

UFO REVIEW

The Truth has had his feelings hurt by all this AA nonsense. He's not speaking to anyone just now.

June/July 2006
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CONDIGN AUTHOR REVEALED!!!

Well known British astronomer Sir Patrick Moore owns up

I wrote that bloody Condign thingy you know.

Have you farted Sir Patrick?

No stupid boy. It's a plasma cloud.



But it smells of swamp gas

UFO

I'll do another one if you don't shut up.

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<p>One of the long forgotten men of Ufology, Matthew Williams is still alive and well and living down in Devizes. These days a much overlooked figure, he was the man who busted the crop circle myth wide open, made one or two researchers look a little stupid in the process, and who's evidence has been ignored ever since. And he was also the man who decided to get into Rudloe Manor, uninvited, and have a look around for himself. Those types of Direct Action days are now long gone; more's the pity. Fascinating interview with a Ufological warrior.</p>	Page 8
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Welcome



Oh dear; so much has happened since we were last here. First we had the *Alien Autopsy* film/revelation/debacle from Ray Santilli, then a lot of fuss about Gary McKinnon, and then the Condign report. Notice anything? Yep; it seems that the UK is the place to be at the moment for blah, blah, blah. Oooh, I'm giddy with the excitement of it all.

So, after all of that, are we any further down the line? Do we know any more than we did a couple of months ago? Actually, yes. We know the MoD hasn't got a clue about UFOs and that the subject has frustrated them as much as it has us. What *has* been clarified for those not in cahoots with the British government is just has stupidly paranoid they are when it comes to linking the subject of UAPs with ET. It would appear they are quite happy to countenance the subject of unidentified flying objects as a matter for serious "scientific" investigation but seemingly go all dewy eyed and vague when one starts talking about aliens. UAPs are for academics and for folk who have lots of letters after their names; UFOs are for cretinous retards like you and me. It's the media and Hollywood and silly programmes like *Invasion* you see.

Understandably, some folk did panic a bit when the existence of Condign was revealed. There was a worry that because it was an official report, with all the facilities available to a government, that it would offer a non ET resolution to the enigma which would be accepted world wide with the result that the subject would become a solved mystery as far as the international public were concerned. It actually made me question my own motives and desires in regards to this matter and I was surprised by what I discovered about myself; I actually don't want it resolved!

As to why I feel like that is a good question. Partly I'm sure there are selfish reasons in there. To start with, if it all gets wrapped up I'd actually have to get a life and start relating to people in a human manner, which is a tiresome prospect. But in all probability, if it is going to be sorted out eventually, then I probably want it resolved on my terms and conditions; I want humanoid individuals not from this planet, with superior intelligence and technology and with a friendly and helpful disposition. I also want a digital personal radio for Fathers Day.

Still it's all been griss for the mill and if it's demonstrated one thing, for me at least, it is that the subject of Ufology is no longer a laughing matter for the media, who to their credit took Condign seriously. Or at least, seriously enough.

If like me your eyes glaze over a bit when you read about another UFO conference, then let me assure you when you're on the other side of the fence, i.e. the organiser of one, then it looks a different picture. Above all the worry is; will people come? When you're dumb enough to pick a day on which the entire nation is expected to be glued to the telly watching 22 twerps kick a ball around for 90 minutes, then your concerns increase. Wish me luck. Wish us all luck.

Just in case you've forgotten

For further press information, please contact Stuart Miller on 0161 929 1846 or at stuart.miller4@btinternet.com

UFO REVIEW MAGAZINE IS PROUD TO PRESENT

<http://www.uforeview.net>

SATURDAY JUNE 10TH 2006

Fed up with football? Then here's the antidote!!

A ONE DAY CONFERENCE ON UFOLOGY AND THE PARANORMAL

AT

**ALTRINCHAM MASONIC HALL, BRANKSOME,
CLAY LANE, TIMPERLEY, CHESHIRE**

Doors open 9:30am, Commence 10:00am. Ample parking, bar.

SPEAKERS

MAKING A RARE UK APPEARANCE

NICK REDFERN



<http://www.nickredfern.com/bio.htm>

AUTHOR OF THE NEW BOOK *On the Trail of the Saucer Spies: Ufos And Government Surveillance*

Now living in the States, Nick is a long standing and very well known Ufological writer and is the author of several successful books on the subject as well as on cryptozoology. He is generally recognised as the UK's leading researcher and has a reputation as a direct, no nonsense journalist who is prepared to get his hands dirty and doesn't like taking "No" for an answer. In 2005, he turned the world of Ufology upside down with his book *Body Snatchers In The Desert* which gave the most likely and most realistic explanation of what really happened at Roswell and why.

Nick will be speaking about the UK and U.S. intelligence agencies observation over the years of people involved in Ufology, and will explain

why and how people were watched and also who was watched, highlighting specific cases. He should know. Special Branch kept a close eye on him for many years!

**FROM CANADA INTERNATIONALLY REKNOWN DOCUMENTARY FILM
MAKER AND UFO RESEARCHER**

PAUL KIMBALL

<http://redstarfilms.blogspot.com/>



"The Wilbert Smith Story: Separating Fact from Fiction of a Ufological Icon".

Wilbert Smith held both a B.Sc. and M. Sc. in Electrical Engineering, and was Senior Radio Engineer, Broadcast and Measurements Section, in the Canadian Department of Transport (DOT).

Smith's interest in the UFO phenomenon and his influential position within the Canadian government caused him to make a proposal to the Canadian DOT to establish Project Magnet to officially investigate UFOs. Smith stated in the proposal that his group believed that they were on the track of something which may well prove to be the introduction to a new technology.

In 1950 he wrote the "Smith Memo." This was a memo which attracted a lot of attention around the time of the MJ-12 papers and it helped lend a certain credibility to the whole MJ-12 milieu. It was originally sent to the Controller of Telecommunications as a proposal to study officially the UFO situation. In this memo, Smith wrote, "The existence of a different technology is borne out by the investigations which are being carried on at the present time in relation to flying saucers." He also stated that by making discreet inquiries at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, he had learned from Dr. Robert Sarbacher that:

- A. The matter is the most highly classified subject in the United States government, rating higher even than the H-bomb.
- B. Flying saucers exist.
- C. Their modus operandi is unknown but concentrated effort is being made by a small group headed by Dr. Vannevar Bush.
- D. The entire matter is considered by the United States authorities to be of tremendous significance.

But is all this true? Was Smith all he was cracked up to be? *Paul Kimball* has made a number of incisive and successful documentaries on the UFO

subject and as a fellow Canadian has taken a special interest in Smith's career. Paul will be looking over Smith's career in some detail and as the title of his talk says; will separate fact from fiction.

NEIL MORRIS



The Alien Autopsy Film –A Review and Update

In the light of the revelations brought out by the current Ant and Dec feature film, namely that the Alien Autopsy footage that appeared in public in 1995 was a fake put together by Ray Santilli, Neil Morris, who has been heavily involved in researching the validity of the film pulls together the whole sad story for us and brings us up to date with his research and recent events. Was Santilli lying back in 1995? Is he lying now? Was this the first sight that the people of this planet had of a life form from elsewhere, was it simply an autopsy performed on a disfigured human being, or was it just a cynical money making effort designed to fool the world?

