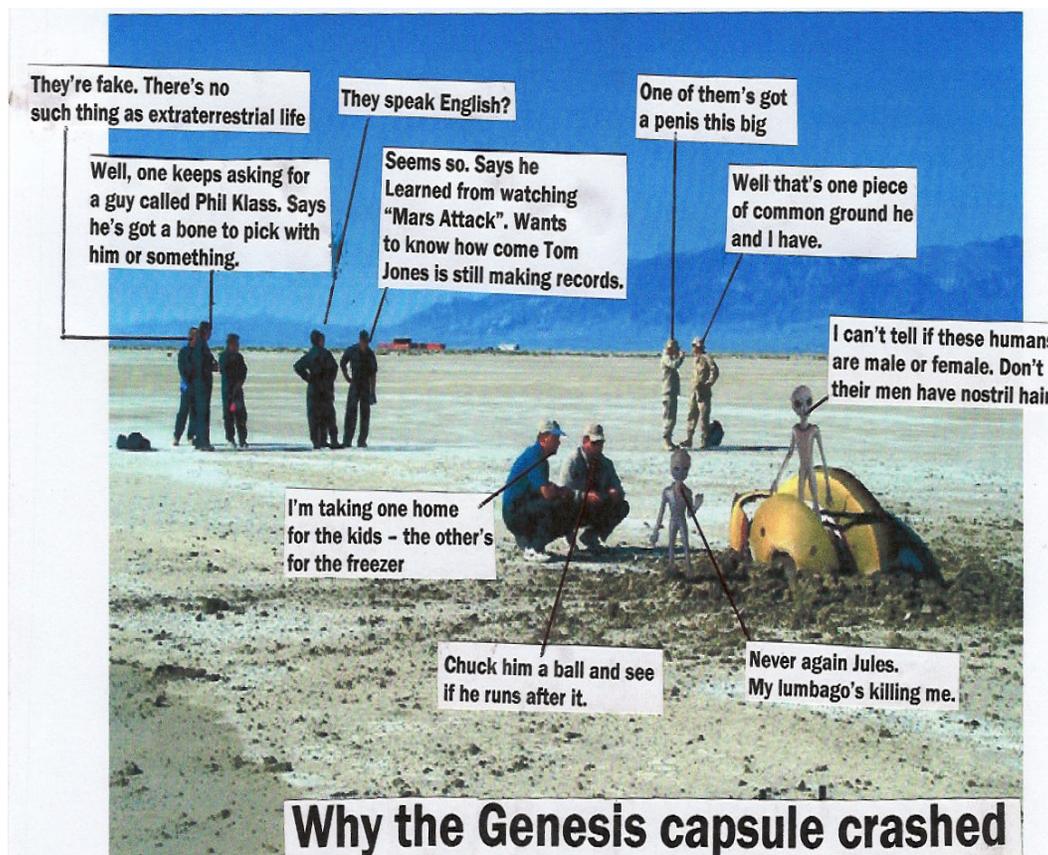


UFO REVIEW

The Truth can be found at <http://www.genesisrace.com/>

October 2004
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Shock sensation etc.!!



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Please note - we are aware that the URLs featured in the magazine may not work. If this is the case, please accept our apologies for the inconvenience. We are working on the problem.

Welcome



I would like to start off with a special word of thanks to reader William Wise. William is the original owner of the URL “UFO Review.com” (we are .net) and he has very kindly and generously simply given us the .com URL. This is an extremely munificent act and I would like to thank William very publicly for this. As and when we make a change to our address, we will inform you.

At the risk of sounding just like any other editor of a magazine, thank you. The figures for our last issue went through the roof. Well OK, I exaggerate a little, but they more than doubled. Onwards and upwards.

September seems to have been a busy month for news and so on, although some of it was very sad. Dr. John Mack, the well-known abduction therapist passed away as a result of a road accident while visiting England. He was the victim of a drunk driver. It's at times like this that one isn't proud to be British. We nearly had the end of the world on Wednesday the 29th but it appears that NASA didn't lie after all and we were “missed” by nearly a million miles by the asteroid Toutatis. Shame really. I fancied a bit of a nuclear winter, but next time maybe. It's also a year this month (already) that the editor of the UK publication Graham Birdsall passed away.

Our days as a PDF delivered Zine are fast approaching an end and we'll soon be into HTML properly. Anybody else just get a new computer? It's fun isn't it? Well it is if you haven't got a clue what you're doing. When I've mastered the important buttons, HTML it'll be.

If there is one thing I do regret about being the editor of this mag, it is that I have no time left in which to read and to do book reviews. I manage the odd one from time to time but I'm struggling. If there is anyone out there who fancies giving it a go then do get in touch – stuart@uforeview.net

After the last issue of Review, I stuck my neck out even further and did a short piece for Phenomena magazine's web site about how life on Mars was going to be confirmed soon. Geez, you might have thought that NASA would help me out a bit and get on with it. Can't rely on them for anything.

If by chance you're off to the Probe conference next weekend (9th and 10th October) then give us a shout and perhaps we can meet there. If you're thinking of going but aren't sure about it, then let me persuade you if I can. With no Leeds conference anymore, we need to support all those who are still giving it a go.

My thanks to all of this month's contributors.

DOOMED



Sir Ian Rankin

Back in late August, I had picked up my morning newspaper and had sat down to read it briefly while the computer woke up. Turning to the features section in *The Telegraph*, I was confronted with the headline, “Fasten Your Seat belts, The End Is Nigh”. Intrigued I started to read. At first glance, it looked like a piece on a typical titled English eccentric who had written a loony book. The first part of the article, and the more substantive part of it, was concerned with Sir Ian Rankin’s background and his connection to the Royal family. It was only as we got into the meat of his theories, superficially glossed over, that I found my interest level rising considerably. This man had some remarkable ideas, and in particular, one very remarkable idea indeed.

I have to admit that I was fascinated by how a man with his background could have reached the consensus that he had. No reason why he shouldn’t have done, but how he got there was what puzzled me. So an interview was kindly arranged by his publishers’ press agent and on Friday the 10th September we spoke.

Let’s get the tedious part of it out the way first, at least as far as Sir Ian will be concerned. His mother, Lady Jean Rankin, was Woman of the Bedchamber to the Queen Mother and would disappear for weeks on end down to London to attend to her royal duties. His father, a dedicated ornithologist, was the great grandson of a ship owner who, when he died in 1870, left £15 million, by today’s standards a bit over a billion. He grew up on a 2000-acre estate on the Isle of Mull and went to school at Eton. As Windsor castle wasn’t too far away, his mother would often invite him in. “Once, she was hurrying me through a room when we saw a little figure bent over a case of medals. My mother immediately went over, took the man’s hand and curtsied. But, as a joke, he simultaneously curtsied back – and they toppled over. As they were rolling across the floor, I realised the little man was George VI.”

His father managed to spend the family fortune. “My father was terribly good at spending money,” he recalls fondly. “He spent one winter in Antarctica writing the definitive bird book, “*Antarctica Isle*”. At home, he was terribly good at

making parks for rare ducks and geese, and then high tide would come and wash them all away.” Both parents had pilots’ licenses and one uncle would regularly land home made planes on the lawn.

His mother was in royal service for more than 40 years and became close friends with Princess Margaret. Yet it was a side of her life she rarely talked about. His father’s lack of economy meant that Sir Ian had to work for a living and after doing PPE at Oxford, he went into journalism and later advertising as a copywriter. By chance, he designed a seat belt, which was taken up by car manufacturers, and “it made me more money than I’ve ever made since.” After various other business interests, he eventually started an oil company which had exploration interests in Australia, Belize, Guatemala, Indonesia and North America and it was while doing this that he started to form his present ideas. He does not have a science background.

SM: I was curious about your path to your present set of ideas. Although your early background was unconventional, your business background seemed to be fairly straightforward.

SIR: Yes, fairly conventional. It’s been with mostly orthodox trading companies in the UK, and a little bit in Holland as well.

SM: How relevant was your professional work in forming your ideas for the book?

SIR: Not at all until I started to look at the upstream oil business and formed an oil company to look for oil. My company held at least half a dozen on shore exploration licenses in this country and in Belize. Another company which I was a director of, another oil company, had interests spread across the world.

SM: Was it because of the geological aspects that your interest was aroused?

SIR: That was what really led me into looking more closely at the way the earth seemed to be behaving.

SM: Your ideas are extremely radical. How did you form the ideas? Were you influenced by anybody in particular?

SIR: One of the things that always fascinated me was that I was a keen yachtsman and whenever one was going along costal shorelines, which were studded with cliffs, one could see in those cliffs the most extraordinary transformations that had taken place. Some of them seemingly in one abrupt movement. I was particularly fascinated by the Turkish coastline, which is very rugged. And there you can see huge pieces of cliff, several hundred feet high, which have been laid down stratographically over many, many years and then suddenly, in one movement, those strata have been turned from being horizontal to being vertical. For that to happen over a long period of time is unthinkable because as the movement took place, the lines of strata would get disrupted and you would see more and more disintegration of the cliff and powdering of the strata.

But no, you suddenly see a huge chunk of cliff turning from horizontal to vertical and with almost no deformation of the lines. This can only happen with the movement of those cliffs being one abrupt event.

SM: In terms of how your views were presented in The Telegraph article, the one aspect that seemed strikingly different about your views is that you seemed to be hinting at or getting towards an earth magnetic field flip, but that's not in fact what you say. You seem to be saying it's the earth itself that shifts or moves, was it 144 degrees?

SIR: The axis of the Earth can move anything from a few degrees to more than 180 degrees. I.E. turn fully over and beyond.

SM: That is the planet as a whole. How does that account for the example that you've just quoted of actual rock on the planet changing direction?

SIR: What happens is that when you get one of these changes, the movement of wind and water, as you can imagine, is very extreme. This leads also to volcanic eruption. Let's take the earth to start with in its steady state where the axis is at 23 ½ degrees and that volcanic and earthquake activity is at a minimum. When you get a change from 23 ½ degrees to shall we say 90 degrees, all the magma inside the earth is going to rush to the crust and you're going to have a movement rather like your clothes in a washing machine. They're going to be pushed centrifugally to the edge of the door to the washing machine.

That will lead to an enormous amount of volcanic activity inside the earth as the magma pushes against the periphery of the lithosphere. That magma is going to come squirting out in innumerable volcanoes. If you look at the history of the earth and its volcanoes, you can see that compared with the 500 active and dormant volcanoes at the moment, there were probably ten times that amount 5000 years ago.

SM: Which would account for.....?

SIR: Which would account for an enormous amount of activity after the earth had shifted its axis.

SM: Why do you think that conventional science or conventional geology hasn't picked up on this or if it has, drawn the same conclusions you have?

SIR: One of the problems is the attitude to the consideration of the stabilising affect of the earth's rotation. The view has been that the earth behaves like a stabiliser rotating at the rate of one revolution per 24 hours. And that is enough in the view of many mathematicians and physicists to declare that the earth could not turn over. Actually that declaration is wholly false. When you've got the mass of the earth spread through a sphere as it is, you don't get anything like the stability that you would get in a gyroscope where the bulk of the mass is actually contained in the wheel and the extremities of the wheel. It's very hard, as you know, with a stabiliser to move it out of the plane in which it is rotating. With a globe you don't have that same problem. Up to now, scientists

have always argued that because the equatorial bulge increases the radius in the plane of the equator by 27 miles, that would be enough to stabilise the earth. Actually its not. The earth can quite easily turn over.

As the analogy is made in the book, there's a comparison made with something like a beach ball where the rotation of the ball can continue and the axis of the ball can point in any direction, with the minimum amount of effort made to change that ball.

SM: What will cause this?

SIR: After the earth has been in a certain position for a length of time, the magma has all moved to the edge of the earth and you're getting much quieter and much less activity among the volcanoes. At that point, the earth's magnetic field reduces because the earth's magnetic field is generated from within the earth. And that means that the canopy over the earth in the form of a magnetosphere becomes less and less and this in its turn means that more and more solar wind hits the earth.

Solar wind hits the earth at the moment first in one hemisphere and then when the summer is over it hits the opposite hemisphere. As this solar wind increases, the heat reaching earth increases and this of course is something we're seeing at the moment in the form of global warming. Just to go off course for a moment, global warming is very little to do with Man's misbehaviour. Its much more to do with the increase in radiation reaching the earth because the magnetic field surrounding the earth is not protecting it in the way that it did two, three, four thousand years ago.

SM: There is an increasingly conventional belief that predicts that the earth's magnetic field will flip. Why is it that you diverge from that?

SIR: Whenever the Earth turns over, the magnetic field turns with it.

SM: Right, so you think the whole shooting match turns over. This sounds like an incredibly violent event. Should it occur, presumably that's the end of Mankind.

SIR: Not quite. It depends what angle it flips to. If it flips to a 90-degree position so that the axis of the earth is lying along where the equator is at the moment, then you will have a very violent action by wind and water, which will probably eliminate 80 to 90 per cent of the population of humans and animals.

SM: If it goes a little bit further?

SIR: Well, if it went through 180 degrees you would get much less affect because as the earth turned over, the magma inside the earth and the wind movements on the surface of the earth will be much less. The magma rushing around inside won't have to rush because it's already at the edges of lithosphere anyway.

SM: But if it went 180 degrees, it would mean that the poles would be upside down so there'd be a fairly devastating effect on plants, trees, and nature in general.

SIR: Not nearly as much as if it went 90 degrees. If it went 90 degrees, all movement inside the earth would be much more extreme.

SM: Do you have an idea, if that was to happen, as to what affect it would have on the rest of the solar system? Would the fact that planet earth has moved either 90 or 180 degrees affect other planets?

SIR: No. I think one must assume there's no pointer in that direction. Venus has done this and turned over 170 or 190 degrees and its lying on an axis where its equator should be. It's hardly rotating at all. As it's like that, the solar wind can't rotate it and its got to come to a standstill and a new polar axis will develop.

SM: So if its hardly rotating and Earth was Venus, then our days would be very, very long?

SIR: That's right. When the Earth's rotation had slowed down, there would be an immense amount of sun beating down on one point. This would probably lead to massive conflagration, a tendency to enormous fires. If on the other hand you're on the other side of the Earth, you're in total darkness for umpteen months.

SM: Either way, even if we get away with a 180-degree flip, its still going to be catastrophic.

SIR: It's going to be pretty uncomfortable. It wouldn't be an experience you wanted.

SM: And you seem to be suggesting that this would happen virtually instantly. It's not something that would happen over a period of time.

SIR: It would happen probably in a matter of two or three days. Three revolutions of the earth would be enough.

SM: Does this theory terrify you? Or do you feel that should this happen there's nothing we can do?

SIR: I think there's nothing we can do. From that point of view it's very depressing. What my research is pointing at is the way the earth has behaved in the past.

SM: And you feel this has happened before many times?

SIR: Oh many times.

SM: And presumably destroyed civilization in the process.

SIR: Certainly it has. The feeling has been that at the end of different geological epochs and eras, the earth appears to have lost its inhabitants. It's very much due to this reason that I give rather than comets crashing into the earth.

SM: I notice as well you question Darwinism.

SIR: Yes. In so far as one's questioning the steady state. I don't think the Earth has been subject to a steady state where comparatively mild volcanic activity is the most violent thing you are going to see. It has been much more violent than that.

SM: So your theory would interrupt Darwinism.

SIR: Only in so far as Darwin claims things move only gradually.

SM: Are you questioning his theory of development of Mankind?

SIR: The origin of species? I think most people regard that now as a little bit dated. I think there's a move towards neo Darwinism which I don't know anything about. That would certainly modify that line of thinking.

SM: Do you have any theories about the origins of Mankind?

SIR: No. That's beyond my role.

SM: You question gravity as well.

SIR: Gravity I question because the power accorded to gravity by Newton is such that the Sun is doing all the work according to him and pulling all the planets in and then the centrifugal force keeps them all in the same place and opposing gravity. But what's happened to that force that is propelling the planets around? Doesn't seem to be mentioned. And don't tell me that with the amount of solar wind that's around that planets can stay in the same place in relation to the Sun for 4.6 billion years without some alteration taking place. But Newton hasn't supplied that force – he hasn't said what it is.

SM: Going back to the Doomsday scenario. Do you an approximation? Did I see the figure 30 years mentioned?

SIR: Yes, you did. One or two scientists who have been working on the Earth's magnetic field have taken the view that it is running down and declining in strength at such a rate that by all beliefs, it should be down to almost nil in 30 years time, assuming its present rate of progress.

SM: What reaction have you got from conventional science?

SIR: It's too early to say, that. One science editor from one of the broadsheets did say that he was not prepared to review the book until it had been accepted by a learned Society. This book is written for the layman.

SM: So that's not likely to happen.

SIR: No, it's not.

SM: Are you antagonistic towards conventional science or dismissive of them?

SIR: No. In some ways I'm rather sorry for them. As you know, if you're a scientist and tow the line and behave in a conventional way and accept people like Wegener and Darwin and other big names, your progress to the top of your tree and your professorial Chair follow one after the other. If you were to adopt a line of thinking like my own, you'd be looked at with horror by the scientific world. Your future in the academic world would be questioned and your chances of getting that Chair would be nil. So it's not worth your while.

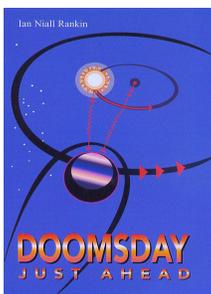
SM: Yes, it does seem to be a very stifling situation for conventional science. I'm sure that some scientists' imaginations must wander. I'm sure they have actually got imagination yet they don't feel able to pursue those instincts.

SIR: There are some brave souls around who try and avoid towing the line and they always get into trouble.

SM: Would you care to just expand a little bit more on the points you look at in the book?

SIR: There are two fundamental features. One is the axis tilt and the other is this contention that gravity is not what Newton makes it out to be. Just touching gravity first, this theory is not necessarily original to me but gravity or the movement of the planets around the Sun is governed by the fact the Sun is not really doing the pulling, as Newton suggested. The pulling is being done by the magnetic centre of the solar system which is not all that far away from the Sun. This magnetic centre in fact is a black hole at the exact centre of mass of the solar system. The Sun is rotating and revolving around that black mass. That black mass is very small and very concentrated with the result that it could be spotted but it hasn't been. The movement of the planets around the Sun is an interaction between these two forces; the magnetic centre pulling and the Sun pushing. The interaction of those two pushes the planets around in a circle around the centre. That's the line of thinking. That overcomes the problem that Newton did not supply us with a force propelling the planets in the direction they move. That is very radical.

