the boys dropped his skateboard, but quickly retrieved it and ran on. After a short time, they stopped and glanced back - but the object had gone.

They ran home, scared and shaken, to tell their parents.

(Omar Fowler)

CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH CHARLES BOWEN

We were all pleased to see Charles again, after his visit last year to our 10th anniversary celebrations.

His visit, on 22 February, coincided with the massive publicity being given to CE3K, and to UFOs in general by both the *Daily Express* and *The Sun*. Charles gave us all an interesting insight into the methods used by the press

to extract information. The Express had spent a long time with Charles, and its reporters had taken pages of notes detailing cases from *Flying Saucer Review (FSR)*, of which Charles has been editor for 14 years. It was not until the end of the series in the Express, that any reference to the sources of information was given - extremely galling for those who provided all the details.

Charles Bowen shared our opinion that the film (CE3K) would lead to surges of people seeing things - a mixture of objective sightings and hoaxes. There would be enough information he said to keep us all going for years.

The discussion broadened later to encompass the 'Establishment view', Russian attutudes to UFOs, the influence of the CIA (particularly the Robertson panel report, and of course, the Condon Report.

We hope that Charles enjoyed his visit as much as we did, and we look forward to seeing him again in the not too distant future.

A FIRST WORLD WAR PHENOMENON

An extract from: Air Observation - Warplanes of World War 1

The behaviour of the engine went from bad to worse, and the vibration became more and more intense. Once more, I thought it would peter out before we were within gliding distance of British territory, and I therefore made ready to burn the machine - the last duty of an airman let in for the catastrophe of a landing among enemies. But the engine kept alive, obstinately and unevenly. 'V' held down the nose of the machine still farther, so as to gain the lines in the quickest possible time.

Soon we were treated to a display by the family ghost of the clan of Archibald, otherwise an immense pillar of grey-white smoky substance that appeared very suddenly to the windward of us. It stretched up vertically from the ground to a height about level with ours, which was then only 5500 feet. We watched it curiously as it stood in an unbending rigidity similar to that of a giant waxwork, cold, unnatural, stupidly implacable, half unbelievable and wholly ridiculous. At the top it sprayed round, like a stick of asparagus. For two or three months, similar apparitions had been exhibited to us at rare intervals, nearly always in the same neighbourhood.

At first sight the pillars of smoke seemed not to disperse, but after an interval, they apparently faded away as mysteriously as they had appeared. What was meant to be their particular branch of frightfulness I cannot say. One rumour was that they were an experiment in aerial gassing, and another that they were of some phosphorous compound. All I know is that they entertained us from time to time, with no apparent damage.

Sigap News is printed, published and distributed by the Surrey Investigation Group on Aerial Phenomena, a voluntary organisation established in 1967 to investigate reports of unidentified flying objects.

Material in Sigap News is copyright reserved. Permission to reproduce any item in Sigap News must be obtained from the Editor.

Editor: Richard Beet, 3 Grantley Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6BW (0483 37322)