DAVE SADLER

<http://www.upia.co.uk/>



CHINGLE HALL – The Most Haunted House In Britain

Just north of Preston, in the small village of Goosnargh, lies one of Britain's oldest and most haunted buildings (it's the oldest inhabited brick building), Chingle Hall. The house formerly known as Singleton hall was constructed in 1260 by the knight Adam de Singleton. The Hall remained in the de Singleton's family late into the 16th Century but in 1585 the Wall Family who were related to the Singletons, moved into the Hall. Its history continues to this day and over the centuries there have been many, many sightings and strange and bizarre events. Here is one example:

"In 1985, sounds of bricks being moved were recorded by a visitor in the Priest's Room, which seemed to originate in the Priest's hiding hole. He

peered within and saw part of a human hand moving one of the bricks. As he watched, the hand stopped moving and disappeared. This witness later managed to capture the sounds of footsteps on tape and a shadowy form on film. Later bricks were found scattered on the floor of the Chapel on the ground floor."

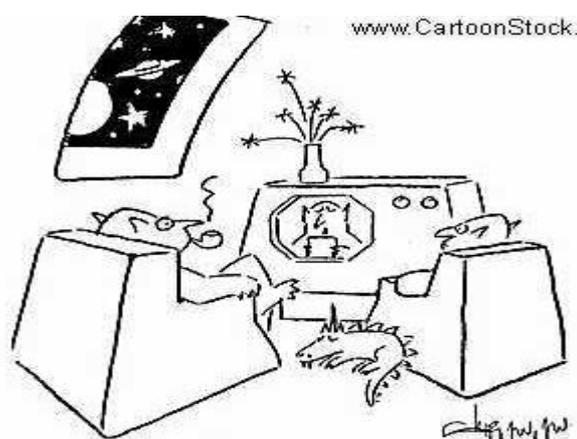
Dave is the founder and co-ordinator of the Unknown Phenomena Investigation Association

With a background in Aircraft Engineering, Dave has been involved in Paranormal and UFOlogical research and investigation since 1995, forming the UPIA in 1998 as a result of an increasing number of reports emanating from the North West of England. Dave has studied and passed The BITC and AITC courses in the Anomalous Phenomena, ran by Manchester's Association of Paranormal Investigation and Training, and has appeared in Numerous documentaries regarding the subject. For two years and along with Para.Science, Dave hosted a weekly paranormal radio show on BBC Radio Merseyside on the Roger Lyons show. He has also had many articles published in magazines and North West Newspapers. Although The UPIA investigates many unusual reports, currently investigators are basing their studies primarily in the hauntings area although another section of the group does take part in other areas.

Tickets: £15.00 on the day at the door - £12.50 in advance. For advance bookings, cheques only I'm afraid to UFO Review, The New House, Church Bank, Richmond road, Bowdon, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 3NW. Tel; 0161 929 1846

Doors open 9:30am. Commences 10:00am sharp. Ample off street parking, bar, food available, Stall holders welcome - Please contact organiser.

Organised by UFO Review. 0161 929 1846. Email at Stuart.Miller4@btinternet.com



"This just in: the inhabitants of planet Earth are being recalled for the correction of a major defect."

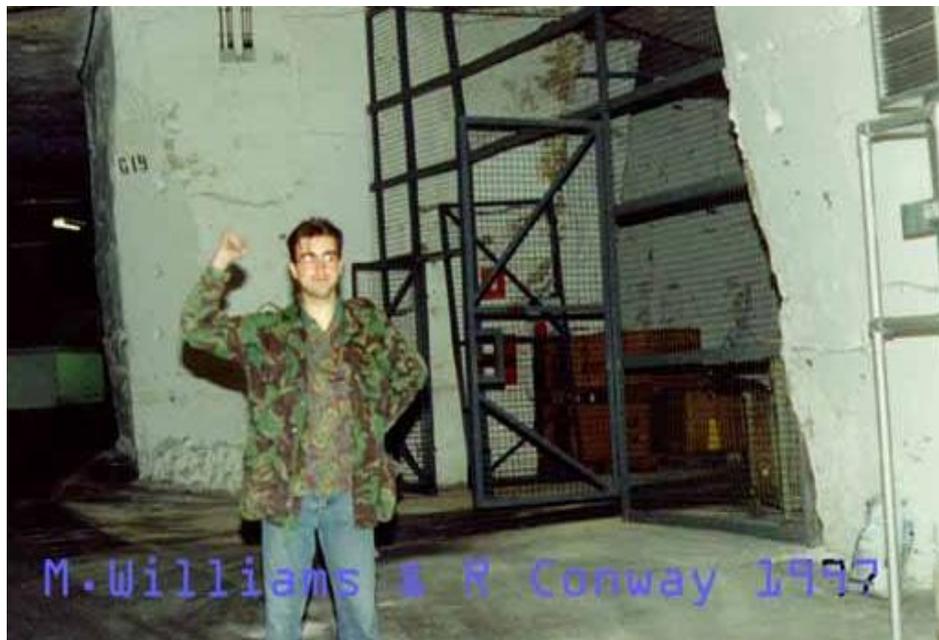
I'm A Bastard Crop Circle Faker Maker, A Government Agent, And A Serious Pain In The Ass (for Special Branch)

Matthew Williams is one of those people who hangs out on the fringe. Not because he wants to necessarily but because he's put there by others. Bit different you see, not like the rest of us; odd, weird, eccentric. While what I'm going to say next is certainly debatable, there is a serious argument that could be constructed to say that Williams is one of the most effective and productive UFO/crop circle researchers ever to emanate from the UK. He simply didn't hang about and if he wanted to find out something, he'd go and find the answer even if it meant trespassing, getting arrested, and having a file down at Special Branch as long as your arm. He was direct and couldn't stand bullshit. Because bullshit and grandstanding are the meat and potatoes of Ufology and particularly the crop circle crowd, he made enemies. Popularity contests weren't his forte and he ploughed on regardless.

Also, some didn't care for his direct approach and felt it didn't do Ufology any good at all. They preferred to ask polite questions and wait five years for a reply.

His revelations about his crop circle making received publicity when he was arrested and maliciously prosecuted. As you will see and may well remember, he was making a point. It was clear that besides laughing at him for getting nicked, the best thing that the crop circle crowd could do as regards Matthew was to forget about him as quickly as possible. It was just simply the most convenient strategy available. Unfortunately, common sense, the passing of time, and the penny finally dropping have brought Matthew's work back into sharper focus and with it, a realization that he was right.

This interview is a rare event. He doesn't speak much to anyone nowadays. It was recorded on Tuesday March 28th 2006



SM: The first thing that intrigues me, if I may ask, is why do you still monitor your calls? Are you still getting hassled?

MW: It's not from the security services or anything like that. It's unfortunately from a problem I've got with a stalker, somebody who saw me on TV once and has become a right pain in the ass. She even turned up at my house once and had to be arrested and taken away by the police and sectioned. She is a mental case called Tabitha Good who has become the bane of my bloody life and rings me up at 4 a.m. in the morning and tries to get me out of bed to answer telephone calls and stuff like that. That's why I monitor my calls. I've had this for about the last two years with her ringing me up and that sort of stuff. I've changed my mobile number three times and she has managed to get the number from people that I know.

SM: That's a nightmare.

MW: It is a bit really, yes. I'm thinking of becoming mentally ill myself so I can smash her in the face next time she turns up on my doorstep.