On the axis tilt, well, I think we've covered that. The magnetic poles must always move with the geographical poles. There's no way of explaining why the magnetic poles should always flip unless the geographical poles did that flipping with them.



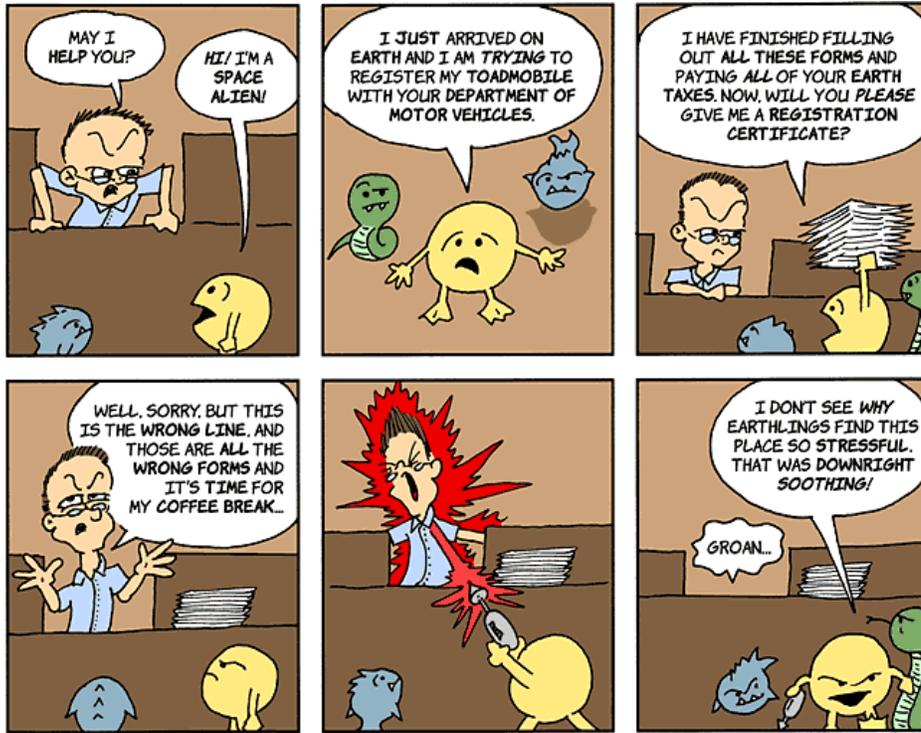
SM: Sir Ian, I am most grateful. Thank you.

Title: DOOMSDAY JUST AHEAD

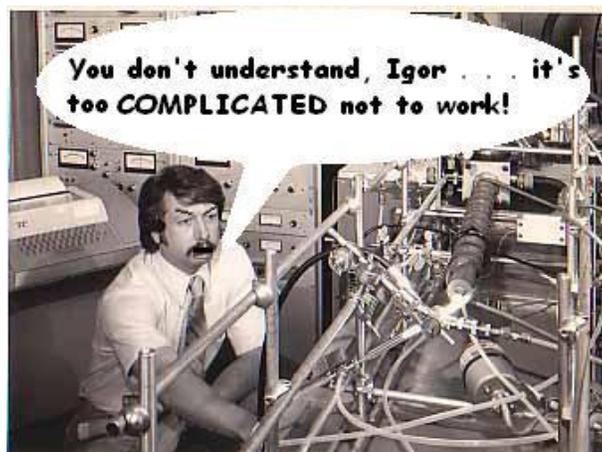
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ET Reality - A Scientist Speaks!



In each issue, if I can remember, we will feature the ramblings of yet another mentally constipated white-coated social inadequate who has held forth on the subject of ET reality. This month's guest spot goes to Dave Ocame;

“Science certainly has served all communities. If only you would listen and learn what science is saying. It is a sad fact, that all human society on this planet undervalues its scientists (witness my paycheck). Our dear U.S. President Bush is a fine example of that. He still completely ignores warnings that we are causing global warming. Our negative effect on our planet is a sad truth. Yet, you cannot live without us! You would all still be living to the ripe old age of 20, but for scientists. The same is true for the UFO community, if only you would listen.

No, we have not given in and said, "Ok, you are right. UFOs exist." What we have done is shown how you have not one shred of evidence that biological extraterrestrials are flying spaceships through our atmosphere. Instead of taking that as the challenge it is, you mistook it as insult.

I am a scientist working in a real lab. In fact, I am in Neurochemistry, working with epilepsy patients. I get paid to do science because I am good at it. I've been doing it for the past 30 years. I do nothing to advance ufology. As I said, I am a scientist. Ufology is NOT a science. When you want it to be a science, let me know and I will help.

As a matter of fact, being a skeptic is not the evil thing you make it out to be. Sure, skeptics doubt and raise questions. This is a bad thing? Skeptics simply seek proof through direct evidence. Truth is, I can't say UFOs (as driven by intelligent aliens) exist or don't exist. There's no evidence for or against them. But, when I come home from work, I spend most of my free time searching for this evidence. I've invested \$1000s of my own money developing equipment to aid me in this search. At least I do that much. At least I do that much.”

In the Andy Roberts interview in our last issue, he made mention of the Shag Harbour case as one of the few that he regards as anomalous and interesting. What better recommendation? This article is based on Don's paper that he presented to the Ozark UFO conference.

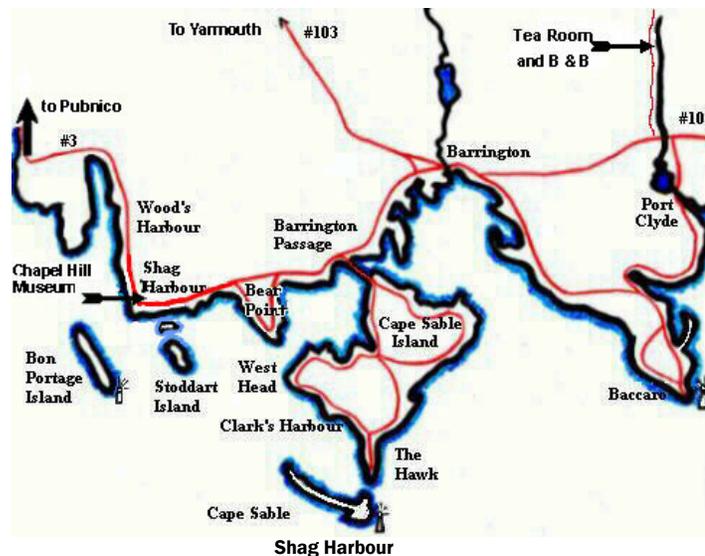
The Shag Harbour UFO Incident

By Don Ledger



11:20 to 11:30 PM-The beginning:

When 18 year old fisherman Laurie Wickens dialled the number of the Barrington Passage Detachment of the RCMP on the night of October 4, 1967, he probably had no idea of the chain of events that would unfold as a result. Nonetheless, he really had no choice after what he had just witnessed.



Several minutes earlier, Wickens and four other persons in his vehicle, had been travelling west on "old" Highway No. 3. Wickens was returning these

people to their homes after meeting them at a function nearby. While entering into the fishing village of Shag Harbour from the east, he caught sight of some lights in the sky through the car's windshield. He watched them for a few seconds while negotiating turns in the road. More and more the lights seemed to demand his attention. They were peculiar to him; something about them was not right not the least of which was their odd position in the starry sky.

There were four, sometimes five lights, flashing sequentially - first from one end then from the other, and sometimes they were all on at once. They were angled downward at a 45-degree angle and seemed to be losing altitude though not rapidly. The object that these lights were attached to could not be seen but the positioning of the lights gave an overall impression of being quite large. What really bothered Wickens was their angle and the fact that this object was coming down into the harbour and that a crash seemed imminent.

Wickens' vehicle crested the hill beside the Presbyterian Church, coasted down the hill and into the village proper, his speed now increasing so as to keep the lights in sight. He now revised his original estimate of the impact sight. It was beginning to appear that the object was coming down just to the west of the Shag Harbour, at best a mile further on. Rushing along at a good speed now, Wickens did his best to keep the object in sight, thankful for the fact that in a tiny village like this on a Wednesday night at nearly 11:30 in the evening, there was no traffic to contend with.

Wickens wheeled his vehicle around a turn just past the entrance road to the Prospect Point pier on his left, just as the lights reached the tops of the tree line in their downward trajectory. The driver knew that once he had cleared this line of trees, he would have nothing between him and open water except a hundred feet of embankment and shoreline. The lights went out of sight behind the tree line, lost from Wickens' and his passengers view for a few precious seconds. Their car rounded the turn, crested a small hill and came into the open area. One of the girls in the back though she heard a whooshing sound and a bang.

Just ahead a couple of hundred feet was the Irish Moss Plant with its large gravel parking lot, deserted at this late hour. Laurie Wickens slowed down and pulled his car onto the lot, jamming on his brakes. Everyone jumped out of the car and ran to the embankment overlooking the broad ocean expanse of "The Sound" a few meters in front of them. They scanned the waters for whatever had come down there, not knowing what to expect. Then they saw it, six or seven hundred feet from the shore.

It wasn't very impressive, not at first, because then they didn't know what they were looking at. Wickens and the others were under the impression that it was an airplane of some type, but were not sure. What they saw was a pale yellow light on top of a vagueness, a dark object of some description, perhaps 60 feet wide and 8 to 10 feet high. There was no moon that night so the visibility was poor. Whatever it was, it was either making its way or drifting out to sea. Being a fisherman and knowing the waters around Shag Harbour as he did, Wickens figured the "light" was drifting with the ebb tide assisted by a natural 3-4 knot current that flowed through that area.

Wickens and the four women discussed what they should do. Laurie figured that there wasn't much they could do on their own and he decided to drive a little further down the coast to a pay phone at an Irving Station in Woods Harbour. Everyone got back into the car and Wickens wasted no time covering the mile or so to the pay phone in Woods Harbour.

Corporal Victor Werbicki was the only one in the Barrington Passage RCMP Detachment at this hour, and he picked up the phone when it rang. Laurie Wickens was on the other end of the line and sounded to Werbicki as if he was very excited. Wickens told the Mountie that he thought an airliner or big plane had just crashed into the Sound next to Shag Harbour.

Corporal Werbicki's first question to Wickens was, have you been drinking? Wickens was caught off guard by the question but recovered and huffily replied that he had not. He informed Werbicki that they had seen the plane out on the water and it still had on light on.

Werbicki's other phone began ringing so he asked Wickens to remain where he was after getting the payphone number and hung up on him. Wickens was miffed, but stayed by the phone anyway while his passengers plied him with questions

Werbicki answered the other line. The caller was one Mary Banks, who lived over on Maggie Garrons Point, which incidentally just happened to look directly down the Sound. She was calling to express her concerns that a big airplane might have just crashed into the Sound. She said she had seen some lights coming down and had heard a bang. Werbicki could get no other details from her and hung up. But the phone rang again. This time it was an unidentified male caller from Bear Point, several miles to the east of Shag Harbour, who informed Werbicki that he had seen lights descending somewhere near Shag Harbour and thought it might have been an airplane crashing.

Werbicki thanked the man and went over to the radio and called the only cruiser he had out on patrol. Constable Ron Pond, accompanied by Constable Ron O'Brien were in the process of returning back to the detachment from his position in an area just west of Woods Harbour, where they had been looking for deer jackers, when Werbicki contacted them by radio. He informed them that there was a possibility that a plane had crashed into the Sound near Shag Harbour and wanted them back at the detachment ASAP. O'Brien, who was working the radio informed his superior that they had just gone through Shag Harbour, headed east, and had seen nothing out of the ordinary. In fact they had probably passed Laurie Wickens who was waiting patiently by the phone in Woods Harbour.

Werbicki was still not convinced that an airplane had gone into the water there, and was thinking it might have been a meteor, so O'Brien's statement probably served to reinforce his suspicions. But it had to be checked out. He called Laurie Wickens at the payphone and asked him more questions and Wickens told him about the lights they had seen coming down out of the sky, flashing on and off. Werbicki asked the young

fisherman if he would mind returning to the Irish Moss plant and keep an eye on the light out on the Sound until his officers arrived, to which Wickens readily agreed.

Corporal Werbicki had no sooner hung up the phone when another call came in from a woman who lived over in Cape Sable Island which is about 13 miles to the east of Shag Harbour. She informed the Mountie that she and her daughter had just arrived home but a few minutes earlier they had seen lights coming down out of the sky, flashing in sequence, and looked like they were on something that might have crashed over near Shag Harbour. That was the second time Werbicki had heard about those “flashing lights in a line” and for the first time he entertained the idea of an aircraft accident near the Harbour. He grabbed his winter coat off the coat rack, a list of fishermen’s names attached to the Coast Guard Marine Rescue Auxiliary, and headed out of the office. He was standing beside his cruiser putting on his coat when Officers Pond and O’Brien turned into the parking lot, having made good time from the Bear Point area.

Some minutes earlier, while returning from dropping off their girlfriends in Cape Sable Island, Dave Kendrick and Norm Smith had had a similar experience to that of Laurie Wickens. They too were on Highway No. 3 heading west toward Shag Harbour, however they were several miles further to the east between the two entrances of the Bear Point road loop. This area incidentally would have major import in the life of Norm Smith’s uncle some three years later.

The two young men, both 18 years of age were in Dave Kendrick’s Chevy II, talking about girls, when Norm noticed some lights up in the night sky. There were 4 or 5 of them, big lights, about 15 feet apart in a straight line, red/orange in colour, flashing on and off and pointing downward at a 45 degree angle. He pointed them out to Dave.

Dave looked up through the windshield to the right, the angle being bad for him. He saw the lights, seeming to hang in the sky in a straight line, observing them for a few second before the winding and hilly old road commanded his attention once more. Norm had rolled down his window in order to get a better look at the object or objects in the sky. He watched it for a few moments until the combination of descending a hill and the objects downward motion caused it to go out of sight behind the trees ahead of them.

Shortly afterwards they arrived at the outskirts of Shag Harbour where Norm lived with his father. Dave dropped him off and went home, told his mother about the weird lights in the sky that they had seen and then went to bed. In the mean time Norm, after being dropped off, watched Dave’s car drive off then began to walk up the driveway to the house. His attention was drawn upward by some motion and he was surprised to see, once again, the same string of lights he had seen in the sky earlier, now up above the trees again. He watched for only a few second before running into the house and seeing his father, Wilfred, was still up, dragged him outside to see them.

Father and son were in time to see the object with the large red/orange lights descending at a fast pace once more behind the trees and in a direction that surely would see it impact some where in the waters of Shag Harbour. They agreed that something serious was about to happen and decided to head over in that direction to see if they could be of any help. Wilfred went hurriedly inside and threw on some warm clothes. Then he and Norm got into the father's truck and backed down the driveway, then jammed on his brakes to avoid backing out in front of one of the RCMP's cruisers that flew by with its red light flashing.

Something was going on for sure. Wilfred backed out of the driveway and chased down the road after the cruiser, through the village and out past Prospect point road. They came around the curve in the highway and saw the cruiser pulling into the gravel parking lot beside the Irish Moss plant. Wilfred pulled in beside it and another cruiser he had not even suspected was behind him pulled in beside his truck. In front of them standing on the edge of the bank overlooking the Sound, Norm saw Laurie Wickens and some of the girls with him. Corporal Werbicki was there with Laurie and the latter was pointing outward, toward the water. Norm went out on the bank and looked too. It was then that he saw the pale yellow light out on the Sound.

Corporal Werbicki, having now seen the light, put Ron Pond in charge of taking statements from Laurie Wickens and the other witnesses. He asked around some of the others gathered there - the area was now becoming a popular place to gather-looking for a rowboat to attempt a rescue of what he considered were possible survivors of a plane crash. In fact everyone there were of the opinion that an airplane was in distress out there. The object on the water had "drifted" out much further than when first observed by Wickens and his friends.

During the time it took to do a quick search for a rowboat along the shore, things began deteriorate offshore. It seemed that the object or at least the light on it had settled deeper into the water, perhaps sinking. There has been a perception for years, mostly due to a misleading press report, that two of the Mounties and a fisherman had attempted to get out to the site in a rowboat, but the witnesses say that that was not the case. When it appeared that the object was sinking, which was really only a few minutes after the Mounties had arrived on the scene, Werbicki decided to resort to his list of fishermen in the area with their own Cape [Sable] Island boats; he would phone some of those right in the village and ask for their assistance.

In the meantime Werbicki had Constable O'Brien go to the nearest phone and contact the RCC in Halifax and inquire about missing aircraft and bring them up to date, and then to go to the Government Wharf in the center of the village and wait for him there. He himself would get to a phone and call some of the local fishermen. Radio communications were not as sophisticated in the middle 60s as they are today. They could not radio direct to other locales in the Province.

Constable Pond would stay at the Irish Moss plant, keeping an eye on the lights' progress and continue taking statements. Just as the two Mounties

were about to leave, the situation became critical. The light suddenly disappeared; either it went out or the structure supporting it sank.

Part 2 - The Search

Fifteen minutes later, the two Mounties met at the Government Wharf in the center of the village. Werbicki had been fortunate with his calls to some of the local fishermen who owned boats. One of the Captains was Lawrence Smith, owner of the "Rhonda D" and the other Captain was Bradford Shand, owner of the "Joan Pricilla". Both had agreed immediately to go out and as luck would have it, both boats were tied up on the outside of all the boats moored at the wharf.

Others were present at the dock including Wilfred Smith and Norm Smith. Wilfred went aboard Lawrence Smith, his brother's boat. It is one of those little twists of timing in people's lives that Lawrence had not been privy to the sight of the UFO in the sky when Norman and his father witnessed it, because Lawrence lived in the same house at the time at the opposite end, it being a duplex of sorts. Wilfred had thought that his brother was probably asleep at that hour and did not want to wake him and his wife.

Norm Smith went over to Bradford Shands vessel, the "Joan Pricilla" and climbed aboard with Corporal Werbicki. Norm, a fisherman himself, worked with Bradford [his friends called him "Brath"] as crew quite often and so was knowledgeable about the vessel. Werbicki told Constable O'Brien to go out with Lawrence Smith so they would have an official presence on both boats.

O'Brien reported to Werbicki that RCC did not have any aircraft listed as missing, however they were going to commence a radio and phone search up and down the eastern coast to ascertain just who might have been flying in the area, including American military and civilian aircraft. They were also contacting a Coast Guard vessel, Life Boat 101, in Clarks Harbour on Cape Sable Island and advise them to proceed to the crash site.