SM: When did an interest in ufology start for you? I know that your interests have changed a bit over the years. I guess you are known for two things really; Rudloe Manor and getting arrested and all that bollocks. But what kicked off your initial interest and what sort of age were you?

MW: I've got to get this right because I haven't given lectures on this for a while but it was in something like 1990 I had a sighting of a UFO and it was in the Rhondda Valley where I lived. I was driving across the mountain road which goes from the Rhondda to the Bridgend Ogwr Valley. There was a friend of mine with me in the car and we were off to do some video editing in a little studio down there. He was in a band and I had done some video filming and he wanted to put a little video together so we were off to do this thing and as we rounded a corner of the mountain, there was this huge vista across to the opposite mountain and sitting on the side of this mountain was a large triangular shape which was quite big and there was shimmering on its edges. I was driving at the time and so I had to keep my eyes on the road and as I was looking at the road and then looking back across to this thing, I was thinking "Hang on, that's a fire". That was my immediate reaction. It was a yellowish, orange shimmering thing, a triangle, and I thought it was a forest fire. Actually, where I live that is quite a common thing. People set the mountains on fire all the time because of the steep incline angle; the fire just shoots up the mountain, and the kids like doing that sort of thing just to see the flames going up the mountain and causing all those horrible scorch marks.

Anyway, I'm looking sideways and forwards and after a while I began to have doubts as to whether it was indeed a fire. It looked quite solid and I'm thinking, "Hang on, this is quite weird. It's not got flames; it's just edges that are shimmering". I'm trying to focus on it to establish exactly where it is because there was something about it that was making it look as if it was actually right in front of my face, within 10 feet, then at the same time as my eyes are refocusing I'm realising that no, it's actually on the distant hillside.

Eventually I managed to work out that the bottom of it was behind the tree line because I could see these fir trees and it was actually behind those so I could see those against it, and the top of it was just poking out above the top of the hill. It managed to allow me to work out where it was but as I was just beginning to get to grips with that and how big it was, I passed a tree line which was on the road I was driving down and this obscured my view. I was worried that I would lose

sight of it and so I put the brakes on on the car and put it into reverse to regain a view in the direction of which it was. When the trees passed so that I could see again, it had gone. There was nothing.

So I turned to my friend who was sitting beside me. I hadn't actually tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Hey, look at that" but I then said to him, "Did you see that?" And he said, "Well, what?" I told him what I had seen. He replied, "I saw sort of lights but I wasn't looking at that, I was looking at the hill". He was looking at the side of the mountain that we were actually driving down. I just shrugged it off. I had no interest in UFOs at that time or rather perhaps just a very minor one as I did subscribe to the *Unexplained* magazine but I wasn't really taken with all of the stories in there and took them with a pinch of salt. I was of the opinion that everything was explainable by science; that religion was for foolish people and that kind of thing. I had this attitude when I was younger but it was all really just probably a load of bollocks. I was quite arrogant about this.

Having had this strange sighting, I went down to the video studio that night and did my work and then drove home over the mountain and I quite clearly remember that I didn't bother even looking in the direction of where that thing had been. I had seen something but it hadn't really struck me as being highly odd at that time.

So I drove home and continued for the rest of the week doing various tasks and not taking any notice of what had happened that night. About five days later it was like somebody had literally chucked a bucket of water in my face. I suddenly had this waking realisation, "Oh my God. Five days ago I was driving across the mountain with my friend in the car and I saw something really strange. Why am I only thinking it was highly strange now?" And *that* I couldn't work out. I couldn't work out how now, five days later, my brain had kicked in to tell me that was a highly peculiar thing.

SM: Are you aware now that that sort of reaction is actually very common?



MW: Well, I am now, yes. People put it to the back of their mind and maybe not even see the thing that other people are seeing because it's maybe too odd a thing for their brain to absorb and it shuts off. Back then, being kind of sceptical, I thought that well maybe I had had an hallucination or whatever and if I had had an hallucination then it would have been something that only I would have seen. But I had had my friend Andrew with me and he had said that he had seen something out of the corner of his eye and so I rang him up and said, "The other night when we were driving across the mountain, do you remember me saying that I saw something?" He confirmed it and also repeated that he hadn't seen it properly.

Matt in gear

So I wasn't imagining that I had seen this thing on that night. I found it very weird because I couldn't understand how to position the experience in my head. What should I think about this? What should I take from it? What does it mean? Am I imagining more than was there? Why was it there when it was very large as life and then the next minute it had gone and why, on the same night that I had actually seen it, did I not bother to look back in that direction when I drove home? Why was it so unimportant to me then that I didn't look and now it seems overwhelmingly important? It's like my brain was saying, "Hey, hang on a minute, why didn't you think about this on the night?"

This struck me as kind of strange reactions and I made my mind up to look into it further and that's what piqued my interest in re-reading some of the information I had on UFOs and then buying books on the subject and looking into it.

Eventually, I said to myself that I had to be sure about what I was dealing with. I was reading books that could be sensationalist and I needed to get a grasp of the subject and see whether people are being serious and that they weren't just wild claimed stories. I felt I needed to become an investigator and meet people and ascertain whether there was some truth to the subject. Are people seeing strange things or is it just hallucinations? That's what I wanted to do -- I wanted to pin the subject down and so I started to become an investigator of the subject and met people and tried to gain an understanding of whether people were telling the truth. That was important to me; to try and be certain.

SM: Did you first become aware of Rudloe Manor through Tim Good's books? Or were you are aware of it beforehand?



Tim Good

MW: No, the first time I heard about Rudloe Manor was through Timothy Good's books. I didn't quite remember that it was Rudloe Manor -- the name didn't stick in my head but the general idea of the story was of this place that was somewhere in the countryside and was a military base that didn't look like it was a very big thing, and that it didn't look like it was highly

secured or whatever and he goes there and finds that in fact there is a lot of security there which wasn't apparent and that he was being watched and followed as he was looking at the outside of the base and then he gets pulled in and arrested and asked questions about himself, and so he thinks to himself, "Why am I being asked questions and why is all this happening in this leafy lane small base that doesn't appear to be anything special, why is all this happening?" The types of questions he was asking were based on information that he had been given saying "This is really an important place but everyone is denying it and you won't get answers through official channels that this is the place where you should be looking".

When he goes there, he gets this strange reaction from the security there. I remember it as a general story and when I came down to Wiltshire to look into the crop circles which was about 1992. I then remembered the story and began to wonder where this place was. Was it down here somewhere in England?

England is a very big place but I reread the story and realised it wasn't a million miles away from where I went to look at the crop circles.

So eventually I convinced my friend Paul that it would be a good idea to go and have a look at this place just to see whether what Tim Good had written sounded correct. Was it a place where you had secret security people hanging around watching in and the base looks low-key when in fact it is high key playing the low-key role? What we found out which I have subsequently written about was that yes, it was a high key base and we did manage to find out some information which backed up what Tim Good was saying in his book. In his book they were only rumours and that's how he was given the information, not as verified from the MoD's perspective, no letters or government documents actually confirming that Rudloe Manor was investigating UFOs and was involved in the subject but we subsequently found out information which did verify those details.

SM: If you don't mind me asking, and perhaps without going into too much detail, but how did you get that information?

MW: A great way of finding out information is to speak to people who have obviously worked there in the past and who know things. Because it was such a large base and in wartime was used for storing bombs and a lot of people were involved in its construction that there are an awful lot of people that live in the area of Corsham who know all about this place which is supposedly a very well-kept national secret. But locally, to the area of Bath and Corsham, because so many people have actually worked there, it's not a very well-kept secret and outside of those areas, the secret diminishes and dies away and not many people know about it.

But if you go into Corsham or Bath and ask almost anybody, you'll have one in four people who will know of it or say something like, "Oh yes, my grandfather worked there. He told me about the stories of the underground tunnels and the underground trains and all the roads and so on" and you get different flavours of the story from people which is to do with the fact that there are underground tunnels at Rudloe, which wasn't exactly what I was looking for when I went to start asking people in the area what they knew about the base. I was hoping that somebody was going to go, "Oh yes. Can't tell you too much mate but they do the investigating of UFOs or maybe they're researching secret projects there". That was what I was hoping to get but what I actually got was all these stories about the underground tunnels.



Rudloe

Nevertheless, I still found this very interesting and it turned out it would be a place where the Royal family would come to live in the case of a nuclear emergency. So I got a whole different thing to what I was expecting to get but from learning the information about the underground tunnels and the fact that all this was going on, I had a reason to go to the public records office to try and verify these facts.

Whilst I was at the PRO searching through the documentation which related to Rudloe Manor and the underground tunnels, a lot of extra things fell out of the documents that didn't really relate to UFOs and Secretariat Air Staff 2A which was

supposed to be the department that was dealing with this sort of stuff, and we found a lot of documents that were relating to the UFO sightings that were made by radar stations based at RAF Rudloe Manor. We also found that it was often referred to by other names so because I was looking for it in a historical sense, I learned that its name had changed from HQ Southern Sector to Rudloe Manor. We started tracking back all the different names that had been used for this base and we started looking up files based on these different names to see if we could learn about the underground tunnels. Every once in awhile we would get a document that was related to UFO sightings or, as it turned out, investigations of UFOs that had been carried out by RAF Rudloe Manor.

As a starting point, I came in at completely different angle but ended up back in the same place, which was very interesting because if there weren't any UFO investigations going on at Rudloe Manor and it was just underground tunnels, it's strange that we should find these documents representing the UFO subject in amongst all this other stuff to do with the tunnels. We were finding stuff we weren't expecting to find and it was quite interesting to follow it down these different name channels.

SM: You seem prepared to bang on the door and go and ask questions at the front door, so to speak. I'm curious; firstly why weren't you intimidated, why weren't you frightened that you might be dragged in and might not come out again or that you would attract the overt attention of the security services who might make your life a misery and so on and so forth. Why didn't that worry you?

MW: I think it was probably something to do with my growing up. I had a lot of bullying at school as a kid and I learned how to deal with bullies in my own way. I learned to get a little bit tough really. I learned that one way to deal with bullies was to be either a bigger bully or a madder person than they can deal with. Sometimes that actually works. You can frighten your bully away. I learned how to stare an aggressor in the eye and either talk to them and talk a situation round or to deal with it quite psychotically. So I suppose I'm just quite a cocky bastard. I've learned not to be the victim and actually to become the person who can deal with the situation and to see where my strengths and weaknesses are and then to decide what is a safe angle and position to take and what isn't safe.

Also, I did start working for Customs and Excise which I can say now was probably one of the worst times of my life because I absolutely hated many of the people I was working with and I hated the civil service life. But having an interest in the law and in how the law works, how arrests work and that sort of thing, I had an idea in my head as to how much I could get away with by going up to bases and places and knowing just where the line is drawn. Knowing what you can do and what you can't do, what they can do to you, what they will threaten they can do to you, and what they actually can do to you. There are big differences. I was comfortable to a certain degree with what they could do.

Timothy Good's own story in his book was kind of evidence in itself but really what they want to do is know about you but ultimately, at the end of the day, they have to let you go. If you're not doing anything more than simply asking questions and looking around the edge of a base, what are you doing wrong? I decided that maybe eventually I wanted to do a little bit more than just hang around the outside of the base and ask questions and that maybe there was going to come a time when I wasn't going to get the answers that I required and I would go further than that and I was prepared for that.

But initially, when I got into trouble with the security at Rudloe Manor, they wanted to know why I was there. I was just amazed at the amount of force they used really to stop a couple of guys who are just UFO investigators. We were quite happy to discuss with them why we were there and the whole background to what we knew to be UFO investigations at RAF Rudloe Manor.

I was working for Customs and Excise at the time and I had my works ID with me which proved who I was so I wasn't a threat. But this didn't stop them screeching to a halt in front of our car, jumping out and pointing guns in our faces. I thought this was a bit odd for a leafy lane, low security looking base. We drove up to the guard house which is on a public road – you can just pull off the road straight into the guard house area, and we pulled up and were chatting to the guard saying, "What does this base do. What is it?" And he was quite happy to talk to us whilst obviously he had pressed a button under the table sounding an alarm, and these guys were jumping in their van and screeching over to us. Within two minutes of us starting to talk to this guard, the van arrived. It just goes to show that you can appear to be doing nothing wrong and you appear to just be asking an innocent question but that's not the type of treatment you are expecting from a base that doesn't look like it's doing very much and from their own statements, isn't doing very much.

SM: Firstly I must apologise because I have not read what you have written about Rudloe so I might be asking questions that are in the public domain, but did they ever pull you inside?

MW: No they didn't. Never been pulled inside. I wish they had in fact as I would have had my eyes everywhere, looking at everything. They did a number of things where they pulled us over in strange circumstances where like I had a friend of mine with me once, Chris Fowler, and he was saying to me, "Are you really being serious about this security at Rudloe? It just sounds a bit far-fetched. Are you really being serious?" I said, "Honestly, they drive around in unmarked cars, you wouldn't know they were following you. They follow all the people around the village and they are constantly driving around and anybody and everybody who shows up on the records as a security threat or they are just suspicious about they will pull them over, and this has happened to us. They have known where we've been even though we are not next to the base, we are way off out in the countryside looking at caves and tunnels and even though we are doing this, they know where we are and have picked us up."

So I am explaining this to him and we're coming into the area and I told him that I would show him where the base was. I pulled into what was known as the underground quarry centre, I believe it's closed down now even though it's still got its sign outside, and they take you down underground for a couple of pounds and show you some of the underground tunnels. So I pulled up into the car park for this and it's a completely enclosed car park surrounded by trees so it can't be seen from the road and within seconds, a blue Cavalier pulled in beside us.

Because of my work in Customs and Excise, I knew what covert aerals looked like. They look like genuine car aerals on the car but they are actually slightly thicker and I have seen these things fitted and they basically have covert radios in the glove compartment where you can push a button on the gear stick or nearby and you can just speak. You are transmitted across the radio channels to the Customs and Excise headquarters. So when I saw this aerial I just said, "Ah, there is a covert aerial. These guys have followed us in." Chris Fowler said, "No" but I said, "That have, they have. They are definitely security. Watch now and they will reverse and if we stay here for a minute or so, somebody will come over and nab us."

So this car reverses and pulls out and there are two guys in plain clothes inside. Within a minute and a half two police cars pulled in and screeched up to us and we got the full questioning; what are you doing around here? Why are you here? So I said to Chris, "I told you" and got out of the car and said to the policemen, "That Cavalier was one of yours, wasn't it?" It was like cat and mouse outside the base really.