The would-be rescuers were in such a hurry that they cast the lines off of their boats rather than untying from the dock and put out into the Harbour. At this time there were only these two boats with four or five people on each, however there would be as many as six "Cape Islanders" plying the waters of the Sound within the hour. Lawrence Smith's "Ronda D" was first away from the wharf and he now steered his vessel toward the western entrance of Shag Harbour over by Prospect Point which would take him directly out into the Sound.

The Sound is a body of water about 2 kilometres wide by 3 kilometres long. It is bound on the east by Maggie Garrons Point, Inner Island and Stoddart Island and on the west by three kilometres long, Outer Island. The water goes little deeper than 12 or 13 meters and is mostly a clean sandy bottom with the odd outcropping of rock and kelp beds.

On the north eastern side of Outer Island about 100 meters from a sand spit is a permanently anchored buoy called the Budget Light. By estimating the

height of the "Dark Object" compared to the known height of the Budget Light [8 feet] above the water, the fishermen at the Irish Moss Plant were able to estimate the thickness or height of the pale yellow light above the water. At the beginning of this sighting, the fishermen, Laurie Wickens and Norm Smith, had assured the Mounties that the "pale yellow light" they were seeing on the water was "not" a buoy light because they were more than familiar with every buoy and buoy light in the Sound and this was not one of them.

At any rate since Lawrence Smith's boat was in the lead, and having been told of the approximate position of the "light" before it sank, and also aware of the types of current running there, and the amount of time that passed, he opted to "run a line down" on the Budget light and let the current/ebb tide carry him to the south. Over on the shore at the Irish Moss plant Ron Pond saw the two fishing vessels come out of the western entrance and slowly cross the Sound.

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THE CHRONICLE-HERALD
VOLUME 19, NUMBER 223 HALIFAX, CANADA, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1967 8 PAGES

COULD BE SOMETHING CONCRETE IN SHAG HARBOR UFO-RCAF

Continue Search Today

By RAY MacLEOD
Staff Writer

A spokesman for a special and little known Royal Canadian Air Force department in Ottawa for the investigation of Unidentified Flying Objects said last night a series of bright lights which glided into the ocean off Shag Harbor, Shelburne County, Wednesday night may be one of the extremely rare cases where "something concrete" may be found.

The spokesman, who identified himself as Squadron Leader Bain, said his department was "very interested" in the matter.

"We get hundreds of reports every week," he said, "but the Shag Harbor incident is one of the few where we may get something concrete on it."

The search will continue today. The two men diving today—JAMES BULLOCK, 36, and one JERRY from Halifax, and all seven will search from dawn to dusk. If nothing is found, special patrol detachments will be sent to other parts of the coast.

To Wage Internal Battle

PROSQUADRONERS, QUEBEC, (UPI)—Squadron Leader Bain, said his department was "very interested" in the matter.

Fuel Dump:
Blasted By U.S. Planes

SAIGON (AP) — U. S. planes have blasted the Dien Nang fuel dump six miles northwest of Hanoi, cutting another target from the forbidden list in North Vietnam.

Storage tanks at Dien Nang were estimated to hold the loss of oil for the Communist war effort. U.S. fighters blasted the dump for the first time in one of the numerous strikes against strategic targets in North Vietnam.

U.S. planes in the past have bombed the oil tank storage dumps in an attempt to cut off the Communist war effort.



Though the night was cool, it was clear of clouds and there was no wind. What wave action there was out on the Sound were long slow swells caused by the tide and the current. Aboard the two boats there was a feeling of apprehension. Norman Smith remembers being very tense and nervous and was not looking forward to seeing dead bodies floating in the water. The Mounties of course, were no strangers to death by misadventure, and it was an

occupational hazard that they were constantly called on to deal with near dead or dead and mangled corpses during the course of a day's work. But that was not to say they were inured to it.

When they had gotten about half way across the Sound, Lawrence had one of the men switch on the seal beam light on the top of the wheelhouse and shine it out over the water. He slowed the speed of his vessel and the men started calling out to any possible survivors. It was only a matter of seconds when they came upon the foam, which at first they thought was a patch of sea-foam. The light picked it out - a yellow, glittery and thick substance floating 3 or 4 inches thick on the water's surface. Lawrence pulled the "Ronda D's" engine back to idle and drifted into the stuff. The light on the wheelhouse played back and forth over it. The patch was huge and all around them.

The "Joan Pricilla", her engines at idle, drifted up to them a short distance to port. Lawrence called over to Bradford. "What do you make of this Brath?"

"Don't know what it is. Can't say as I care for it." Bradford replied.

Lawrence did not "care for it" either however they had no choice but to sail through the stuff. Lawrence remembers it as smelling of sulphur and there were bubbles coming up through it. In no way did this stuff resemble ordinary sea foam, the fishermen stated years later. Both Lawrence and Norman Smith said they had never seen anything like it before or since, did not like to sail through it at the time, and avoided that general area for years after when sailing through the Sound.

They reached the other side of the foamy patch which was about two boat lengths, or approximately 25 meters [80 feet] wide. After a while they were able to determine that the smelly patch of foam was over a half mile [805 meters] long. Reluctantly they steamed back and forth through the foam and the surrounding waters, looking for wreckage and survivors.

At one point, one of the younger men on Constable O'Brien's vessel stuck his arms up to his elbows into the foamy water and pulling them out, found that the foam did not stay on his clothing. O'Brien examined the young man's arms and clothing but could not detect a smell coming off of it, such as a fuel odour like kerosene, diesel or gasoline. The Mountie thought that the foam might have been the by-product of jet fuel or gasoline leaking from the fuel tanks of a submerged aircraft, or barring that, perhaps from the fuel tank of a fishing boat that might have been though there earlier. But there were no fuel slicks or even the smell of it and if fuel tanks had broken open on an airplane, there would have been residue of some sort with its accompanying odour. But there was none.

Shortly after midnight, on the morning of the 5th, Coast Guard Cutter 101 arrived at the site after steaming the 14 miles from Clarks Harbour on Cape Sable Island. This brought the total number of vessels searching the Sound up to seven including four more fishing boats that had joined the search within the first half hour. They moved further to the south, criss-crossing the Sound making track lines east and west while CG 101 went out to the mouth of the

Sound and worked its way back in case the current had carried debris or survivors and those less fortunate out to the southern entrance to the Sound. Once past that point there was "The Rip" to contend with, a fast moving current caused by the meeting of the North Atlantic and the current through the Sound. The behaviour of the waters then changes dramatically, as this writer can attest, having been there myself and having been tossed about in short steep seas on a vessel not much different than those that Lawrence and Bradford were using back in the 1960s.

Shortly after the Coast Guard vessel arrived, her skipper Ronnie Newell, radioed Lawrence Smith's boat and asked for Corporal Werbicki. Werbicki took the microphone and Captain Newell informed him that he had been in radio contact with the Rescue Coordination Center in Halifax. RCC wanted to inform him that his request for a search for a missing aircraft had been carried out and that an exhaustive search had been done and there were no aircraft missing from Labrador to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Werbicki thanked Newell and gave the microphone back to Lawrence who asked him, if they were not looking for a downed airliner then what were they looking for? Since the message was on the open marine band, the crews in the other boats in the little fleet heard this as well.

RCAF Squadron Leader William Bain, handling the "Air Desk" in Ottawa later that day, had already received a brief report from the RCC in Halifax stating that no aircraft or vessels were missing and also a conveyed message from the RCMP officer in charge in Shag Harbour, stating that they had found nothing after nearly five hours of searching. He read the message and scribbled three capital letters on the top right hand portion of the report and underlined it three times. UFO. But he was late in his assessment of the situation. Werbicki and the rest of the searchers were calling it that by 2 o'clock on the morning of the fifth. When you called something a UFO, then as far as the fishermen were concerned, they were now looking for a crashed flying saucer, or survivors from it.

The fishermen and crews of the six fishing boats that had been the first to go out into the Sound had been told to go back in by 4:00 AM the next morning. They were tired and had been up for at least 24 hours. But the search continued with other boats and fresh crews.

In Halifax, the RCC had put the Navy's Fleet Diving Unit on notice that they were going to Shelburne to look for a downed UFO in Shag Harbour at the request of the OIC RCMP in Barrington Passage. They would be augmented by RCMP divers from Halifax Subdivision. Four Divers from the Fleet Diving Unit stationed on the "HMS Granby", a decommissioned destroyer permanently anchored in Halifax Harbour, loaded their equipment and supplies into a deuce and a half they called "Old Sid". When their orders were cut, they set out for Shag Harbour and arrived there on Friday morning October 5.

By 1:00 Pm on Friday afternoon, the divers were ready to get into the water. They and their RCMP counterparts were working off the CG 101 and a couple of the local fishing boats. They searched the bottom of the Sound until before dusk with no results then went at it again the next morning. Still nothing was

found. Donald Nickerson, a local fisherman, recalls seeing the men bringing up debris of some description, looking like aluminium, but found the divers to be closed mouth about what they were or were not finding. Nickerson also wondered why there were submarines off the coast, one of them a US Navy sub.

The next day in the Saturday edition of the Chronicle Herald the front-page headline read:

**COULD BE SOMETHING CONCRETE
IN SHAG HARBOUR UFO - RCAF**

Continue search today

A spokesman for a special and little known Royal Canadian Airforce Department for the investigation of Unidentified Flying Objects said last night a series of bright lights which glided into the ocean off Shag Harbour, Shelburne County, Wednesday night may be one of the extremely rare cases where "something concrete" may be found.

The spokesman, who identified himself as Squadron Leader Bain, said his department was very interested in the matter.

The report, under the by line of Staff Writer Ray MacLeod, went on to say that "we get hundreds of reports every week" which is news to this writer because they certainly aren't available in the archives, federally or provincially. In any event, the search did go on for the rest of the day but the divers were ready to wrap it up by mid afternoon on Saturday.

One of the "Granby" divers, Rick Wood, remarked to me that "We didn't find any flying saucer down there, just kelp and lobsters." He informed me that they were ready to call it quits on Saturday afternoon, but the Mounties got a message from RCC telling them to continue the search for a few more days, which kept the divers at it until Monday October 8 at 6:30 PM.

Maritime Command called of the search reporting that, with reference to the Shag Harbour "crash", the they had found, "Not a trace...not a clue...not a bit of anything."

And so it seemed to end there. A few days of hype in the press and some fears by the fisherman of the object possibly resurfacing under or near them while they were fishing in or passing through the area. There were three possibilities offered then, as to why the object had not been found.

- 1. The object was swept by the tides, further out to sea where it came to rest. The area that far out was never searched.**
- 2. The object, crippled, made it out into deeper waters under its own power, then sank. Again the area was not searched beyond the Sound.**
- 3. The object submerged, still under intelligent control, and continued to another destination along the coast.**

The first two possibilities raise some questions. First, since everyone was aware of the strong currents and ebb tides in that area, therefore making it entirely possible that some object could have been swept out to sea and deeper water, why then was the area offshore not searched as well with sonar and other methods available to the Navy? Or was it? One remembers Donald Nickerson's observation of some submarines off the coast. Were they looking? That is not known, and no records are available to substantiate Nickerson's statement. If they were not looking offshore then there must be a reason why, and the only reason that could be is, why bother to look, if you knew in the first place that the object was not there. That then makes reason number three look more attractive if you are a UFO investigator.

Part 3 - The Story

About a year and a half before I got involved in the Shag Harbour investigation, Chris Styles had been doing an exhaustive search of all of the records he could find both here in Nova Scotia and in Ottawa. When I came on the scene as the new guy in town, Chris and I eventually tied up on this thing, though at first, my part of the job was to start chronicling the material and putting it together in a book, which I did. In order to do that I had to do many interviews with Chris and then go out and re-interview many of the same witnesses he had. As I got more and more involved with the "Incident" I started uncovering witnesses of my own and uncovering detail and anecdotal evidence that Chris so far had not gotten to.

During my interviews with Chris, he said that he had contacted or had been contacted by some people who had been in the military, each of whom had a story to tell and each of which, save one, did not want their name mentioned in connection with the case. Because none of these storytellers were connected or known to one another, it made their stories very convincing, let alone intriguing. It fell to me then to get the stories separately, which I did on three out of five of the witnesses. One has not been located and the other has clammed up completely, the latter being one of the witnesses who was interviewed by Chris and his friend Bob MacDonald on the same occasion. Since they both told me the same story of their interview with this man, one of the divers, then I see no reason not to believe it.

The details of what might have happened and what I believe happened, because I now know all of the witnesses save one, the diver, are so lengthy and detailed that they cannot be related here, but rather the gist of what we have

learned. At the risk of plugging another book of mine and my co-author Chris Styles, suffice it to say that should it eventually be published, the full details of the investigation and the complete story will be related there.

One afternoon Chris Style, a bachelor, was at a Laundromat in his neighbourhood for obvious reasons, and since, as everyone knows, Laundromats can be very boring places, he had brought with him a briefcase loaded with his files on the Shag Harbour case. While he was there a worker at the place noticed what he was reading and remarked on it. He said he was only a kid at the time but he remembered the Shag Harbour crash but went on to say that at the same time, all kinds of weird things had been going on outside of the town of Shelburne, off the base at Government Point. Something to do with a UFO.

The Government Point location rang a bell with Chris because while interviewing one of the divers supposedly involved with the Shag Harbour diving search, he discovered that the man had not been involved with the Shag Harbour dive. This was despite the fact that his source had tracked down the operations journal for that time and his name and 6 others had been in the journal for those dates. Still here was the diver saying, well I remember diving on two UFO operations [Two!!...Never mind, the second is not pertinent here] but though he remembered something about Shag Harbour [probably his fellow divers] he recalled diving off Government Point.

Chris Styles wished at the time that he had been aware of this second incident, because he kept trying to relate this to Shag Harbour but the square piece would not fit into the round hole. Finally it was beginning to get through to him what the man was talking about. He was saying that he was involved in an operation that specifically involved 6 or 7 supply and warships that were anchored over, not one but two, UFOs that were in 80 to 90 feet of water off Government Point at the mouth of Shelburne Harbour. They were there for a week observing these objects on the bottom and photographing them before some of the ships had to steam away from the area to intercept a Russian sub that had violated the 12 mile limit of the time. At that time, the alleged submerged UFOs lifted off the bottom and vacated the area to the south.

Now here was this Laundromat worker alluding to the same incident, admittedly without too much detail, having occurred during the same time period. The worker mentioned the names of some of the Lighthouse keepers that worked Cape Roseway Light that overlooked the Government Point area and suggested that Chris try and track them down. Maybe they saw something. Chris took the names, not really expecting anything and sure enough he found three of them, one of whom was in charge of Lighthouse maintenance. Unfortunately neither of the lighthouse keepers were on duty at that time but mentioned a third man who probably was. Chris was unable to track him down after nearly 30 years, but I did late in 1997 and interviewed him shortly after.

He could not remember seeing anything in the nature of a flotilla of ships off the Light station, but then he recalls that during that period they had fog on the

sea for some 32 days straight. He also recalls the island being used for some sort of military exercise as well, but could not be certain of the date.

Once more we return to Chris Styles who after these two instances runs into a friend of his who had retired some years before from the Air Force. They hadn't seen one another for about three years. They worked together in the circulating department of a local newspaper. The friend was with his son and all three were at the West End Mall in Halifax. When asked by the friend what Chris was up to these days, Chris took him over to his car and showed him some of the material he had in his briefcase on Shag Harbour and explained that he had been investigating the case for over a year.

Chris' friend floored him by saying, "Oh yeah, the Shag Harbour crash. But you know...the real story was over off Shelburne."

Taken aback, Chris asked him what he was talking about. His friend replied that he had spent a week sitting on a ship off Government Point. Chris stated that he was in the RCAF, so what the heck was he doing on a ship? The friend informed him that he was there as an aircraft identification expert and explained his job in the RCAF was to identify aircraft that had crashed in a remote area or in deep waters from only fragments of the craft, such as a rudder or aileron hinges for example. He explained that he had been kept below for a whole week waiting to do his job, but nothing ever came of it. He related however that he overheard some of the divers talking during supper one night, about what they had seen below. They were promptly dressed down by some American naval officer for not keeping their mouths shut.

American? What the hell were American naval officers doing giving orders to RCN divers on a Canadian Naval vessel, Chris wanted to know. His friend could not help him there. After seven days some of the vessels left the area at full revs and shortly afterwards he was returned to shore with no explanation. At that point Chris' friend said that he had to leave and left Chris with his mouth hanging open.

It didn't end there. Later, Chris was contacted, once directly and once indirectly by two other ex-military personnel who told him essentially the same story. They probably had seen Chris on a couple of television programs, one national and the other local, where he had been telling the story of the Shag Harbour Incident. I was in the picture after a while and re-interviewed these people and learned additional information from one of them. He was an ex RCAF crewman involved in electronic intelligence who at one point was ready to appear in an American TV show, "Sightings". The night before he was to do the segment he contacted Chris and backed out. We were not to find out why until 18 months later while I was interviewing him. It is a shame because he was the one witness prepared to go on record with his story. Again the details are too involved to get into here.

Again, I reiterate that without these men that I have mentioned going on the record, this remains a story. It is fact to Chris and I but to the public it has to remain a story. However it is a story that is not yet completed, but seems to

expand as more details come out. Perhaps some day we will be able to tell it with some degree of credibility.

Part 4 - Resolve?

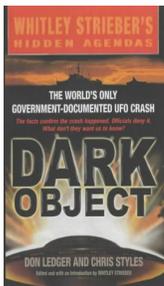
Seven days after the Shag Harbour Incident and almost to the hour, Lockland Cameron was having TV problems. There was a white line across the screen and it was "going all squiggly". He went outside to have a look at his antennae. It was about 10:00 PM on October 11th. From his location at the back of his house in Woods Harbour which overlooked the Sound, he was startled to see a string of bright red lights climbing upward, away from the water about a half mile from his location. They then stopped and hung in the sky for some time, about 7 or 8 minutes. Ockland was not alone in his observation. He was accompanied by his wife Lorraine, his daughter Luella, his brother Havelock Cameron, his wife Brenda and their two children.

They all agreed that the lights from one end to the other measured about 55 to 60 feet and that the object stayed stationary at an altitude of between 500 and 600 feet about 3/4 of a mile offshore before they disappeared. But that was not the end of it. Four of the red lights reappeared a short time later in the sky, this time at a 35 degree angle and they seemed to descend northwest toward the horizon in the direction of Big Tusk Island. The colours of the lights slowly changed from red to yellow to orange and then went out of sight.

After that, things seemed to go back to normal, in Shag Harbour.

These books by Don are still currently available:

Dark Object: The World's Only Government-documented UFO Crash
Don Ledger, Chris Styles, Whitley Strieber
ISBN: 0440236479



and **Maritime UFO files**
Don Ledger **ISBN: 1551092697**

Well known Researcher claims, “I can’t get Published”



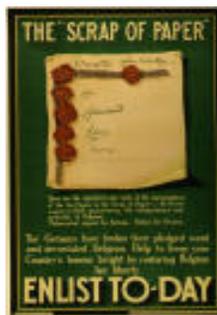
Shoutalot Fluff

Well know veteran UFO researcher Shoutalot Fluff claimed today that no publisher or outlet would distribute his research paper on “the biggest UFO CE5 sighting ever to have taken place in the history of Mankind”. Mr. Fluff, who resides in Flamboyantville USK said, “I have been an active researcher for more than 30 years. I have had six books published and was the first to reveal that the Socorro sighting was simply an escaped group of midgets from a Snow White production at the White Sands Playhouse. I have established a reputation over the years for groundbreaking research and yet I can’t get a publisher to even look at my latest manuscript.”

Mr. Fluff, 62, went on to say, “There’s something going on here and I suspect the CIA. This case would break open the whole shooting match and reveal how the government has been lying to us for the last 50 years (ya don’t say – Ed). I have solid witness testimony on something or other but they won’t look at it because it doesn’t fit in with their existing paradigm. It offers an alternative explanation to the solving of a currently solid case and neither sceptics nor believers like the conclusion. It’s all to do with the synchronicity. I have no idea what that means but that’s the buzz word at the moment. So no one wants to know.

When contacted by UFO Review who offered Mr. Fluff an outlet for his paper, he had this to say, “Errrrrrr, somebody’s supposed to be publishing it but he’s holding on to the manuscript and trying to make a decision. He’s had it for 3 years. It has to be presented properly in green ink with a yellow border. Do you have any tomato soup?”

Mr. Fluff is 24.



Mr. Fluff’s manuscript

Cornish Cryptids



Not that Kithra particularly wants to upset the various tourist boards down in Cornwall, but you might want to think twice about going down there for a holiday after reading this excellent article below.

Very early one morning a year ago, in the late summer of 2003, my adult daughter, who lives in Mawnan Smith, had a strange experience. Being a thoughtful neighbour, and not wanting to disturb anyone, at 2:00 a.m. she and a friend had wanted to listen to some pop music. So she took her car up to the car park of the old local church because it's such an isolated spot. After about ten minutes my daughter and her friend suddenly became aware of a block of blue/white light above their heads. It was pulsating in that it stopped and then started again for seconds at a time, although it remained stationary and constantly overhead. Neither were aware of any missing time, but they also had no idea how long they remained near the churchyard before they went home. And, when they reached home, both were so tired that they simply went to sleep without checking the clock.

While doing an Internet search to see if I could find any similar experiences I came across an article by Paul Devereux in which he tells of a block of light materialising above the church in November 1996. You can read the full account here:

<http://www.lightworks.com/MonthlyAspectarian/1997/April/0497-21.html>

It wasn't exactly the same as my daughter saw, but it does lessen the odds that she was mistaken, or misperceived something.

For many, when I say that the church was The Old Church in Mawnan Smith, near Falmouth, in Cornwall, this will mean nothing at all. However, back in the middle of the 1970's it was the place where the Owlman first appeared, together with reported sightings of Morgawr in Falmouth Bay. Given my daughter's experience, and the connection between UFOs and Cryptozoological creatures in some instances, it made me take another look at what happened in Cornwall back then.



Picture Credit: "swampy_embassy"

Mawnan Old Church is situated on top of cliffs about four miles south-west of Falmouth Bay, the third largest deep-water seaport in the world, with the Helford River lying just south of that. The church, dedicated to St. Mawnan (Maunanus), a Celtic saint, and St. Stephen, is one mile from the village centre and was built in the 13th Century. It stands in the middle of an Iron Age Earthwork known as the Round; part of which can still be seen in the surrounding hedge. In the grounds there is also an ancient Holy Well that has a head carved into the stones over its entrance. History has it that tin traders from Europe, maybe from even as far a field as the Mediterranean, came to Mawnan in Celtic times. And enduring Cornish legends also maintain that Jesus visited Cornwall, possibly as a ship's carpenter.

The village takes its name from the Old Church and the Smithy in the middle of the village itself. The Smithy was built where two ancient tracks meet, and it is also believed that the Church lies on a Ley Line. If you're interested in the history of the village the following link gives much more detail:

<http://www.mawnansmith.org.uk/HTML%20Sheets/Council/History.html>



Picture Credit: "swampy_embassy"

A local Cornish friend of mine will tell you the following about the county: *“Cornwall is a focal point for Spiritual Energy. In places there is a spiritual heaviness in the atmosphere. Sometimes you can feel high/elated, while at other times depressed. It’s like a tide that ebbs and flows between good and evil. The Cornish have an innate awareness of it. Most members of The Fundamentalist churches in Cornwall say they can feel it all the time, and often liken it as akin to the atmosphere between Palestine and Israel. History is both made and unmade in Cornwall; from Exmoor downwards, (but not from Glastonbury), right down to Heamoor, overlooking Zennor/Penzance. Down enzance way you can feel a tangible difference in the atmosphere, and at St Mawes, opposite the Roseland, at Place Manor, you can feel a calming influence. Marizion, near Penzance, is a Phoenician word that means ‘The Tribe of Elders,’ as in trees.”* The same friend also reminds me that the Cornish don’t “open-up” to outsiders, or Incomers as they’re called. You have to live here for around thirty years before you’re seen as a local. And for that very reason it is possible that not all cryptid sightings in the county will ever get into the main stream of public knowledge.

The Owlman

Beginning in the Spring of 1976 some very weird events happened in the Falmouth and Mawnan Smith area of Cornwall. The weather unseasonably fluctuated between droughts and floods, heat waves and cold snaps. There were reports of women being trapped in their homes by flocks of birds that beat themselves to death on the windows, and of feral cats that kept one lady incarcerated in her house. There was also an increase in dog attacks, and reports of some dolphins attacking swimmers while others rescued them from drowning. Local farmers reported that cows were being ‘teleported’ out of their fields only to be found in different locations. Added to all this was an increase in the number of UFO sightings together with reports of cryptids being seen.

The first report of the Owlman came on the Easter weekend of 17th April 1976. Two young girls, June and Vicky Melling, aged twelve and nine, saw what they described as a big, feathered birdman hovering over the steeple of Old Mawnan Church. In fact the children were so frightened by the experience that their family cut short their holiday and went home.

Three months later, on 3rd July 1976, around 10:00 p.m. but not quite dark Sally Chapman, age fourteen, and her friend Barbara Perry were camping in woods around the church. They heard a hissing sound and saw what looked like an owl as big as a man with pointed ears and red eyes that were glowing. It was standing near the pine trees and flew up into the air, which made them scream. At that point they could see that its feet were like pincers. But their first reaction was that someone had dressed up to scare them. Both drew pictures of what they’d seen and, although similar, the pictures were different enough to refute any collusion.



Picture Credit: "swampy_embassy"

The following day, on 4th July 1976, Jane Greenwood and sister saw the creature. They described it as being as large as a man, with silver-grey feathers that also covered the legs and body. It had wide mouth, slanted red eyes, and huge black crab-like claws. They thought it looked like something from a horror film. Again it flew up into the air, after which: "*there were crackling sounds in tree-tops for ages.*" In a letter to local paper Jane said:

"It was Sunday morning and the place was in the trees near Mawnan Church, above the rocky beach. It was in the trees standing like a full-grown man, but the legs bent backwards like a bird's. It saw us and quickly jumped up and rose straight up through the trees. My sister and I saw it very clearly before it rose up. It has red slanting eyes and a very large mouth. The feathers are silvery grey and so are his body and legs. The feet are like big, black crab's claws. We were so frightened at the time. It was so strange, like something in a horror film. After the thing went up there was crackling sounds in the treetops for ages. Later that day we spoke to some people at the camp-site, who said they had seen the Morgawr Monster on Saturday, when they were swimming with face masks and snorkels in the river, below where we saw the bird man. They saw it underwater, and said it was enormous and shaped like a lizard."

<http://www.madladdesigns.co.uk/unexplained/creatures/wingedthings.htm>

From June to August 1978 there were additional sightings in area of the church. In early August 1978 a sixteen-year-old girl, "Miss Opie," saw what she described as: "*a monster, like a devil, flying up through the trees near old Mawnan Church*". And on 2nd August three young French girls, staying in Redruth while attending Camborne Technical College, now known as Cornwall College, told their landlady they'd seen something: "*very big like a big furry bird with a gaping mouth and round eyes.*" The report was made to Doc Shiels, a very well-known local "character" and someone who seems to figure somewhere in most of the Owlman reports.

Sometime during 1980 an enormous bird-like creature was seen flying over the Helford River and into trees near Grebe Beach. This is the closest named beach to the church.



Picture Credit: "swampy_embassy"

In 1989 Gavin and his girlfriend Sally, (both pseudonyms), two young teenagers on a walking holiday, were on the fringe of woods and shining their torch beam across trunks of trees about fifteen feet off ground. The trees are recalled as possibly being large conifers. At about 9:30 p.m. they too saw the Owlman, and describe it thus: *"it was standing on a thick branch with its wings sort of held up at the arms. I'd say that it was about five feet tall. The legs had high ankles and the feet were large and black with two huge 'toes' on the visible side. The creature was grey with brown and the eyes definitely glowed. On seeing us its head jerked down and forwards, its wings lifted and it just jumped backwards. As it did its legs folded up. We ran away."* This is the only sighting that definitely can't be linked to Doc Shiels.

Apart from Gavin the Owlman seems to only be seen by girls aged from eight or nine up to sixteen years old.

To the people of Cornwall, Doc Shiels is a very well known name, although he no longer lives in the county. In the early 1960's he became a professional showman, and called himself the Wizard of the Western World. But he is really better known as a surrealist painter, and has had numerous exhibitions. Some of his paintings have been hung in the Tate Gallery. You can read an appraisal of his art here:

<http://www.yowiehunters.com/crypto/reports/Weird%20stuff.htm>

And you can find a list of some of his books and articles here:

http://www.dragonskull.co.uk/t_shiels.htm

But, unfortunately that list doesn't include his famous book "Monstrum!: A Wizard's Tale (1988)" about the strange events in Cornwall.

Jonathan Downes, writing in his book "The Owlman and Others" (2001 CFZ Communications) gives a very good refutation of an article by Mark Chorvinsky who believed that Doc Shiels had hoaxed it all. And in Chapter Eight Downes also gives some very good reasons as to why the sightings were not

misidentifications of owls. In the same book, on pages 190/191, he alludes to Rudyard Kipling's idea that "The People of the Hills" came to the British Isles as part of the beliefs held by about gods and demigods by various invaders. Then, at a later time, they became marginalised to the point that, as Downes says: *"These are what we now know as earth spirits, and some of them could well be described as zooform phenomena."*

For those who haven't read the book, you can find long excerpts from it on the Internet at:

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/chris.mullins/OWLMAN.htm>

As the site states, the extracts were posted with the permission of the author. Alternatively you can read a shorter article by Jonathan Downes here:

http://www.phenomenamagazine.com/0/editorial.asp?aff_id=0&this_cat=The+Ghost+Inside&action=page&obj_id=1163&type_id=5&cat_id=121&sub_id=0

The article is entitled: "Owlman: a ghost - or something beyond? 'no way is it a real animal...'" (Dateline: Friday, June 4, 2004 By: Jonathan Downes, Phenomena News Editor)

The Cornish Guardian newspaper says in a round up of most of these sightings: *"Its description is normally always the same, a creature of between 5-7 feet tall with grey feathers, clawed feet and glowing red eyes. Pictures and descriptions of the creature often include two tufts of feathers that stick up on either side of the head behind the eyes. The Owlman seems to bear a remarkable similarity to the infamous Mothman who is claimed to be seen in parts of America. The Mothman investigators have alleged that they can trace the legend back to ancient religions in the Middle East."*

<http://www.cornishguardian.co.uk/displayNode.jsp?nodeId=144143&command=displayContent&sourceNode=144131&contentPK=6689938>

So, has anything similar to the Owlman been seen in any other parts of the UK? Well oddly enough, yes it has. There is a report from 1981, on the Fortean Times web site, of a sighting similar to the Owlman that happened near Luton. You can read about it here:

<http://www.forteantimes.com/happened/owlman.shtml>

Then, in March 2004, the ufoinfo web site carried a report of an event at Wolverhampton in the West Midlands. The description of the creature that was seen is a very evocative of the Owlman. You can read the report, entitled: "Winged Wierdie seen in West Midlands, UK" here:

<http://www.ufoinfo.com/roundup/v09/rnd0911.shtml>

It often seems that strange events happen in clusters at certain distinct places around the world, and sometimes even only at what might be predetermined times. Could some, as yet undiscovered, energies cause them? As for the

woods around Mawnan Old Church, it has long had a reputation as an eerie. And, unfortunately, not very many years ago it was even place the scene of a suicide when a man hung himself from one of the trees.



Picture Credit: "swampy_embassy"

In the second half of the book entitled: "Into the Bermuda Triangle" by Gian J. Quasar, (2004 McGraw-Hill) the author examines such theories as: antigravity, atmospheric ionization and pollution, atoms, brain functions, electromagnetic anomalies/pollution, gravitational fields, gravitational waves. ELF, ESP, magnetic anomalies/vortices, megaliths, Moon and Mars anomalies, psychic abilities, radiation, sea serpents, space probes, space-time, supernatural phenomenon, UFOs, 'Watchers', and zero-point energy. Could any of these be responsible for the crackling sounds and hissing noise that were heard during some of the Owlman experiences? You can find Quasar's web site here:

<http://www.bermuda-triangle.org/>

It also contains a database of all the ships and planes that have disappeared in that area.

Another suggested explanation for the Owlman has been that it was an escaped Eurasian Eagle Owl. These can grow more than two feet long, have a wingspan of five to six feet, and if kept in captivity can live for up to forty years, although in the wild their life expectancy is normally from twelve to fifteen years. It is probably the largest owl species but, of course, it isn't native to the British Isles.



Picture Credit

<http://www.hawk-conservancy.org/>

In all of the reports of the Owlman there doesn't appear to be any missing time but, even so, could it be a screen memory?

Owls as Screen Memories

Owls have long been revered as symbols of wisdom, and the symbolism of the owl occurs in many belief systems, such as Shamanism. Today it is sometimes being seen as a screen memory in abduction experiences. Although Freud maintained that screen memories are those produced by the mind to hide a traumatic experience.

An article by Bill Chalker entitled: "Alien abductions - a shamanic perspective on UFOs" (originally published in "Nature & Health" (Australia), Vol. 11, No. 1, Autumn, 1990), looks at the relationship between the screen memories found in abduction reports and the symbolism of Shamanism. You can read the full text here:

http://www.theozfiles.com/ufo_shaman.html

Of course one of the best-known abductees is Whitley Strieber. He describes seeing a barn owl staring at him through his bedroom window, and attributes it to a screen memory. Interestingly, in an article entitled: "Aliens. Mind or Reality?" by Jim Lindsay he refers to Strieber's experience and examines the relationship between the owl symbolism and screen memories:

http://www.gardenof-eden.com/aliens_mind_or_reality.htm

One of the earliest mentions of an owl as a screen memory comes from the Betty Andreasson case back in January 1967. Under hypnosis she recalls seeing a fifteen-foot tall birdlike creature during her abduction. If you don't remember the case you can refresh your memory with this account:

<http://ufocasebook.com/Andreasson.html>

And in a piece by Budd Hopkins entitled: "Abduction and Deception" on the FSR web site, [Republished by FSR with permission from IUR Reporter, September/October 1990], he refers to an abduction case where a lady saw a five-foot tall owl.

<http://www.fsr.org.uk/fsrart20.htm>

(The article is the second item on the page.)

Also, in an extract from the book he co-authored with Carol Rainey entitled: "Sight Unseen" you can read the following: *"The idea that these images are not self-generated but are implanted in the minds of abductees by their captors is supported by the fact that two or more people in the same encounter saw exactly the same (impossible) five-foot-tall owl staring at them, the same pileup of six empty cars on a deserted road, or the same telepathic deer."*

http://krater01.tripod.com/sight_unseen.htm

Whilst we mostly hear of alien abduction reports from the USA, there is a very good article by the late Johannes Fiebag, Ph.D entitled: “UFO Abductions In Germany, Austria and Switzerland” that you can read here:

http://www.alienjigsaw.com/Part_II/ufo-abdu.html

However, that wasn't the only sighting of a strange creature in Cornwall at the time.

Morgawr

Colloquially it is said that the Cornish name Morgawr translates as Sea Serpent, but I haven't been able to substantiate that. Nevertheless Morgawr is the name given to the Loch Ness type monster reported to have been seen in the waters around Falmouth Bay, and until the middle of the last century it was simply presumed to be just another Cornish legend. Most of the sightings have occurred between Rosemullion Head and Toll Point and this stretch of coastline is now known as “Morgawr's Mile.”



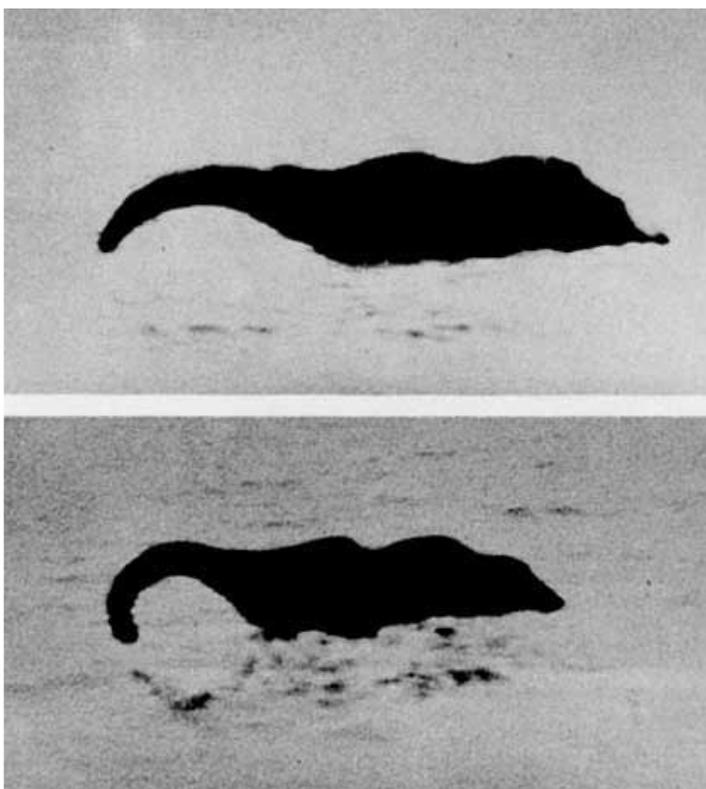
Picture Credit: <http://uk2.multimap.com/>

In both 1875 and 1925 fishermen netted an unidentified long-necked creature in those waters; but they may just have been the decomposing bodies of dead basking sharks. However, in September 1975, while out walking, a Mrs. Scott and a Mr. Riley reported seeing: “*a hideous hump-backed creature, with ‘stumpy horns’ and bristles down the back of its long neck,*” swimming off Pendennis Point. In addition to which numerous mackerel fishermen confirmed the sighting.