Some people have said they have never experienced it. They have been there and have never had this happen to them. I have had it happen to me quite a lot of times so I know that there is this stuff going on. And you also get the famous dog walkers - I have taken photographs of some of them and they all seem to wear the same wax jacket and blue denim jeans and wellies and they walk different dogs around, and yet they seem to have keys to the gates to get into the base, which your normal average dog walker wouldn't have. So if you follow these people with a camera for long enough, you will see them open a gate and go back inside.

So you have obviously got the things going on around the place and you have to be careful that you don't attract attention to yourself.

S.M: I very much got the impression, and you half alluded to it a moment ago, that it very much became a game. They became very familiar with you. Was it unnerving to realise that they knew so much about you?

MW: Not really, I don't think so. Rudloe Manor not only has emergency underground facilities but also has communications roles and is an equivalent you could say to NORAD. If one of the main command and control centres like Northwood in London which is an underground bunker where they have got screens and computers and guys with headsets on who talk to military commanders via satellite while controlling battlefield situations, well Oakhanger is a fallback. There is also High Wycombe which is strike command and is another underground bunker with I think six levels and is a very large and you can drive cars into it as well. Then you've got the headquarters of the Command and Defence Communications Network - CDCN - that is based at Rudloe Manor in adjacent tunnels to where the Royal family would be housed in a national emergency.



Oakhanger

I found out that they have got Skynet there, the British satellite system, as it happens the same name as the system used in the Terminator movies, but there is no connection and its communications for the military to use all over the world. They have encrypted communications going through there from land lines, from microwave dishes, from radio sources and from satellite. They all go through this headquarters communications centre. It's like a hub of GCHQ but military as opposed to civilian operated. It was related to me by a source that Skynet was in fact a dual purpose system, that it had another role. It could not only receive communications but because it was a radio receiver and it could actually detect where the radio signals were coming from i.e. it could localise it to one quadrant or another and relay the information back to the controllers, it also had a secret function. It could be used to detect nuclear explosions in foreign countries. It could be used for example to ascertain whether Russia was doing tests that it wasn't actually admitting to because it could pick up the electromagnetic radio pulses and frequencies from that test.

But, as it could pick up electromagnetic pulses, which were believed to be from UFOs, I found this quite interesting. Because, from the documents which relate that in the past, HQ southern sector was not only as a radar station in its own right where, in its command and control rooms, it would look at pictures of aircraft flying across the United Kingdom and also look at the military picture of what aircraft were meant to be in the skies, so it would also determine which were legitimate craft and which were illegitimate. It has actually sent out aircraft to intercept fast moving traffic at extremely high speeds and performing manoeuvres which were considered to be impossible for military aircraft. It would scramble aircraft to intercept.

We did have that sort of role in the past, which is documented in official documents which are available from the Public Records Office, it then becomes very interesting when you learn from sources who don't have any information about those types of events but who are relating that the Command and Communications Network is connected with the surveillance role for all of the radio traffic and possibly nuclear events and possibly UFO propulsion systems. When you start to piece these things together, and then you see documents which relate to the fact that the Provost and Security Services, which are basically the police force for the RAF, used to send out officers to interview witnesses and used to investigate the UFO subject on behalf of the military intelligence services.

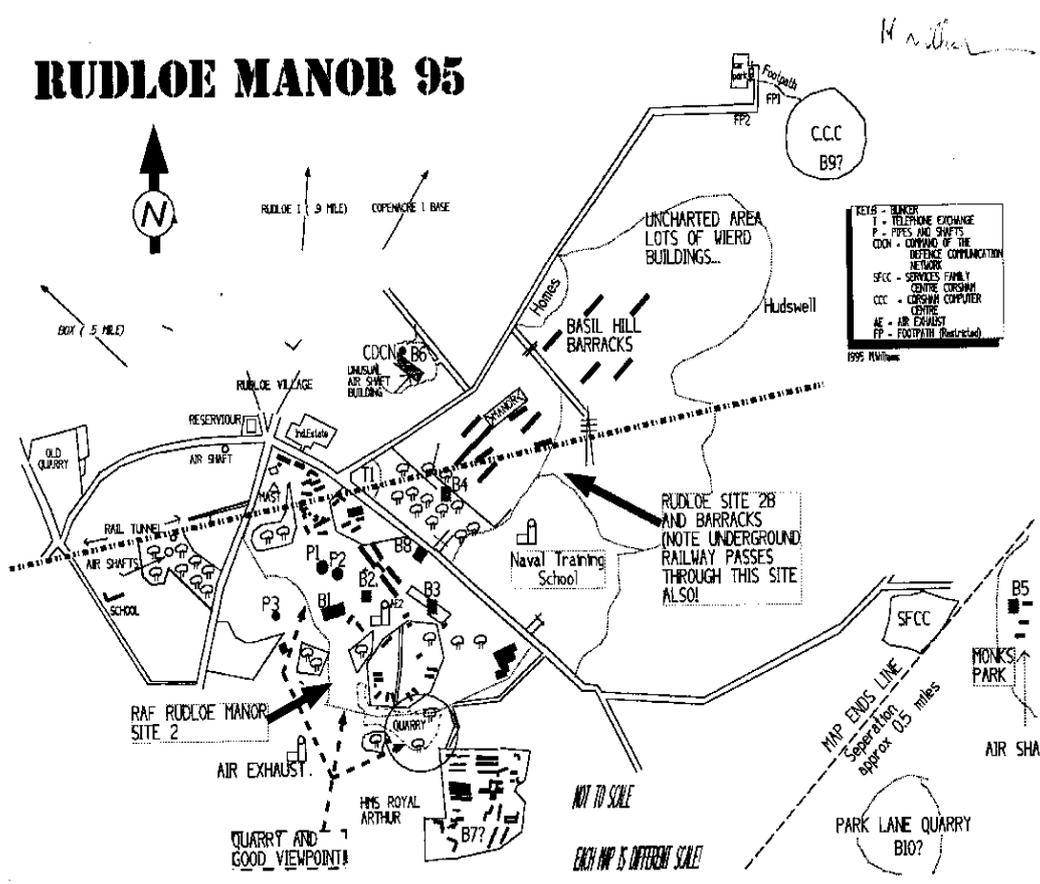
So they will actually be responsible for collecting information and feeding this back up the channels to Whitehall and intelligence analysts would be looking at this information to see whether these UFO sightings were real or not, and they would correlate it with information that was coming in from other sources such as radar bases and command and control centres and they would have the bigger picture of what was going on.

So it was interesting that the Provost and Security Services, the police wing, used to investigate the UFO cases, they used to channel all of the UFO information from the military bases through Rudloe Manor before it went to London. In the past also, from their own radar stations, they scrambled aircraft to intercept possible UFO traffic. And the Skynet system which was operated by the sister base to Rudloe Manor, the CDCN, that system could maybe be used to track UFOs. You had a number of interesting things all pointing to the same base. It tinged my interest!

SM: What conclusions did you come to as regards Rudloe Manor/the P&SS's attitude towards UFOs? As far as those people are concerned, UFOs exist

because they've seen them on their radar screens many, many times and they are absolutely convinced they are not manmade objects?