Also in 1975, or possibly January 1976, there was mention of something strange being spotted from Durgan Beach on the River Helford, just one beach along from Mawnan Smith, when an unknown carcass was washed ashore. Meanwhile a swimmer off Rosemullion Head claimed to have seen a creature with a long neck, and according to some reports a length of thirty to forty feet.

This was followed by another sighting in January 1976 when two ladies from London claimed to have seen a creature that was twenty-five feet in length, resembling a prehistoric animal, with a neck the length of a lamppost.

Then in February 1976 a lady who called herself "Mary F" published two photos purporting to show just such a creature swimming off Trefusis Point. It was said to be at least fifteen to eighteen feet long, and here's how she described it: *"It looked like an elephant waving its trunk, but the trunk was a long neck with a small head on the end, like a snake's head. It had humps on the back that moved in a funny way. The colour was black or very dark brown, and the skin seemed to be like a sea lion's... the animal frightened me. I would not like to see it any closer. I do not like the way it moved when swimming."* She also regretted the poor quality of her pictures saying: *"The pictures are not very clear because of the sun shining right into the camera and a haze on the water. Also I took them very quickly indeed."* When her photos were published in the Falmouth Packet the newspaper received a deluge of letters from readers who also said they had seen Morgawr.



Picture Credit: <http://it.geocities.com/francorosate/serpenti3.html>

On Good Friday, in April 1976, (the same weekend that the first reported sighting of the Owlman took place), a fifteen-year-old boy took a photo of a similar looking monster, twenty-five feet long, and his photo was shown on television. One month later, in May 1976, two bankers from London reported seeing a pair of monsters swimming in the waters at the mouth of the Helford River.

In July 1976 fisherman George Vinnecombe, part of the crew of a fishing boat in the waters off The Lizard, saw what at first was taken to be the hull of an overturned boat. But it soon became clear that it was a living object with a leathery scale-less skin, and humps along its eighteen to twenty-foot back. He had been a fisherman for over forty years and had never seen anything like it. Part of his description included a head and neck that rose three feet above the water, ahead of the body, with large eyes similar to those of a seal.

There were more sightings in August 1976. The first was when a sailor saw a forty-foot long 'worm-like' creature while sailing thirty miles northwest of the Scilly Isles. While just a few weeks later a couple in a motorboat saw two large, mottled-grey, humps while cruising off Restronguet Point. And later a man saw a hump-backed creature, like a large eel that was fifty to sixty feet long, while he was on Gyllyngvase Beach in Falmouth.



Picture Credit:

<http://www.parascope.com/en/cryptozoo/aquarium03.htm>

It would be remiss of me not to mention that Doc Shiels claims to have photographed Morgawr in July 1976, but in view of his involvement with the Owلمان, this might have just been another hoax.

In July 1985 writer Sheila Bird, and her brother, reported seeing Morgawr while walking at Porthcurnow, near Truro. She described it as being mottled-grey, about twenty-feet long, and with a tail of the same length. She added that it held its head up like a camel, and she thought it was a descendant of the plesiosaurs.

Although not taking place in Morgawr's Mile, but at Devil's Point on the Plymouth side of the river Tamar, a strange sighting from October 1987 can be read in this personal article at:

<http://www.forteantimes.com/happened/morgawr.shtml>

It contains a description of a creature very like the Cornish sea monster.

Then in January 1992 a couple walking on the Falmouth cliffs reported seeing a creature similar to the Loch Ness Monster.

In an article by David Hatcher Childress he makes brief mention of a possible sighting of Morgawr that happened in early September 1995 by a lady on Golden Bank Beach in Falmouth. The description is very similar to that of the creature seen by Sheila Bird in July 1985.

During the summer of 2002 a diver who was diving off Black Head, Cornwall, relates what might have been a sighting of Morgawr. It seems the creature had already been seen off The Manacles during that summer, and in fact there had been two sightings in those summer months. You can read his account here:

<http://www.divernet.com/biolog/1202monster.htm>

He also suggests the six most likely places for a diver to encounter a sea monster in UK waters.

In July 2002, a Mr. Holmes, who was a former employee of the Natural History Museum, claimed to have filmed a snake-like creature that might have been Morgawr back in 1999. The same day that he filmed it a St. Piran patrol-boatman, and a Falmouth fisherman, also claimed to have seen it in the same area. A full report of this sighting can be found here:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2070000.stm>



Picture Credit: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2070000.stm>

You can also read mention of this sighting at:

<http://www.100megsfree4.com/farshores/ccornmon.htm>

On the same page, the next post down, says that the film reawakened the memories of a ninety-two year-old lady who lives by the Helford River. She had a sighting in the early 1980's when she saw something strange in the water. The same link also contains a fuller description of Sheila Bird's sighting.

Curiously, in September 2004 there was a report from Whitehaven, on the coast of Cumbria, of a "mini Loch Ness" being washed ashore. It was described as having a seal's body, the tale of a whale, fins on the tops and sides, plus claws and sharp teeth. The original report comes from the Whitehaven News at:

<http://www.whitehaven-news.co.uk/leisure/viewarticle.asp?id=133786>

But unfortunately the link does not appear to be working

However, there was a brief mention of it, plus a photograph on this web site:

<http://www.unexplained-mysteries.com/>

Under the pseudonym of A. Mawnan-Peller a booklet was written about the Morgawr sightings. Some think this was an alias used by Doc Shiels, but it

seems it was more likely to have been written by a journalist on one of the local newspapers. You can read the text in full here:

<http://www.cfz.org.uk/features/morgawr.htm>

For a wider view of Cornish sea monsters I can recommend a new booklet that came out this year, 2004. It's entitled: "Mystery Sea Serpents of the South-West" by Chris Moiser, and is published by Bossiney Books Ltd. The reports contained in it go right back to 1875 and ends with a sighting in May 2000. The booklet is small but it is very comprehensive, and also takes a look at the various theories of what Morgawr might be.

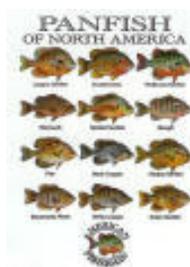
There are many theories to explain what people have seen, but the most currently accepted one is that it is some kind of unknown long-necked seal. It is possible that a new seal species may inhabit the waters off Falmouth as many seals are seen in the area, often in the harbour itself, and there have occasionally been sightings of Black Seals, which are not native to this part of the UK.

However, bearing in mind that the prehistoric coelacanth was thought to be long extinct until it's rediscovery in the 1930's, should we too surprised if a plesiosaur-type creature was also found? Scientists maintain that the waters around Falmouth are too cold to support any reptilian type of creature, and that if Morgawr is real it must be warm-bloodied. As for the waters being too cold for many marine species a barracuda was caught off Cornwall in 2002!

One other major explanation for the sightings of Morgawr comes from those scientists who tell us it is probably a sunfish. These have one soft and spiny dorsal fin, one anal fin with at least three spines, and a tail fin that is usually forked. The main types of this species are the Panfish, which includes the Bluegill, and the Bass, which includes the Spotted Bass.



Sunfish



Panfish



Bluegill



Bass



Panfish Pumpkinseed

Picture Credits: <http://www.esd.ornl.gov/programs/bioindicators/sunfish.htm>
http://www.lovingcompanionsgifts.com/panfish_product_page.htm

www.idph.state.il.us/images/bluegill.jpg
<http://agrino.org/fishing/photos/freshfish/bass-lrgmouth.jpg>
<http://dep.state.ct.us/whatshap/press/2003/cr0708.htm>

An article entitled: “Monsters of the English Channel,” that also takes a look at the stories of Morgawr, can be found on the Paranormal News web site at:

<http://www.paranormalnews.com/article.asp?ArticleID=1021>

At the end of the article is a link to the Global Underwater Search Team, at:

http://www.bahnhof.se/~wizard/GUSTeng03/okandadjur_morgawr.html

This second link gives some very interesting facts about the topography of the English Channel and Falmouth Bay, including some very good graphics. One map shows where the largest fish catches take place, together with the places where Morgawr has been seen; both of which coincide.

Another article entitled: “The Definitive Sea Serpent” by Matthew A. Bille, examines the case of two zoologists, British naturalists, who encountered a sea monster during a research trip near the mouth of Brazil’s Parahiba River in 1905. The case is little known these day and it makes extremely interesting reading. It also includes a graphic that compares the head profiles of the animal that was seen with a Plesiosaur, a Common Eel, and a Leopard Seal. It can be read here:

<http://www.strangemag.com/definitiveseaserpent.html>

UFOs Over Cornwall

So where does all of this leave us in relation to UFOs? Well, of course, Cornwall has its fair share of UFO sightings, and the first one I can find a reference to comes from the FSR Magazine. Apparently, on 18th October 1955, a blue/white object with flames coming from its tail was seen over North Devon and Cornwall in the very early hours of the morning. It made a sizzling sound, and when it hit the sea it sounded as though it had exploded. (Reference: Flying Saucer Review Vol. 17, No. 5 September/October 1971, p. 29)

Then in 1975 a group of three UFOs were seen over Falmouth Docks; while in March 1976 a pair of flying saucers was reported over Perranwell. Both of these reports are only very briefly mentioned in the Cornish Guardian newspaper at:

<http://www.cornishguardian.co.uk/displayNode.jsp?nodeId=144143&command=displayContent&sourceNode=144131&contentPK=6689936>

UFOs were also reported over Falmouth Bay in the August or September of 1976, but trying to track the stories down has so far proved fruitless.

One bright clear morning on 30th June 1988 a couple, and their friend were at Mounts Bay, Penzance, when they saw a small round object circling a jet. As they watched it faded and vanished as if it had disintegrated.

As reported by the Cornish Guardian on 13th February 1997, although it happened a year previously, a student claimed he had to do an emergency stop in his car near Pensilva, south-east Cornwall, when he saw four different coloured lights in a square formation. The lights seemed to be very low, right over his car, but with no mass to them, and he felt as though he was being watched.

In Jonathan Downes' book, (referenced above), on pages 90/92, he has also turned up a report from the same time period of a 3 unidentified fireballs being seen over St. Mawes and Flusing, plus the details of a UFO sighting over a Redruth school. Three teachers and ninety children saw it, and, according to the head teacher UFOs had been seen in the same area a few years previously.

More Bizarre Explanations?

Cornwall is full of myths and legends, it has a truly Celtic heart, and although a genuine belief in fairy-type beings has largely died out, they are still talked about with affection. Cornish sprites come in various shapes, with various names, but the two best known are the Piskies and the Knockers. However, there is also a species called the Spriggins who are said to live in the ancient sites such as standing stones and barrows. They are credited with being shape-shifters who can change in size from very small right up to being gigantic grotesques. You can read about them here:

<http://storm.prohosting.com/megowan/blspriggan.htm>

And in an essay entitled: "The Elfin Creed of Cornwall" you can read yet more about them here:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/prwe/prwe023.htm>

If you're interested enough to want to know about the folklore of Cornwall there is a very good bibliography, compiled by Jeremy Harte, which contains many references to Cornwall. His book is entitled: "Alternative Approaches to Folklore" and you can read extracts here:

<http://66.102.11.104/search?q=cache:IngMqQcR8rIJ:www.hoap.co.uk/aatf1.doc+earthworks++Round++Cornwall+Mawnan&hl=en>

He also wrote a work entitled: "Research in Geomancy" that has a section on Cornwall. You can read extracts of that here:

<http://66.102.9.104/search?q=cache:NqHNXuLLZw8J:www.hoap.co.uk/rig2.doc+&hl=en>

Is there a basis in fact for some of these legends; are these fairy beings real? Could they be responsible for the sightings of Owlman?

There is one final idea to add to this eclectic mix of possibilities, and that concerns the now decommissioned RAF Portreath base at Nancekuke, on the northern coast of Cornwall. In actual fact Portreath and Falmouth lie directly opposite each other on the map, with just about twelve miles between them.

You can read a brief history of the base on the M.O.D. web site at:

<http://www.mod.uk/issues/nrp/history.htm>

But, in a nutshell, it started out as a Fighter Section during WWII, and then became a transport-training unit. But in May 1950 it was taken over by the Ministry of Supply to be developed as the Chemical Defence Establishment (CDE) Nancekuke. It closed on 30th September 1980 when it was formally handed back to the RAF. During that time, amongst other things, it produced VX nerve gas.

In 2000 the MP for the area took up the cases of local people who claim to have been poisoned while working at the base during the time that Sarin was being produced. You can read the BBC report here:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/608113.stm

And in July 2001 the MP asked a question about it in Parliament:

<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo020116/text/20116w09.htm>

By late 2001 the local Surfers Against Sewage group, locally called SAS, were finally allowed to look around the site; as reported here:

<http://www.sportextreme.com/phdiar137/>

The SAS group were also invited to take part in the preliminary discussions regarding the clean up:

<http://www.sas.org.uk/pipeline/48/nancekukeupdate.asp>

And in August 2003 a chemical clean up was at last announced:

http://news.mod.uk/news/press/news_press_notice.asp?newsItem_id=2579
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/cornwall/3161887.stm
<http://www.kerrier.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5310>

The project finally began in this summer, 2004:

http://www2.itv.com/westcountry/news/full_story/?id=870404&type=WCNEWS+-+News+Story

And here is an outline of the clean up project from the M.O.D:

<http://www.mod.uk/issues/nrp/>

If you'd like to read more background information on this issue, then this final link will tell you the story of a very redoubtable lady who spent most of her adult life fighting for justice. The article is from October 1995 and entitled: "The Toxic Avenger":

<http://john.tillotson.com/The%20Toxic%20Avenger.htm>

Could there be a link, even a tenuous one, between the nerve agents produced at Nancekuke and some of the local cryptozoological sightings? Was the Owlman all a hoax? Does Morgawr exist?

We may never really know the answers, but at least living in this part of Cornwall is interesting!

Kithra

<http://kithraskrystalkave.org.uk>



FORTEAN CORNER

An occasional new series where we totally take the piss, sorry, where we look at the stranger side of life.

LEGEND OF THE WILD MAN OF BIGGLESWADE

And why not! You'd be pissed off living there too.

For many years there have been persistent rumours of a “Wild Man” living in the large forest area known as Dingly Dell that adjoins the town of Biggleswade in Bedfordshire, England. These stories have dogged the area for centuries and if you go into the town and accost a local person, usually after a sharp poke in the eye and a tug on an ear lobe, they will gladly recount tales of strange sightings and events regarding this creature. Is he real or just a figment of the local's imagination? Our ace reporter on the spot, Dam Acne investigates.



“The Wildman” – a picture taken 5 years ago of a strange human like creature seen in Dingly Dell woods. Half man, half pineapple, he has been known to terrorise the local building societies.

Biggleswade is a delightful little town filled with stupid, simple-minded inbreds who all look alike and dribble when they smile. It is an enchanting mental picture but do not think for one minute that Biggleswade is unique. Oh no. It is

typical of many of the feeder towns that surround the grand metropolis of London, where all the streets are paved with dog shit and the locals rejoice in greeting you with the refrain, "Sillyoldcowain'tshe."

But behind this pleasant façade lies a dark secret. For many years, some say centuries, the town has been dogged by stories of a wild man living in Dingly Dell woods. Local legend has it that it's not safe to venture into those woods after 6:37 pm on a Wednesday and not after 7:20 pm on all other days (please allow for early closing on Fridays). Eerie howling can be heard piercing the night time air and there is often the unexplained sound of grunting and "boom like" noises. What can it all mean? (who gives a shit - Ed)

I met up with local mythologist and Citroen 2 CV driving bearded pseudo, Terry Fied who is an expert on local legend, and who filled me in. Having done that, he told me a little about the background to the story.

"The Wild Man has been seen many times over the years, which is why the story still persists. Originally, he was meant to have been an escaped Jesuit priest fleeing persecution during the reign of Elizabeth 1st. More recently, there were stories of a runaway German soldier from World War 2 who had somehow evaded capture and survived in the woods. I can't give a definitive explanation but you won't get me in there after dark for love nor money pal. You're on your own."

So, very late one recent Saturday night, I decided to venture into the woods to see if there was indeed anything living there or whether the local myth was just that - a myth. I was fully prepared. I had a packet of Sainsbury's tuna fish salad sandwiches and a thermos of Ribena to keep the night chills away. I also had on my thermal underwear and for protection, I carried a gun. Not a real one unfortunately but one of those joke jobs where, when you pull the trigger, a little flag pops out of the end of the barrel with the word "BOO" written on it. While it wouldn't kill anything it was very realistic looking and Binky the dog always wets himself when I point it at him. The pistol that is.

So at 10:30 pm that night (you said "very late" you Nancy boy - Ed) I slowly walked across the Common and into the woods. Virtually as soon as I stepped past the first tree, a silence descended on the area, as if all the animals and birds still around at that time had decided to sit back and "see how this idiot gets on".

I made for a wide- open clearing and sat down near the middle of it against a large oak tree. I thought, "If Wild Man is here, then let him come to me." It was not an unpleasant evening and after a while, my eyes became accustomed to the surroundings and I became more and more relaxed. Too relaxed maybe for I drifted off to sleep.

I awoke with a start and immediately looked at my watch, depressing the night light button to illuminate the face. It was 2:30 am. Boy had I slept! Something though had woken me and I became anxious as I wildly looked around to see what it was.

Faintly, in the distance, I could hear someone humming and the sound was getting steadily louder as the person singing got closer and closer. Who, I thought, would be out in these woods at this time of night? I didn't have to wait long for an answer. Suddenly, and with a little skip to his walk, out into the clearing strode a colossus of a man, well over 5 feet tall, dressed in a bizarre, ancient garb and almost caricaturely carrying his meagre belongings wrapped in a red and white spotted cloth tied to the end of a long stick swung across his shoulder.

He stopped and looked at me with a quizzical eye, his head cocked to one side and we both stared at each other for a few seconds. I spoke first. "Who are you?" I asked in as non-confrontational manner as possible.

"Why," he smiled, "I'm known as the Wild Man of Dingly Dell. And whom might you be sir?"

"I'm a reporter," I replied, "and I've come to write a story about you."

"About me?" he said in a surprised tone, "Why, how wonderfully delightful," and he came and sat down very close to me. "Whenever you're ready," he grinned.

Slightly put out, and not unaware of the strangeness of the situation, I nevertheless "got on with it" and turned on the tape recorder that I had brought with me. Here is the text of the interview.

DA: Who are you?

WM: I'm the Wild Man of Dingly Dell woods.

DA: Do you a real name?

WM: Andrew Fosdyke.

DA: So you're not an illusion or something imaginary?

WM: Good god no. Look, pinch me. OW! Not so hard you twerp.

DA: Why do you do this then?

WM: It's my job. I'm employed by Biggleswade Council.

DA: What?

WM: It's for the tourist trade and to drag the punters in to the town. I've been doing this now for twenty years.

DA: But there is no tourist trade in Biggleswade.

WM: Yes, I know. It was a budgetary thing when it started. They had money left over one fiscal year and had to spend it, otherwise it would have been hacked off the next year's budget. So here I am!

DA: So what do you do?

WM: Basically scare the crap out of people. I'm particularly good at terrifying children, but grown ups are fun too.

DA: How can you be happy about terrifying children?

WM: I'm a mean bastard.

DA: Do you live here?

WM: In these woods? Don't be silly. I live at 27, Bedford drive. Nice, three bed semi.

DA: Any strange incidents occur during your time in the job?

WM: Tons. Courting couples are always fun. But my lips are sealed.

DA: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Your editor writes; This is ridiculous. There is obviously no such "thing" as the Wild Man of Dingly Dell woods and I believe, Dam Acne, that you have made all this up in order to qualify for an additional word bonus and possible increase in your expense account.

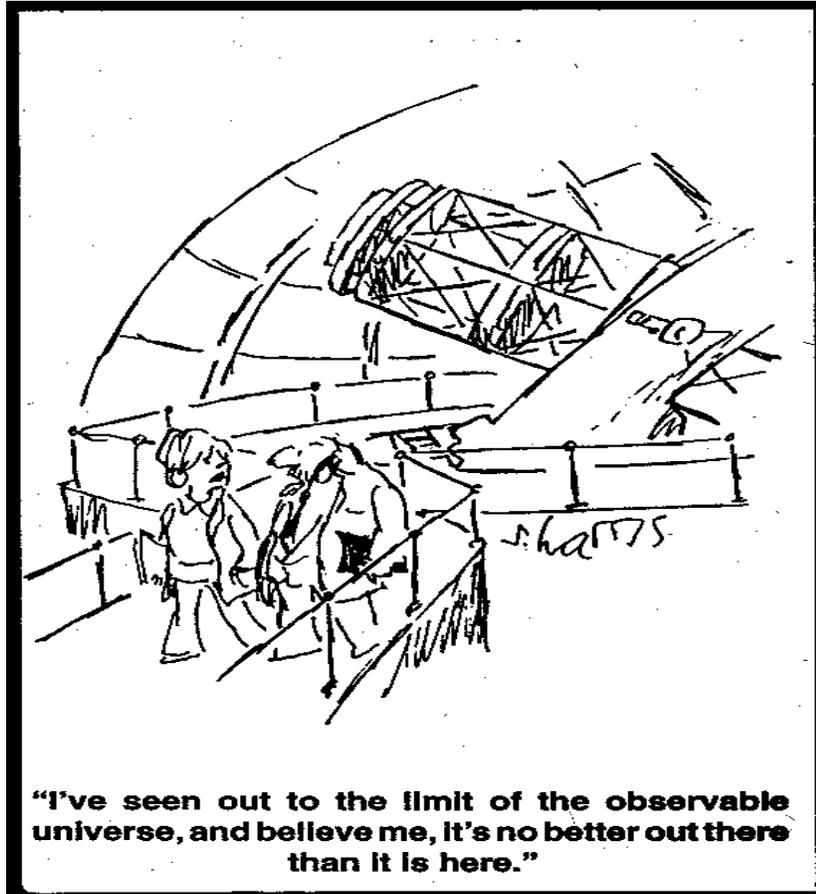
This sort of behaviour is paramount to fraud. You're fired.

Our new reporter, Miss B. Osom will be writing this column in future. Miss Osom is my new P.A. (pictured below) and is well qualified as a journalist and thinker. She also tells me she's very good at French but always smiles shyly when she says this, so I am puzzled as to why being fluent in French should be amusing.



Hopefully, Miss Osom's appointment will result in an increase in the quality level of articles submitted for publication.

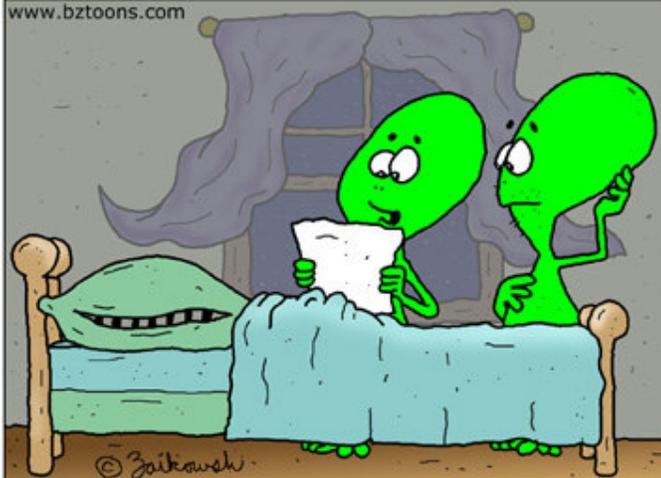
Miss B. Osom



B.Z. Toons

by Brian Zaikowski

www.bztoons.com



It's a note... "Dear aliens, I am sick and tired of being subjected to your humiliating invasive procedures..."

Silver in those Circles.

By

Steven Gerrard

SUFOG Chairman

A report on the Southampton UFO Groups' Avebury 2004

Investigation.

Saturday the 14th August 2004 saw the annual SUFOG sky watch at Avebury and circle hunting / watching. I set off at 10 a.m. and my mobile phone informed me that I had left the disposable BBQ at home... After a quick stop at Safeway's in Salisbury, I was back on the road again. Having negotiated Salisbury and its traffic jam and roundabouts, everything was going fine. Me and my big mouth! As I approached the roundabout for the A303/A345, I was pushed over by a big arctic that wanted to go where IT wanted to go and sod everyone else. I now found myself on the A303 and miles of traffic ahead on the road to Exeter! Road signs said no U-Turns and I crawled along at 5 mile an hour... A gap in the central reservation appeared and I could see the road that I wanted and decided that the time had come... Decision time... Exeter or Avebury? That was the question. Avebury it was and after a further hour I arrived at Alton Priors to see my first formation, the Dolphin formation.

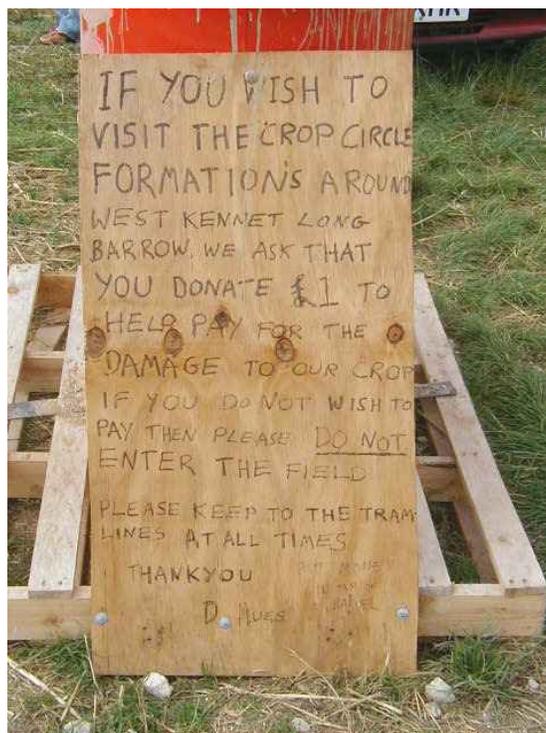


I finally arrived at the Barge PH at Alton Barnes at around mid day and by 1.30 p.m. and lunch, I had been joined by a further 5 group members, Roger and Jo Stone, Kev Nicklen, Mark Easen (Who had traveled up from East Sussex – Dedication for you members!), Alan Woods and now we were a merry band of

6. We decided to head off towards Silbury Hill and look at the formation there and the two at the West Kennet Longbarrow.

The Silbury Hill Mayan 2012 Calendar formation (The end of the world!)

This was a fascinating formation that was said to tell the story of the end of the Earth in 2012... It has recently featured in an article in the Daily Mail dated the 9th August. This was an impressive formation from the air and from the ground as well. But to get into the formation we had to pay £1 each as per the sign :



and get past the young lady sat in her deck chair to make sure that we paid (Mark, I think she saw the 2p!). The formation appeared on the 1st of August and was still in remarkable condition. After taking a number of photographs, I looked at the very center of the formation and noticed that there was a slight 'bowl' shape to the ground (As if something had been put there and compressed hard into the ground - a pole maybe?). So, for some unknown reason, I gently rubbed the surface with my finger (by now the other members were stood around me wondering what I was doing - so was I !), and I saw something shiny in the dirt. I used my car key to 'Dig' the object out of the solid, compacted earth...



What I found was a 1999 British 5 pence piece stood up on end!... But :

- 1 It was buried in the ground on end and not flat so it couldn't of just been 'dropped' there – The circle makers calling card?**
- 2. If it had been dropped when the formation was being created, then it would have been trodden down flat into the earth.**
- 3. The surface had been compacted very hard.**
- 4. I asked Kev Nicklen to try and push the coin back into the ground on end with his fingers, but he couldn't.**
- 5. I then asked Kev to use his walking stick to push it in, but this also failed.**

The only way to get the coin into the ground vertically if a hole was either there already or dug for the purpose and the coin DROPPED into it and then buried and the ground compacted around it and ontop.

So, who put it there and why?

- 1. The Circle Makers calling card?**
- 2. ET's calling card?**
- 3. Someone doing some kind of test? But why with a 5 pence piece?**

Another question one must ask is how did the so-called crop circle researchers not find this? Had it been left there since the 1st of August by the circle maker or later, as an experiment by someone else? Maybe in the future circle researchers should take a metal detector into a new formation. Have these 5 pence pieces been left behind before, or have researchers just missed them! If it is a calling card from the Circle Makers, then sorry folks, we must consider

the Silbury Hill formation as a hoax! Maybe next year I might find a 10 pence piece hidden in a formation ? – Inflation!



I must admit, 'I' feel this casts doubts on the Silbury Hill formation for me, as this is possibly an important find (Or some researcher is now pissed off that I have spoilt their experiment!). Had it been left by ET? I doubt it very much... Was someone carryout some kind of personal research? I have asked people this and there appears to be no reason as to why someone would use a 5 pence piece.. Was it left by the Circle Maker?.. I personally think this is the answer.. Their calling card.

After this, we decided to walk the quarter of a mile to the West Kennet Long Barrow across the fields. I wish we had chosen the road route! There were a number of the people in the formation next to the ancient burial site and the formation was like a rising sun and moon design. But, just outside the formation in the long corn was...



Who had left this piece of rope in the field? The circle makers or someone else? Someone commented that it was like someone had tapped one end as if to feed it through a hole and tied a knot in the other end and the rope had broken? Was it form the Circle Makers 'Stomping' board? The second formation just down the hill from this one was a lot more impressive from the road and this completed our afternoon of circle hunting... But I was wrong!

We headed back to the Red Lion at Avebury and found the local hostelry open and being well patronized (by wasps!). After a refreshing, wasp infested ice

cold drink, I went for a walk around the stones and looked over the backfields, but saw nothing of note. I made a swift visit to the Henge shops and walked out after seeing the prices, Andy Collins and Steve Alexander's crop circle books (Hoaxed formations included in the price!). When I re-joined the group, we decided to go to Avebury Trusloe and investigate the formation there. After a drive down narrow country lanes we found the formation in the middle of no-where! Even the farmer here had put up an honesty box, but no one was sat by it this time...



(Kevin paying his entry fee)

From the air, the formation looked like the old 'insectograms' of the early 1990's. From the ground, it appeared to be between 200 - 250 feet in length. There were a few anomalies, such as the circles centers appeared to be 'off set' to one side (Egg shaped circles instead of round) and someone had placed a birds feather (Rook, Raven or Crow) in the center of one of the circles. It was an impressive formation from the ground, as well as from the air.

From here, we headed to the sky watch position in a car park opposite Adams Grave and overlooking East Field. From the car park, we looked over the fields behind Alton Priors and Alton Barnes and could see the Dolphin formation in East Field and the circular formation some 2 fields away. A couple of us decided to climb to the top of Adam's Grave (Me and my big mouth again!) and as we climbed, I hoped it was going to be worth it! And it was! We could see a total of 6 formations. There were the two near Alton Priors, Two to the right of Adams Grave (One being the Bee formation) and 2 in the distance, one near Alton Barnes and the other one in Honey Street close to the Barge Public House



This was a fitting end to the circle hunting and the sky watch was the next experience for the group.. or not.. We set up camp around 8 p.m. with a clear sky and dark clouds in the distance. We had a wonderful sky watching airplanes, satellites, shooting stars and even the odd meteorites falling through the sky. The sky stayed reasonably clear but the odd 'patch' of cloud passed over the sky and we lost the clear sky for a few minutes. Around midnight, we lit the barbeque and by 1 a.m. we were tucking into burgers and sausages. But by 1.30 a.m. the sky went very black and the clear stary sky was lost. At around 2 a.m. our sky watch was over for another year.

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More Challenges For The Volunteer Ufologist

By

Sheryl Gottschall (2004)

In a previous issue of UFO Encounter (issue # 207 Aug/Sept 2003) I explored four of the sometimes annoying and often disheartening aspects of Ufology that face all UFO researchers at some time, namely - lack of funding, egotism, extreme idealism and burn-out. Quite stressful at various stages in one's own development as a researcher, over a period of time these

challenges often cause us to stop and question why we do what we do and if it is even sane to keep doing it? Although many people from mainstream society hold the notion that those who inhabit the UFO community are probably on their way to developing some form of mental health problems, it is when we call ourselves into question that we can feel quite uncertain and hesitant about our role.

Researchers can often be plagued with doubts about their contributions and achievements and whether it all makes a difference, with the most pressing doubt of all being: is it really worth the sacrifice? My advice for anyone who gets to this point, as many have done, is to either take a vacation or go do something else for a while. Once you get back on track you can prepare yourself to face the challenges once again.

Of course the best way to shortcut any of the previous mentioned situations would be to receive more spontaneous acts of appreciation from our peers, particularly by those the younger generation of Ufologists may consider as mentors. Up and coming researchers need to receive a pat on the back (preferably publicly) when they make valuable contributions and a gentle and kind suggestion out of public view when they might be venturing down a shadowy path. However, traditionally the UFO research arena is not like this at all. Most displays of back patting are done privately and suggestions of people falling short of the mark are very public indeed. So here we have our fifth challenge - the need to grow a "thick skin".

This is not a field for those who have low self esteem and look for encouragement at every turn as they will not get it. Unfortunately when this doesn't happen there are those who will resort to slapping themselves on the back, which is very discouraging - particularly for those new to the field, something the subject just cannot afford.

One should also be aware that although many derisive public comments about fellow researchers appear to be ego driven, there are those who set themselves

up as researchers that are actually members of the cover-up brigade, whose intention it is to discourage us from pursuing certain paths of inquiry or collaboration. Since Disclosure witnesses have spoken out, some have confirmed what researchers always expected: there are debunkers peppered within the UFO community whose job is not only to throw shadows of doubt over the UFO subject but also to create division where possible. Researchers need to be aware of this and observe those within the UFO community that may be creating the most division. This may just be their goal and another reason why we need to develop a thick-skinned approach in our work.

The sixth challenge we are faced with is a lack of skills and training. While it is not imperative for UFO researchers to have a background of professional training, it is appropriate for us to cultivate some skills or expertise that will help us understand the object of our research more clearly. This will also help us decide whether we feel it useful to cooperate and/or collaborate with those who do have relevant training. If we choose to do so we may possibly develop a deeper appreciation for those skills and work harder to attract people who have them. Unfortunately those who underestimate contributions from a professional perspective are often those who least understand what they can offer. Consequently, this leaves Ufology suffering generally from “professional cringe”, particularly towards scientists. Although some scientists may be deserving of this attitude, it does not change the fact that a scientific model serves us well as a starting point.

Although there is consensus among some that to bring this subject into the public’s awareness it will be necessary to adopt scientific models, and while those models may be useful, we also have to maintain a holistic approach to this often times bizarre subject. Hence the added need to read broadly and develop an eclectic knowledge-base complete with its own set of tools that, when brought together with mainstream tools, will aid in making breakthroughs in the UFO arena. Researchers need to grow their own tools so they can quantify the basic hard evidence but also deal with the subjective evidence that may be of an esoteric nature. The current piecemeal approach of many researchers only serves to keep this subject in the dark longer than necessary.

The seventh challenge is the “extremist” sub-culture that exists in Ufology. There are those in this field that are easily led into fuzzy thinking by randomly gathered and often unsubstantiated pieces of information that only serves to set up the gatherer as the “in house” guru on a particular subject. Those who follow their guru jump onto the swing of a pendulum that carries them to an extreme way of approaching this subject, with very little or no evidence to back up their newly adopted “belief”. Often they fool themselves into thinking they have discovered the “latest and greatest” in understanding, yet have really only cast off one set of unquestioned beliefs to take on another. Attempting to “get through” to these people is usually a waste of time as their minds have been narrowed and objectivity abandoned while they “buy into” what appears to serve a purpose in their lives. Sadly, those of guru status often have quite a strong following, which creates division within the UFO community and breaks down any form of consensus that might serve to move our understanding forward.