MW: You can go down two avenues of thought; the military know much more about this subject and believe it to be nonhuman and they are holding this information away from the public or you may take the opinion that the military may be looking at it from a clinical standpoint and take the view that the stuff has to be investigated because it may be military aircraft or testing of unknown missile systems that are intruding into our airspace to test our ability to track these things or to shoot them down, and we have to investigate this to find out what these things are. Or it may even be that the military are testing themselves. They may know exactly what these things are and they maybe testing our own military hardware to find out if we can track these things and understand what they are via our own equipment.



So maybe there are certain military branches that know what these things are. Other military branches are baffled by them and try to investigate them and find out what they are. The people at the top, who might know exactly what's going on, might be looking at this and saying, "Well, these are the unknowns and these are the knowns. We know what they are, they were ours and we were testing them but we can't tell the other people down the line. And these are the real unknowns which don't appear to be ours, weren't things we were testing and are genuinely strange. Those could fall into either of the two categories; other things being tested by governments who are looking at flying stuff over our territory or.....

SM: Illegally? The reason I ask that is because I did an interview with Nick Pope about three or four months ago (not published) and he was very specific, for what it was worth, and very definite that yes, we fly our own black projects but we fly

them over very specific zones and areas. And obviously we know where those areas are and so by implication he was suggesting anything of an unusual nature seen outside of those zones was of interest. I put the point to him that could this not just be American projects flying over the UK? He replied that there was a very strict protocol for that and that they have to file, I can't remember the term he used, but it's a special request.

MW: There is an open skies treaty which means that each country can over fly under certain circumstances. There's also the space aspect which means that if you are outside the atmosphere at a certain height, you are excluded from all of this anyway because you look from space down into somebody's territory without having to fly a U2 spy plane or a Stealth.

SM: So that's really an easy way around what Nick Pope said. What he said might be correct but there are comfortable ways around it. So let's say for example that the Americans wanted to test an Aurora plane at 10,000 miles an hour to get across the Atlantic in about 30 minutes; they would not have to ask permission from the British government to fly over the UK?

MW: It depends whether they are trackable in the first place and whether they are interceptable. If they can't be intercepted because they are flying too high and too fast and nothing can touch them, not even a missile, and maybe even they've got countermeasures on board which could defeat those missiles, then if they are flying in that capacity then really who can prove what that was? Who can prove where it came from and what it was doing? If you can't shoot it down then you can't prove where it came from. Really, requesting permission to do something like that is irrelevant. We all know that governments don't get that down half the time anyway. They are pulling off stunts or getting into trouble all over the place. It's never stopped them in the past and the fact that things have happened years ago which would indicate that it is a danger and could cause a diplomatic crisis doesn't mean that governments with the latest technology won't try it again because they think they are above it and beyond it. Since the fall of Communist Russia, apart from flying over China which could cause problems, I don't think there are too many countries in the world that are actually going to complain about America over flying them these days.

SM: You don't seem to be certain about what they think about unidentified radar traces. Are they convinced that UFOs exist or not?

MW: I think they are convinced that UFOs exist but there are differing ideas within the hierarchy as to what these things are. There may be somebody in a very high level who knows what some of these things are and I think they realise there are obviously things that cannot be identified, that pass through the channels and go down into the reports and never get identified. There's a lot more that goes on that is never disclosed and that's what's interesting. People like Nick Pope allude to certain things. You have to be very careful with the questions because they will give you standardised answers which don't really tell you an awful lot. When you realise this, you recognise that you might have wasted an opportunity. You have to ask them very specific questions. One of the most interesting questions I ever asked Nick Pope which came about through my work at the PRO was did DI55 and other intelligence departments actually channel the information down through him. He said that he was aware of other departments that investigated the UFO subject above him but he wouldn't be able to comment on them. I thought that was quite interesting.

SM: That *is* quite interesting because he insisted for years that he wasn't aware of anything else going on and that as far as he was concerned, all reports came into his desk. Did he say this recently?

MW: It was a couple of years ago. He hasn't worked in the department investigating UFOs since the time I asked him so I don't think his opinion could really have changed unless he is still involved in some way, which I don't think he is. He has alluded that he has changed departments and I think he said he was promoted as well when he left Air Staff 2A and has gone into something like financial planning. He wouldn't say exactly what it was. But he did say that whilst he was working at the Secretariat Air Staff 2A he used to receive reports from the public of UFOs and he would investigate them. He would do this mostly off his own bat because of his personal interest. He would then send out questions to other departments for the input, like radar stations, military bases, weather stations, and he would receive responses back. Based on that, he could make a conclusion and then make a comment to the people as to what his feelings were about what these things were.

Now, I said, based on the fact that in the historical documents which shows how the department that went on to become the UFO department used to deal with these things, it seems clear that the chain of command was that if anything was reported as a UFO, it would be reported up to DI55 and the intelligence departments of the Air Staff such as Air Intelligence 5A, 4B, so there were various wings that dealt with this. They would all circulate their information, come to a conclusion, make a report to the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and when they had made their reports, they would send their conclusions down the line to Air Staff 2A who often wouldn't be allowed to tell the public what the conclusions were. So they would have to come up with some sort of cover story and pass

that on to members of the public.



Nick Pope

Now they were quite specific about this procedure of how they used to do things in the past; don't tell the public what it was, tell them something else, don't excite the imagination and don't give things away. They were quite specific about this and what I said to Nick was; based on the fact that there were people working in intelligence divisions above you who are making the final conclusions about these things, you would have been the equivalent of the last person to know and only a letter writer who was actually supposed to distort the truth. So, can you confirm that there were departments of intelligence above you who were

investigating the subject? And he said, "Yes, I can confirm that there were people above me in intelligence who were investigating the subject but I can't comment about which departments they were and I cannot discuss the work that they did." I asked him what the reason for that was and he gave me a stock reply that nobody comments on intelligence matters, which is true because that is the common military clichéd response. Its complete fucking bullshit because when intelligence departments come out and say, "Oh yes, they've got weapons of mass destruction", then they can talk about it. It's quite okay to comment for propaganda purposes and of course when you go to them with a question like "do you investigate UFOs?" they go, "Sorry, we don't want to talk about that". Give me a break. On the one hand they can talk about intelligence matters, on the other hand they can't talk about intelligence matters.

So I asked him about intelligence department above him; would they be more qualified than him to investigate the subject and would they have specialists in missiles, weapons systems, latest type of aircraft, that sort of stuff and would they be specialists in those fields as opposed to yourself who is just an entry-level executive officer grade who has come in off the street and is letter writing to members of the public, albeit with a genuine interest in the subject and a desire to actually help people? Can you confirm to me that there are these people who are more trained at a higher grade investigating the subject and feeding information back down the line? And he said, "Yeah, I can. But I can't discuss it". And that to me speaks volumes.

I don't like to be nasty to Nick but it's like flush Nick Pope down the toilet because what does he actually know? He's basically taking the word from higher departments about what he actually has to basically dole out to members of the public. What he believes himself is irrelevant. Does he know what is going on? Are they telling him? Well, the chances are, probably not.

SM: I found it very interesting a moment ago when you mentioned that the reports filtered up to the JIC. Now that is very interesting because that is the top. So it was all of interest even to them?