Then there is the reverse swing of the pendulum where others have a completely

opposite objective, that is, to stubbornly refuse to look at anything new. These types adopt great “scientific” skepticism and turn a blind eye to the paranormal nature of the UFO phenomenon. When we view the phenomenon from a perspective that goes beyond the hard data only, we are left with the question - what does it all mean? We cannot answer this without exploring beyond that data. Refusing to go beyond the scientific approach will also leave us in a state of confusion, chasing our tails and getting nowhere, which is precisely what has happened over the last five decades.

The eighth challenge is that of the UFO community’s “high consumption rate.” For the last few decades there has been a prolific amount of writing on this subject, which has left many in the habit of demanding new information to satisfy their “hunger”. However, recently the amount of new literature available has dwindled, at least in Australia, and the provision of new information has decreased. This has caused a tremendous pressure on researchers to “come up with the goods”. Consequently this has seen the emergence of “infotainment” within the UFO community.

While infotainment offers “knowledge-through-sensationalism” under the guise of keeping people informed, this trend causes one to wonder about its impact on the UFO community at large. Although the idea of educating and entertaining people simultaneously is not a new idea, when applied to UFO research it sometimes falls short of being done well. As an example, a conference in the US recently advertised two speaker topics as “Vampires From Outer Space” and “Goodbye Mermaids Hello UFO Crop Circles.” Is it any wonder the public does not take the subject seriously? Could it be that the human intrigue with unending sensational story lines such as above, or alien abductions and conspiracies is beginning to take its toll?

There is no doubt that the UFO community has a lingering fascination with these stories and they are never in short supply. There is hardly a UFO conference today that does not include a hearty smorgasbord of these morsels. If we want people to take this subject seriously, then perhaps the UFO community might have to consider making some compromises to achieve some of its goals.

Although infotainment may bring some people to the UFO subject that otherwise may not pay attention to it, one wonders whether its emergence may have accelerated the decline of interest in the UFO subject, at least here in Australia. This causes one to ponder at what price good material is displaced for “bums on seats” at UFO conferences or increased readership of UFO magazines, and whether we are infotaining the subject to death?

Such a steady stream of tabloid UFO news items will eventually have adverse effects on public perceptions of the subject, creating distorted perceptions, levels of distrust, widespread confusion, perpetrating ignorance rather than learning and possibly further creating a diminished public interest, which basically is what has happened in recent times. Long-term interests in this subject are maintained not by entertainment or for its shock value but through a balanced reporting of all aspects of ufology. An interest in the UFO subject takes years to cultivate and years to diminish, but once diminished it is not easily restored. This is why UFO researchers, UFO magazines and UFO

conference organisers need to look at their subject matter and present it in a balanced way so the UFO “consumer” will stay with its reality.

So here we have more challenges that constantly fall across our path, whether we like them or not. Perhaps one day when we truly gain an extraterrestrial perspective of this third rock from the Sun we might actually be able to overcome them.



SPIRITUAL DAWN - APOCALYPTIC DARKNESS

(Don't worry – it'll be alright in the end - Ed).



A look at UFO Based Religions – an interview with Professor Chris Partridge PhD.

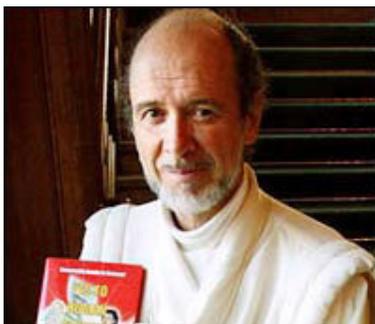
We haven't had one for a while, have we? I am referring to the charismatic individuals that were about, particularly in the 50's and 60's, who somehow managed to convince many others that they held the key to universal happiness and lots of other groovy things too, and went off and formed religions based on or centred around extraterrestrials. Yes, I hear you shouting, we've got the Raelians, and indeed we have got them, but aren't they a little too smooth for your tastes? Where's the rough and ready, those living in remote communes in deepest Wales or the Californian desert, engaging in bizarre chanting and eccentric worship and plain just making it all up as they go along? A cultural fad perhaps, long gone and never to be repeated? There has always been this gap between them and us. "Us" being ufologists and "them" being folk who were looking for spiritual salvation and found it by chance in the ET genus. Nevertheless, there was a bond between us, whether we liked it or not and the sociologists just loved them. Absolutely wetted themselves over them as, after all, they were the almost perfect study models. Professor Chris Partridge is not in fact a sociologist (though he spends an increasing amount of time working in the area). He's a Religious Studies scholar, with a PhD in philosophical/theological approaches to religions and the study of religion, with a specific focus on the work of H.H Farmer. He's either written or edited some twelve books and a couple of years ago produced one called *UFO Religions*. He's an expert. He's also a sceptic. Intelligent life exists, probably, but it hasn't come here.

In fact Chris interviewed me as much as I interviewed him and we chatted on for some two and a half hours. I think he just wanted to get back in touch with Ufology again to find out what the current views and attitudes are. Might be something to do with what he's writing at the moment. This interview took place on Friday, September 10th.

SM: What attracts you to the concept of UFO religions?

CP: I'm interested in new religious developments in western society. I'm principally interested in what I call emergent religion and why principal institutional religions are in decline. Church attendance figures are plummeting and yet there seems to be a massive interest in the paranormal and in new and alternative spiritualities. UFO religions are particularly interesting because at one end of the spectrum they can be atheist and yet seem to provide spirituality for people who are looking for belief in an apparently 'secular' society. And, at the other end of the spectrum, UFO religionsists belong to a particular tradition of spirituality, an esoteric and theosophical tradition.

Rael



So they are fascinating in several ways: as typical new religions within the Western esoteric tradition or as atheistic, 'physicalist' belief systems with an interest in science. For example, the Raelians are very involved in scientific pursuits such as cloning; they don't believe in God, but provide a spirituality which many find attractive. They have around 55,000 members worldwide, with branches in 52 countries. That said, they only have around 40 members in the UK, along with roughly 200 sympathisers.

SM: On the subject of the Raelians and in fact with most of the cults and sects mentioned in the book, there is at the pinnacle a human figurehead and it does create a sense of unease. Does that disturb you? In very simple terms, do you see it as a monstrous ego trip?

CP: That's a difficult one. As a scholar of religion I try to be entirely objective, but I can see what you're getting at and I think there is that tendency. The Raelians are interesting in that they were founded in 1976 by the Frenchman Claude Vorilhon ('Rael') who was a sports journalist (similar, in that respect, to David Icke) with an ambition to become a racing car driver, and who, on 13th December 1973, three years after the publication of *Chariots of the Gods*, had an encounter with extraterrestrials who provided an interpretation of the Bible that's very similar to von Daniken's. It's very difficult for me not to see a direct link between the popularity of von Daniken and the emergence of 'Rael'. Again there is, certainly in the early years, a fairly strong emphasis on sexuality and the experience of the senses. So there are all sorts of things going on in the emergence of this new religion which you might be able to find in a lot of 1960s/70s new religious movements: free love; a charismatic leader in tune with popular culture; and, as a result, someone who was struggling in one area of life but became very successful in another area of life as a result of his encounter with extraterrestrials. There are some interesting issues here, I think.

SM: You sound cynical without cynicism creeping into your tone.

CP: I try not to be, but it is difficult at times. In the book *UFO Religions*, I hope I make it clear that I'm very open to the ETH. It's not that that I'm cynical about. It's the way it's used by some new religious groups and the claims that are made by some UFO religions that, I have to say, I find a little incredulous.

SM: What do you think is the mindset of somebody who joins a religious group like that? That probably though goes back to the point you made at the beginning of this conversation about the reduction in influence of the established churches and so on. So clearly, for whatever reason, the established churches have let people down or not given them what they are looking for. Firstly, why would that be? Have the churches not kept up culturally with what's going on in Society or is it something else?

CP: Yes, that's certainly true. The churches haven't kept up culturally with what's going on in society. That said, often I talk to non-Christians who have the attitude, "Been there, done that" when it comes to Christianity, but, as the discussion progresses, it becomes apparent that they haven't really been there and done that (except perhaps as a small child). Nevertheless, the problem for the Church is that, the perception they have of Christianity is an institution that is dogmatic, patriarchal, hierarchal, and all the things that are antithetical to the modern mindset. So people are looking for something else. This is usually a spirituality (not, many would argue, a 'religion') which focus on the self and the development of the self's spiritual potential. The emphasis within contemporary society is eclectic and individualistic, over against church 'religion' which is viewed as 'preachy' and authoritarian. In a society where science is quite dominant and certain mythologies prominent, some find within the UFO community, a home. Here they can explore their spirituality with reference to a popular contemporary myth. The messiahs, saviours, and spiritual guides are transformed into real physical beings from other planets and dimensions. However, unlike traditional, monotheistic beliefs, the saviours from space require little of them that is not common sense and in accord with what they already value (develop your spirituality, be loving, care for others, look after the planet etc.)

SM: I don't want to put words into your mouth but you seem to be saying that we are now a very selfish society. We're totally focussed on ourselves.

CP: It's not that it's a selfish society. We may very well live in a selfish society, but the point I'm making is slightly different. The spiritual emphasis that has emerged (largely since the late-60s) is not 'selfishness' in the sense that word is often used. It's more self-focussed spirituality; the emphasis is on the individual's responsibility for himself or herself; it's on the importance of seekers to discover for themselves. Contemporary Westerners don't want to be linked to a particular tradition, to be told what to do by a particular authority. Indeed, they value being able to pick and mix from a variety of sources and authorities. A lot of these new teachers/groups will emphasise that "We're not telling you what to do. We're encouraging you to seek for yourself and find your own path. We're just offering you a way." That said, it often becomes apparent that a group or teacher does believe that *their way IS the way*. Consequently, some actually operate at a basic level in a very similar way to the traditional religions. But the emphasis initially, certainly within New Age spirituality, is on Seeker Spirituality.

UFOs are a key element within contemporary culture, among the whole variety of things on offer. UFOs are interesting to many spiritual seekers. When such people feel that the traditional saviours have let them down, they look to space for their saviours.

SM: So that's the key, is it? This planet's a mess; our space brothers will save us.

CP: To a large extent, it is. I think the idea of the 'space brothers' is an important one within UFO religion.

SM: What's the dynamic that goes on? What happens when they're let down when dates are set etc. and nothing happens?

CP: This is a very interesting question for those who study new religions. A lot of work has been done on, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses who have also had failed prophecies. In UFO religions, what usually happens is a denial the space messiahs that have let them down. Consequently, various explanations are offered. With the Unariuns, for example, the reason spacecraft didn't arrive at their designated landing spot at the expected time (and still haven't) was because humanity just hasn't evolved enough, spiritually, for the extraterrestrials to be with us. They were hoping that we would be better than we are. That we aren't makes it our fault. This often happens within UFO groups. Again, they might argue, "Yes, we did get it right. The UFOs are here. But we can't see them. The faithful, however, are aware that aliens are among us."



The Unariuns on the march

SM: Either way, to an objective observer, both answers seem like cop-out excuses.

CP: Well they do, yes. And they are! They are ways of relieving what we call 'cognitive dissonance'. The gap between what they've been told (and thus what they expected) and what they're experiencing causes quite a lot of trauma in a believer. Either that trauma will lead to them abandoning their faith, in which case cognitive dissonance is relieved. They can simply dismiss it. Although a

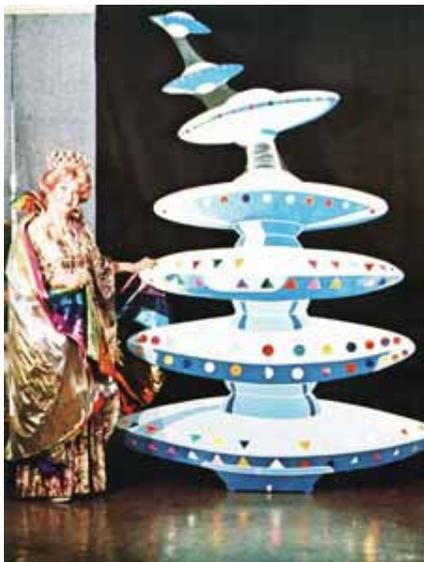
hard thing to do, they can declare that “Well, it was all rubbish anyway” and then move on to a new spirituality or, perhaps, just abandon faith altogether. Or cognitive dissonance is relieved by explaining the apparent failure in some way. They might conclude, for example, that the prophecy/extraterrestrial communication was “a test sent to encourage us to move on. We’ve still got some way to go and we ought to learn from our experiences. Hopefully next time, we’ll be able to meet the expectations of our space brothers and they will come down.” Or again, perhaps their expectations were fulfilled, but not in the way they expected them to be. It’s just a matter, then, of reinterpreting the prophecy to fit their current experience.

SM: What level do you think there is of spiritual satisfaction overall among all the groups? They all have a high throughput of membership, some more than others. One presumes that if people leave, they are dissatisfied for one reason or another. Is it fair to conclude from that, likewise with the institutional religions, that they’re not finding satisfaction there either?

CP: Yes, if they’re leaving. For many of the more established groups (the Aetherius Society, the Raelians, the Unarius who are much smaller) they do seem to provide a great deal of satisfaction for many of their members. The Raelians have a particularly committed membership. Other groups, such as Heaven’s Gate (the apocalyptic group), though only small, were committed enough to die for their beliefs. When Halle Bopp passed over in 1997, thinking that there was a spacecraft coming to save them, travelling in the tail of the comet, they all willingly and gladly ate poisoned apple-sauce. So you’ve got a high level of commitment there. I have all their exit statements (i.e. suicide notes) and reading clear that they were with a sophisticated their beliefs, a high level their leaders, and a to commit suicide.

SM: Well, I tend to find, Heavens Gate comes up, great level of distress people think or talk or Nobody actually spells it the strong implication is, dreadful waste of life.

CP: It was, absolutely.



Ruth Norman of the Unarius doing her thang

through them, it is intelligent people understanding of of commitment to happy willingness

when the subject of that there is still a and anger when read about it. out or says it but what a shocking,

SM: I found personally that I don’t share that point of view. You yourself said a few moments ago that the members were intelligent people with an understanding of their belief system. As far as I’m aware, there was no coercion, was there?

CP: No, no coercion.

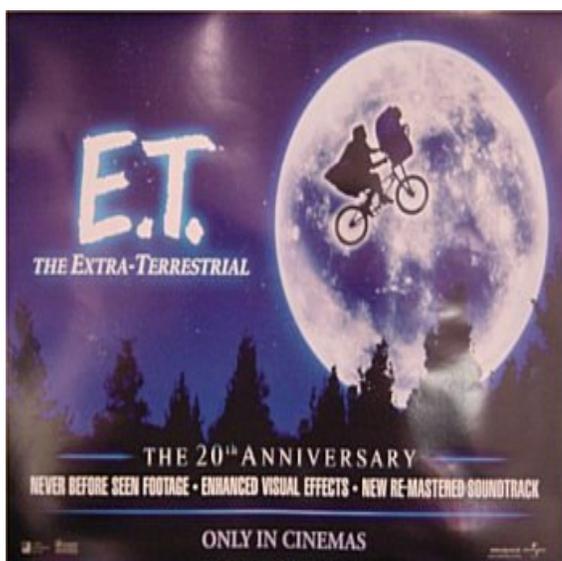
SM: So this was a voluntary choice. To us, to the rest of the world, it seems ridiculous but surely we're imposing our mindset on them when clearly their mindset was very different.

CP: Yes, that is true. It was a choice that they made and they were very happy with that choice. Reading their 'exit statements' it is clear that they are full of jubilation. They were convinced that they were about to embark on an exciting journey to a happy, utopian existence. Consequently, they explicitly rejected the idea of suicide. To commit suicide, they argued, is to continue living in this 'world of the walking dead. To choose life is to progress to 'the Next Level.' The transition they believed would be one of the most joyous events they could possibly imagine.

The picture that research has revealed is one of a very happy, close knit community about to make a joyous transition to the Next Level (physical Heaven), to be with their space brothers. So yes, there seems to be no coercion, a great deal of happiness, and free choice.

But, as you say, from an outsider's perspective it does seem like a waste of life. It so clearly seems to be a flawed understanding of reality. Indeed, it was obviously a flawed understanding, in that, for example, they insisted that the world would be destroyed and 'spaded under' (as they put it) shortly after their departure. 'Spading under' was one of many gardening metaphors used. Essentially, this 'earthly garden' was seeded with human life by extraterrestrials, who have subsequently sent saviours throughout history to guide us on the path of spiritual evolution (e.g. Buddha, Jesus, and finally Applewhite and Nettles the leaders of Heaven's Gate), the aim being to produce more Next Level beings. Those who do evolve will be transferred to the Next level in a spacecraft, after which the garden will be spaded under, recycled, and made ready for more human seeds.

SM: Given that the planet itself and perhaps humanity as well is, to many, in a far greater state and level of disintegration and difficulty than it was 30 or 40 years ago, why aren't there more UFO cults or religions appearing now? In many people's minds, this sort of phenomenon was a 50s, 60, or 70s thing and then it stopped. But the demands and the pressures on individuals now are probably greater now than they were back then.



CP: My understanding of the way new religions function is that they are very clearly embedded in a particular culture and context and they emerge out of that culture and context. The first significant UFO group, the Aetherius Society, emerged in 1954, followed shortly after by the Unarius Academy of Science (also in 1954). Hence, this all happens during the period of

UFO sightings following the Arnold sighting in 1947. In other words, they emerge within a culture in which UFOs are very prominent. Again, it happened in the 70s with the abduction phenomenon. There was, certainly by the late 1970s, a fascination with the malevolent alien (as in the groundbreaking film *Alien*), which quickly replaced the benign alien (of *ET*, for example). Also during the 1970s the Barney and Betty Hill abduction story, first told in the book *Interrupted Journey* and subsequently made into a film, becomes popular. The point is that, here again is a culture in which UFOs and alien abduction are very prominent. Hence, new religions emerge that reflect the concerns of those cultures. Indeed, increasingly the alien is, following popular culture, demonised.

The 1990s haven't seen so much of that but you still have a luxurious growth of new religions and alternative spiritualities. It just so happens that they are reflecting a different culture that's not so dominated by UFOs anymore. It's dominated by other things. In the 60s the emphasis was very Eastern and a lot of the new religious movements tended to have a Hindu or Buddhist flavour to them (which has again, since the late-1980s been returning). Nowadays, perhaps the most prominent new religious groups to emerge are Pagan, eco-centred, and environmentally focussed. This, again, is, to some extent, a reflection of current cultural concerns. However, that's not to say there won't be new UFO religious groups emerging in the future.

I should say that because I argue that much spirituality and religion is shaped by context, I am not, therefore, necessarily denying that they lack spiritual value.

SM: Do you think that Rael is sincere? Do you think he believes himself what he says?

CP: Again, that's a very difficult one. I often ask myself that. However, on balance, I think I have to say yes. I've listened to him on tapes, but never actually met him myself. He sounds sincere. That's all I can say. I have spoken to other prominent people in new religions and they seem sincere. That is to say, they seem as sincere as the local vicar or imam. Whether they start out sincere or not is, perhaps, another question. That is to say, I think people can become sincere about beliefs that they are not initially convinced about.

It may very well be a case (for some) that, as they are verified and authenticated by followers, they become convinced of their initial musings. This seems to have been the case with Ruth Norman of the Unariuns, who gave herself a very grand position in the universe, eventually believing herself to be almost semi-divine. In an epic about herself she taught that many life times ago in another star system her current followers persecuted her and followed a demonic entity known as Tyrantus. Consequently, in this lifetime, they were required to pay for these misdeeds and seek her favour (thus gaining good karma) by adoring her, worshiping her, and serving her. And she clearly believed all this. She dressed up in various Star Trek-type (first series!) costumes. Hence, it would seem that, in response to the commitment of her believers, her mythology developed and her self-belief increased accordingly.

SM: Am I right in thinking there has been some queries about Raelian financing? Is there anything sinister there?

CP: I don't think so. Just as a conservative Christian churches receive significant funds simply as a result of tithing, rather than any financial irregularities, so committed members of UFO religions will contribute their funds. When you have the support of middle class and, possibly, well-paid people such as the Raelian academic Dr Brigitte Boisselier, it is not difficult to accrue significant funds. That said, it is true that occasionally new religions, such as the non-UFO organisation lead by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, do face questions about tax evasion.

SM: Of all the UFO religions you've looked at, is there a personal favourite?

CP: 'Favourite' is not the word I'd use, but the one I've done most research on and the one I'm most interested in is Heaven's Gate. I'm fascinated by apocalyptic groups and groups that exhibit extreme behaviour. That said, I'm also interested in the Aetherius Society (which is not an extreme UFO religion). Also, I find Heaven's Gate fascinating because, I would argue, they're basically a Christian organisation. That is to say, I'm interested in the way they've taken and reinterpreted Christian themes, particularly their interpretation of the Book of Revelation, the final book of the Bible. Indeed, much of Heaven's Gate's theology is determined by a particular interpretation of Revelation.

SM: Is there any significance in the fact that both Ti and Do had issues with mental health early on in their lives?



Marshall Applewhite

CP: Yes...though, not so much Ti (Bonnie Lu Nettles). They met in a psychiatric Hospital where she was the nurse, he the patient. This is mainly significant because Marshall Applewhite had serious sexual problems. He was married with two children. He was clearly gay and, as a result of an affair with a student, was dismissed from his post as an academic. This caused him great bitterness, which led to further problems which eventually led to a psychiatric hospital. But the point is, central to

much of Heaven's Gate thinking is that there mustn't be attachments to the world and in particular there mustn't be sexual attachments. So, there was a great emphasis on denying bodily appetites, particularly sexual appetites and living as 'genderless beings' (which they believed they would be in the Next Level, just as extraterrestrials are). Hence, in their writings there are frequent references to transition to a genderless existence where sexual temptation will not be an issue. This clearly comes out of Applewhite's own psychiatric problems and personal struggles.

But this is also significant because it links into the idea that their bodies are containers which hinder the progress the 'real self' encased within. They had a Neoplatonic idea of a soul within the body, a self that needed to be nurtured.

The body, its appetites, and its environment thus become despised as spiritual hindrances. The point is that, while there were other reasons for the suicides, this theological anthropology provided the rationale for it. As soon as they'd got over the mental hurdle of rejecting the world and their families, rejecting the body and its appetites, it made it fairly easy for them, psychologically, to think of their bodies as 'containers'. Once this step was made, it was relatively easy to think in terms of exiting one's container and entering another on a spacecraft. One simply exchanges one suit of clothes for another. The self can simply shed its envelope of flesh and put on another provided by the extraterrestrials in the passing spacecraft trailing Hale-Bopp.

SM: When you look into the background of most if not all of the figureheads of these religions, there is one particular word that seems to spring into my mind time and again and that is "misfit". I don't say that in a derogatory sense. They are just persons who have never really been able to slot into society right from the beginning. Would you agree with that?

CP: To some degree, yes. It's not always the case but I think it is sometimes the case. To take a step back and think from a broader perspective, there are a lot of people in the West who are just normal, everyday people, like me and you, who may be spiritual seekers wanting something more out of life. They get involved in spiritual seeking and then eventually settle down into a Buddhist group or into some other new religious movement or into Transcendental Meditation. These are just regular people with very normal lives. They are from all walks of life and are certainly not 'misfits'.

George King -
founder of the Aetherius Soc.



So on one level you've got people like that . On another level (and this is particularly the case with small, close-knit groups, like Heaven's Gate), the members do struggle socially and in such a group of like-minded people, find a home. They find security, close friendships, and they find people who want to listen to their ideas and take them seriously. This is important to such people. That is not to say that such people are unintelligent. Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese new religion that attacked the Tokyo subway with sarin gas, attracted some highly intelligent physics graduates. But then again, these seem to have been outsiders, as is often the case with some

of the more extreme groups.

SM: Of all the groups you've looked at, which would you regard as the most menacing and threatening?

CP: The apocalyptic groups such as Heaven's Gate, the Peoples Temple, Aum Shinrikyô, Heaven's Gate, and the Ordre du Temple Solaire. That said, it's not always easy to tell which groups might become volatile. Many were surprised by Heaven's Gate's suicide. Off the top of my head, I can't think of any at the

moment that seem particularly menacing or threatening. They all seem fairly innocuous. Generally speaking, the ones that need attention are those that are focussing overly on the corruption of the current world and its dramatic and apocalyptic end. One UFO religion that is forecasting an imminent apocalypse, prior to which the faithful would be rescued by flying saucers, but which doesn't currently look volatile, is Chen Tao in the United States.

SM: They're not a 2012 lot are they?

CP: No.

SM: Do they regard the apocalypse as coming sooner or later?

CP: Sooner. The end was due to begin in August 1999. Since then, as far as I'm aware, no further date has been given, though imminence is stressed.

SM: Is there an argument in favour of government stepping in and taking a deeper interest, at least in apocalyptic groups where there's a danger there might be a Heavens Gate type ending?

CP: I think there is an argument for that, though it's not one I subscribe to. Governments should be dialoguing more with those who are working in the particular areas. Part of my reluctance to say governments should get involved is incidents like Waco. There, for example, the government did take a deep interest and got involved, but it ended in tragedy. Some have argued that this happened because they didn't properly understand the world-view of the Waco group. They weren't a particularly volatile group, but they were made volatile by the actions of the law enforcement agencies.



David Koresh-head of Waco sect

SM: If I remember details correctly, didn't the law enforcement agencies start taking an interest when it became apparent that the Waco group were holding a large cache of weapons?

CP: Yes, they did.

SM: Doesn't that contradict what you just said? I mean, why would they need an arsenal?

CP: That's the point really. Here was a group who were expecting Armageddon. As such the group is a cause for concern. That they have weapons is also a cause for concern. They were not, however, volatile. What did need to be understood was that they their leader, David Koresh, taught that Armageddon would begin with an attack on their compound. Hence, to send in, on 28 January 1993, a force of 76 agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, was not the wisest move. As far as they were concerned, Armageddon had begun. The group therefore became volatile. The rest is history. My point is that, while these things are never easy, an understanding of the new religion should be gained by consulting those who have studied them in depth. Then an approach might be found that avoids misinterpretation and violence. That is to say, if they'd taken a much more conciliatory approach,



or approached them through counsellors rather than through the law enforcement agencies, the result might have been different.

SM: If I wanted to start a UFO religion, what advice would you give me?

Mount Carmel, location of the Davidian sect at Waco burning

CP: The advice I would give you is to understand the context in which you want to

recruit your followers. Look at what is the most popular UFO issue within contemporary culture. What is the most highly consumed idea within Ufology today? Also, look at what people are doing spiritually. Don't come across too authoritarian, respecting individuality in spirituality. That said, you must be an authority. You do need a revelation from the space brothers. You need a new revelation, but one that resonates with contemporary concerns.

SM: Do you feel sorry for people that join these cults and religions in that there seems to be something missing for them? Do you regret that they aren't able to find spiritual satisfaction either within the institutionalised churches or a less extreme manner or method?

CP: On one level, it's difficult to feel sorry for those who are happy with what they're doing. On another level, I do feel sad about the problems and stress caused by those who end up becoming insular, separating themselves off from society and particularly family, as was the case with Heavens Gate. My sympathies are really with their families and friends.

I suppose that it would be better if people could find spiritual satisfaction within mainstream religions that are largely innocuous.

SM: What is your own worldview? Do you feel, for example, that we're heading for some massive disaster?

CP: I read a lot of literature from these groups and from people who believe we are heading for a major disaster, but no, I don't have any apocalyptic concerns really. I've never been convinced by the arguments I've read and heard.

SM: Well clearly the weather is playing up. Whether it's a natural cycle or something more sinister remains to be seen.

CP: I don't know enough about the science of climate change to comment intelligently in that particular area, but looking at the way religion (whether mainstream or sectarian) has responded throughout history to environmental and geographical disasters, as well as the inevitable speculation at the turn of

the millennia and centuries, there are always people concerned about disasters, those who will look for signs of things to come, and those who prophesy the end of the world. It's not happened yet! Environmentally, there have been heat waves, great freezes, mini ice ages—even the Thames froze over several centuries ago. Without denying that humanity has contributed to environmental change (notably, damage to the ozone layer) and whilst wanting to promote environmentally friendly living, I do think there are cycles of climate change which we need not be overly apocalyptic about.

Perhaps I'm far too sanguine and laid back about it, but I do tend to think that non-routine things will always happen and that the environment will, generally speaking, correct itself. It's an enormously resilient planet and, I think, if we continue to encourage responsible stewardship of it, we'll be okay. I should balance my comments by insisting that I do think people need to campaign on green issues.

So, in short, I don't see any apocalypses on the horizon. I think we'll just go on as we've always done. There will be disasters, there will be tragedies, there will be climate change, but they won't be apocalyptic—I don't think!

SM: I do realise that the subject of UFOs and ETs are incidental almost to your interest. They just happen to be a feature of part of your interest. But in the beginning of the book *UFO Religions*, you do state your own views which, if I'm quoting you correctly, are that, yes, there probably is intelligent life elsewhere but you can't see how it could have come here because intergalactic travel is not feasible. Would that be fair?

CP: Yes. I suppose that it comes from an experiential point of view. Logically, I can sympathise with the argument that in the vastness of space and considering the multitude of planets, it's very likely that there is going to be another planet similar to our own that is able to support life. So the likelihood is that there is extraterrestrial life out there. But that statement of probability is very different from the argument that that life has not only evolved to the level it has on this planet (the chances of which are extremely small), but way beyond the life on this planet (the chances of which are infinitesimally small).

More than that, this life has managed to find a way to leave the surface of its planet, travel millions of light years across space, and, within the millions of stars and planets that pepper the universe, find our planet. This I find too difficult to believe. That such beings are regularly visiting this planet, for whatever reason, is beyond what I can honestly accept. Of course, I cannot logically rule out the possibility, but I'm saying that the probability is too tiny for me to seriously consider.

I don't know what I'd think if I saw a UFO, but I never have. I'm the kind of person, because of the kind of material and beliefs I research, who would like to encounter what others would consider to be a UFO. Obviously, I've seen the photographs and read accounts, but still remain unconvinced. I try to be open-minded and I am very interested, but simply can't bring myself to be a committed believer.

SM: Blavatsky. Is she the earliest example of a spiritual deviation from institutionalised religion in that she looked to Venus and so on?

CP: She's not the earliest example of the leader of a new group of course. Many religions start off as small sectarian offshoots. However, as far as contemporary religion is concerned, she's particularly interesting because of her focus on Venus in the early days of the Theosophical Society and her interest in what she referred to as 'The Lords Of The Flame'. This belief in Venusian masters fed into the I AM Movement, which was a very important theosophical development headed by Guy and Edna Ballard. Guy Ballard in particular had an interest in extraterrestrial civilizations, astral travel, and Venusian Masters. It was really he that began to popularise spiritual ideas about a utopian Venusian civilisation. Out of that stream of thought evolved the principal theosophical UFO religions and thinkers, George Adamski, the Aetherius Society, and, to some extent, Unarius. So, yes, Blavatsky is an important figure.

Before Blavatsky, going right back to the 17th century, there was Emmanuel Swedenborg who also talked of visiting other worlds. This wasn't in spacecraft, obviously, but by means of what might be termed nowadays astral or spiritual travel. In the modern period, since the European Enlightenment, he's the earliest example. But his ideas are quite different to Blavatsky's and the post 1947 UFO groups.

Madam Blavatsky – co-founder of the Theosophical movement.



SM: Is there still a theosophical movement about these days?

CP: Yes there is. It is one of the most significant Western esoteric groups really, as a precursor to the New Age movement, which has spawned numerous alternative spiritualities and religions. Indeed, Blavatsky was one of the principal figures, along with her colleague Henry Alcott, in bringing the East West. She was very important in promoting Hinduism and Buddhism in the West, particularly Buddhism. That said, although the Theosophical Society is still going, numerically it is far less significant than it once was. That said, it is still active and often has

a presence at large alternative gatherings, such as the Mind Body Spirit festivals, held in Manchester or London, where you'll see a whole range of other groups, including the Aetherius Society, who have their spiritual roots in its history. She was very important in India as well. There were a lot of Indians that at the time, in mid twentieth century who looked to the Theosophical Society as one of the great western movements that helped give Hinduism their pride back following the Raj.

In fact you find a lot of traces of what I call easternisation in the UFO groups linked directly to Blavatsky.

SM: If I asked you to peer into a crystal ball, would you care to predict which way we're going to go spiritually over the next 20 or 30 years?

CP: My prediction would be (and it's part of what I'm working on at the moment) that the West will become increasingly re-enchanted. Paganism, alternative spiritual groups, the spiritualities that focus on the development of the self, all these will grow and institutional religion will continue to decline.

SM: You do see that decline continuing.

CP: I think so. I don't know how long it will continue, but I think it will go on for some time.

That said, non-Christian religions look as though they will become established in the West, just as Christianity is beginning to flourish in the non-Western world (particularly Africa, Latin America, and China). Part of the process of alternative spirituality is that people start off as seekers (picking and mixing from a range of groups and reading a range of books and literatures, from all sorts of different perspectives), but eventually they settle down into particular groups or paths that they find to be conducive to their outlook on life.

Many spiritual seekers from the 70s, for example, have become Buddhists. I do see that continuing and I do see Christianity and certain forms of theism declining. That said, there are various forms of Christian spirituality that are experiencing growth, which tend to be the more mystical type. It's this experience-centred spirituality that westerners seem to want. They don't want dogma and long sermons. They want to experience the divine. This happens in a lot of the new religious groups. The focus is very much on meditation, or on controlling your Chi, or on experiencing the sacred within.

However, to repeat the point, in the non-western world, there is a massive rise in Christianity, and, of course, Islam. So, Christianity as a religion is certainly not dead, in fact it's booming. But in the West it's declining.

SM: Does that mean that in 20 or 30 years, the two thirds of the world where Christianity is growing will move on and catch us up or go through what we're going through now?

CP: It's difficult to know. They are completely different cultures and, as I've said, the context is very important for these groups. It's interesting that the forms of Christianity that are growing in Africa and Latin America tend to be the Pentecostal and Charismatic. So, in a sense, they have similar needs to Westerners: experience is key. But in Africa, Christianity has emerged in the context of traditional religions which are focussed on shamanic experience, on Ecstatic religion. Again, experience, miracles, prophesy are all central, but often they are shaped by the type of African traditional religion. So, the same sort of thing is happening, but there's a completely different context. It's difficult to know where that will go in the future, but it's certainly growing.

SM: What do you feel about President Bush's type of Christianity?

CP: Again, America is a very different culture to that in the UK. There are a lot of areas where we are similar, but one of the areas where we are not is spirituality. It's almost *de rigueur* for Presidents to claim that they are Christian. Moreover, all the Presidents attend a particular church in Washington. It's almost expected. This is not the case in the UK. So, even if they're just nominally Christian, by name rather than by conviction, it's important that they are seen to be Christian. President Bush is, as far as I know, a believing, practicing, Evangelical Christian, just as Jimmy Carter was (and is). That is very popular in America. Conservative, right wing Christianity is enormously politically significant.

SM: They do not strike me as a very compassionate group of people. Would that be unfair?

CP: I think so, yes. I know what you mean. I know a lot of conservative Christians who are very compassionate. They are motivated by love and are self-sacrificial. These are genuinely good people. But some of the main spokespeople, particularly for fundamentalism, do appear to be hard edged and, as you say, lacking compassion. But when you talk to them and read their writings, they clearly do want to be models of Christ. Their dogmatism and vehemence is a right wing reaction to a world that they see declining in sin, and unfaithfulness to God.

So, on the one hand, they seek to emulate the compassion of Jesus and, on the other hand, they want to proclaim holiness. This is a difficult balance to maintain (holiness and love). For many, what they understand to be the holiness of God which is offended by homosexuality and abortion drives them to sometimes extreme language and actions. They often say "We hate the sin, not the sinner" and it's that balance that they're trying to strike. Unfortunately, very often they come across as hating both the sin and the sinner.

SM: This is a funny subject from a Ufologist's point of view. There is the obvious common ground in terms of UFOs, but that's it. Otherwise there's an immense divergence from then on. It is like peering over the fence at a group of very distant cousins.

CP: Well, there does seem to be an overlap and UFOs do seem to be prominent in the broader occult community. UFO religionists certainly see themselves, I think, as quite closely related to the ufology community. Indeed, there are, in my opinion, significant overlaps, so that the community almost seems to merge into one, with religious beliefs finding their way into ufology.

SM: That's very interesting because that statement would horrify a lot of ufologists.

CP: I know.

SM: So it's interesting to have an objective external view.

Chris, thank you.

That's it folks. As usual, I hope you've enjoyed it or at least parts of it. Please keep the correspondence coming in and ideas and articles are, as always, welcomed.

Till November.

Stuart Miller