MW: Yes, military interest. Anything that can fly faster than one of our aircraft performing unusual manoeuvres and maybe disappearing and reappearing on radar screens is definitely something that the military are going to be interested in. Is it hardware? Can we bring one down, study it, find out where it comes from, who is doing whatever or maybe even utilise it ourselves? Can we incorporate this type of thing into our own technology? Is it something we can use? I think they would very definitely be interested from an earthbound standpoint. If they can't ascertain what it is and there are question marks left behind, then it will go into the X Files draw and remained unexplained.

But the military would have a reason to want to know about these things and I would imagine that they wouldn't want to excite the imagination of the general public too much on things they can't always explain. And they certainly wouldn't want to go talking about things which are cutting-edge technology which they can explain. So really there is nothing they would want to discuss about the subject at all unless it is something they can say, "You are clearly wrong Mr Jones. That thing you saw was Venus" which is probably right because that is how things often are.

It's the type of sightings that Nick Pope would be dealing with, at the lower end of the spectrum, which are just misidentifications or things that the military would rather be seen as misidentifications than be discussed at a higher level.

SM: You have used the phrase "Don't excite the public". Is that partly out of embarrassment because they would be acknowledging that there is stuff flying around our airspace or above our airspace that they can't explain and therefore by implication they are not doing their job because they not defending the security of the realm and so forth, or is it because they don't want to instigate panic for want of a better description?

WM: Probably a mixture of both. The reports from the Public Records Office stated that they didn't want to excite people's imagination; that they didn't want to create more of a situation than was warranted. I think the wording that was used in one file was, "reports which are given credibility by military sources or other official sources like policeman, pilots will always be taken more seriously by members of the public than just straight public reports". So therefore military and other people have to be more careful with what they say about these things because it will cause a reaction and cause people to believe that there is more going on than in fact anybody knows.

They were saying that these things are not always identifiable and if reports are made by military personnel and the public will get excited by this and take it more seriously when in fact there may not be much behind it.

SM: Do you think or do you know whether they have got a gun carriage film or indeed any sort of hard evidence of strange stuff?

MW: I think somebody recently was afforded a certain amount of access into the military files and I think a number of pieces of footage were mentioned in the files. I can't remember who it was but I did read about it somewhere. Apparently they were promised they would be given access to footage and film and when they made the request to do this, then it was denied. There is obviously stuff at the MoD that hasn't been released of that nature; gun camera/radar tapes. I don't think they would destroy that type of information because it's a once-in-a-lifetime type material. You don't destroy interesting things like that.



Tunnel entrance at Rudloe

What we do know is that they have probably destroyed a lot of the more boring and mundane case files that have gone through the channels because they want to limit how much goes out into the Public Records Office. People are under the false idea that all documentation from the MoD that

relates to interesting things that they have done over the years will eventually end up in secret files at the PRO and one day will be releasable. That's not the case because what tends to happen is just a sample picking, which people in the Ministry think might be of interest in the future and which isn't so sensitive that it would throw everybody into a civil war because of the ramifications of it, gets let out.

So what you are left with then is maybe something that is a half and half interesting selection of files which are just the tip of the iceberg really. And what you have got with UFO footage is a similar sort of thing. The stuff that is too interesting or serious will probably never get released into the PRO. The less

sensitive stuff will go in there and will take a long time to come out and some of it will disappear as well, as some of the case files have done over the years.

When we found out a lot of this stuff about DI55 and the P&SS those files were removed from the PRO, which is actually illegal. When a file is lodged there, records have to be kept of its movements and if anybody borrows the file, there has to be a notification on an index system as to where the file has gone and yet, the files disappeared after we started publicising the presence. We asked questions about where they were and they reckoned they did an all files census to try and find the things, and they couldn't find them. However, when a parliamentary question was asked, within two days the files reappeared, and this was quite interesting.

So I think if one can actually find information and footage relating to UFO's it might be that it says that it is going to come out for release in 30 years time but you can actually push for it to be released ahead of time if you've got a valid reason, and you can ask for this to be reviewed. With the new Freedom of Information Act they are supposed to review these things with more of a leaning towards "Why not?"

In actual fact, you might find that when it comes to the crunch and you actually go to get the file and it is supposed to have been released, there is nothing there for you to get. There is a record of it being there but when you could pull it, it's not, So you've got that problem to face as well.

SM: I got the feeling that you found all of this - these brick walls, the secrecy all very frustrating, almost as if you felt you had a right to know because well, why should it be kept secret? Would that be right?

MW: Yes. I am coming at it from the point of view of somebody who would like to know what is going on. At the end of it all are the public and limited by the resources I've got and wondering whether or not there are good intelligence reports out there, good military reports, well, I would like to get my hands on those. Those do mean more than things that are just strict witness sightings, which shouldn't be ignored, but there is obviously great validity and some of the military case files which are backed up with radar evidence and footage. The way the military will operate will be probably a little bit more efficient than a UFO investigation network would operate. They've got a communications channels and there are lots of people looking at these things who are trained in many areas which are probably a lot better than UFO investigators.

And I think to myself, "Well, if that information is there and the only thing that is stopping us getting it is bureaucracy, we should really try and fight the bureaucracy and question whether or not these things are only being withheld from the public for reasons of old bureaucratic, dogmatic old guard wartime attitudes. We live in a more modern world now. We know that UFOs are being cited by people and they just doesn't seem to have been a threat over the years, we haven't been invaded from space and really all we are looking for is interesting sightings which might shed some light on things that are going on; trends and areas that have more sightings than others. It would be interesting to see these reports. I'm not somebody who believes that we should give away state secrets about everything but I believe there is a lot out there which really is in the public domain anyway and the attempts the military go to to keep some things which are already public knowledge secret are kind of futile and pathetic because the information is already out there.

It's like taking military bases off maps for instance when everybody knows it's there and you can get satellite photos confirming that, yet the Ministry of Defence are saying to Ordnance Survey, "No, remove it. Don't have that on the map". This is childish and crap like this is being addressed by people like comedian Mark Thomas. I think they said that they were going to put some of these bases back on the map and it's the same with the UFOs really. From my perspective, we do have a right to know and the UFO subject is not really, I think, a threat in terms of information being let out in public. I can imagine that there is a certain belief that the military investigations above the norm may reveal secrets and wouldn't be something they would want to release but I don't see the need for information from them that would interest the public which has gone up through the channels should be treated with such caution. By definition, it came from an external non-military source anyway. There is a certain hypocrisy about the way the military deal with the information that they gather. The same with the police and other government bodies in the way in which they like to hoard information and not let anything out when in fact some information is actually quite harmless and could be let out. I think things like that should be addressed and looked at.

SM: Monks Park. Absolutely fascinating and I can't imagine the guts that must have taken.

WM: Or stupidity.

SM: It's a thin line actually. Reading Nick Redfern's account, which he said actually was pretty much word for word as you described it, and I love the way you summed it up at the end by saying "that was an exciting day" – but what were you hoping for or was it just purely a fishing expedition or was it to stick two fingers up at them?



Monks Park.

WM: It was purely a fishing expedition really. We were trying to have a look at various places surrounding Rudloe Manor and there are various tunnel entrances that lead to old Victorian mines which cover the whole area. You've got some old places which have been shut down and sold off and also there are quarry tunnels which lead up to these military bases which are becoming increasingly privately

run. Then you've got tunnels which cross from a military base through an old tunnel system and then go in to private sector tunnel. You've got escape shafts and air breather holes inside, and things like that.

So you can explore the countryside and get speaking to the locals and say to them, "What do you know and where have you heard that you can get into these tunnels?" And they say, "Oh, I heard in the forest....." Then you try to pin them down a bit more and in the end you ask them if they can take you out there and show you. So you pan out and look at all these places.

One of the places we passed a few times had been Monks Park which looked like a military base to us but didn't seem to have an awful lot going on there. There didn't seem to be many cars parked outside it and it just seemed like a quiet place, without even a guard on duty. It looked like it was shut down and just had a few street lights on inside it but it was definitely not an abandoned base. It was well kept but nobody seemed to be at home.

RAF Colerne we were given to believe was a disused air base now sometimes used by civilian flying school clubs and the air cadets but what we found out about it was that it was another one of these cover bases. It had a barracks which housed a lot of people but around the back of the base, you had a nuclear protected satellite dish which was in fact the uplink satellite for the Skynet system. So that was actually housed at Colerne base and there were wires and tunnels that led back over to Rudloe Manor that connected the whole system up to the CDCN which is where all the information would be processed.

All of these places are kind of low-key. Colerne doesn't actually have a fence around the runway. You can actually walk just straight off the road onto the runway. You kind of think it's a bit odd because you got barracks over there and this is an airfield and yet you can just walk onto the runway. Then, when you look at the hangars, there is always work going on and the keep on them looks really pristine and the runway is a very well-kept, and yet apparently it is disused. So is this really just a place that they say is disused but in the case of an emergency when they might need to bring people in at short notice, they can fly them in and within seconds you can get them into the underground tunnels. This was the scenario that was put forward and that's why there is a lot of care and maintenance on the base.

So you've got all these places which are very low-key and don't appear to have much going on at them and then you've got Monks Park which again seems to be well maintained but nothing going on. Out of all of these places that we looked at, Monks Park looked the quietest so we thought that if we were going to have a look around, which one would be the best to go for? Obviously you go for the quietest. So we jump over the fence, we have a little mooch around and try not to get seen by anybody. Then we managed to find this entrance way into the underground section and we were very careful to try to not set off any of the alarms, although it didn't appear that there were any. It looked easy to get into, all we had to do was climb over a barrier so we did that and as we did, we set off an alarm! We didn't realise there was actually an alarm on the barrier itself. It was like a laser alarm. At that point we had a choice; we could either leave or go in and have a look. I thought "Fuck it, you only live once" and I think that was probably a good decision to make really because the tunnels were so large there and it was so easy to hide that really anything could have set an alarm off there because it was open to the outside air. Any bird or animal could have broken that beam. I wasn't sure if we'd been picked up by any cameras but I worked out that we could get into the tunnels and disappear quicker than they could actually get to these tunnels and stop us, so we had a chance to get in and have a good look.

With any luck there was a good chance that somebody would think it was a false alarm and they wouldn't come in and look for us.

My companion Richard wasn't quite so sure but I did quickly offer him encouragement. He thought it was a stupid idea but I reassured him it would be okay! In the end I just told him to shut up and follow me. It was all just chance that it took place. We weren't expecting or planning to do that; we were just having a little look around on the surface part of the base and didn't expect to encounter an open shaft leading underground.

SM: You heard gunshots on more than one occasion?

MW: Yes. We had been in there for some time and heard noises which could have been a lift shaft operating or a conveyor belt working. We snuck back up to the area which was close to the slope shaft and when we were fairly close to it, we were trying to listen to see if we could hear any noises of people coming around, and then there were these gunshot sounds. So I said, "Listen to that. What the hell is that?" And Richard said, "I know exactly what that is. That's a shot gun going off". He was absolutely certain because he was a clay pigeon shooter.



Matthew underground

It was at that point that he started to get a bit panicky and started saying, "Shit, they're going to come down here and get us" and I was saying, "No, no, no, there is no real reason to say that those noises at the end of the tunnel are anything to do with people coming down the tunnel with guns. They are out there shooting those guns into the air to frighten people off who might be thinking of coming in. Eventually, he took my judgement on it and we just stayed inside and waited for a period of time for everything to calm down so that it was quiet again. We spent a few hours just hiding in boxes down there and then we came out and went for a good look round. It was amazing - it was a huge facility.

SM: In the end though, you didn't actually see anything of great value. I believe you passed one recess where it was marked "CIA"?

MW: Yes. After all of this happened, we actually got given a tour of the place by the people that said they ran it on behalf of the military. They seemed to be ex-

military people that had been given licence to run what was and probably still is a military facility, but is now under the cover of a privatised company. We weren't allowed to take photographs and we weren't allowed to look at what was on the manifests on the boxes. They are called Leaffield engineering Ltd.

SM: Were they aware when they gave you that tour that you had already been down?

MW: Yes. (I'm roaring with laughter in the background-ed). They gave us the tour to allay our fears that anything suspicious was going on and also they wanted to assure us that they hadn't been shooting guns that night.

When we were down there, we climbed a spiral staircase all the way to the surface and when we got to the top, we waited. We knew there was a passive infrared detector at the top of those stairs so we had to stop back from it at a certain distance so as not to set the thing off. It was pointing at an emergency door that would let us out. We knew this was the best escape route so we actually listened for a long period of time there to see if there was any movement, any cars, footsteps, anything. We waited there for about 45 minutes just listening and there was not a sound. The moment we kicked open that door and set the PIR off, sirens started to go off and as we started to run across towards the fence, within seconds we heard gunshots again.

The editor of *Alien Encounters*, Nina Penridge had a phone call from Leaffield engineering (<http://www.leaffield.co.uk/index.htm>) after the story was published in the magazine and they claimed that the shot gun noises we heard were just fireworks that were going on in a little party in a house nearby. I wondered how a small party could sustain a fireworks display for a period of five hours. To me, it suggested that somebody was there, lurking around in the background who was trying to frighten people off.

SM: There's no chance that it was a recording attached to the alarm system was it?

MW: It could've been. May be it was a trigger on a bird scaring device connected to the alarm system, but it definitely sounded like the real thing. I'm fairly au fait with sound systems and I would imagine I would have been able to detect if it was a recording.

SM: You attracted some criticism from some quarters for what you did there because I think some people felt uncomfortable with so-called direct action. What was your reaction to that criticism?

MW: Well, I thought what we were doing was fairly harmless really. If we had been terrorists or people who had an interest in gaining military hardware, then, we probably wouldn't have gone for somewhere that was supposed to be a closed down little base. We would have had our eyes more on somewhere that was a weapons storage facility. What we were actually targeting were just interesting little outhouses in strange places that adjoined this military base, Rudloe Manor.

With many of the things we have done, we have actually gone up to the front door and just pressed on the buzzer, calling out "Hello, hello, anybody there?" and when somebody appeared, we would ask, "Can we speak to anybody please about reports that UFO investigations were carried out here please?" Naturally we were always refused and often threatened with the police and told that we had to leave. So with everything that we were doing, we weren't always going round to the back door. We only really started doing that when it appeared that

questions that we were asking reasonably weren't being answered. We thought we had nothing to lose at that point because if we pissed anybody off by jumping over some fences or whatever, what was the worst they could do to us? It's trespass. If we haven't broken anything, any locks or windows or stolen any files then all they can do is arrest us. Trespass usually has to be accompanied by a criminal act before it can be prosecuted otherwise it's very petty basically.

So what they tend to do is question you and then let you go. What we could gain was some interesting insight into what was in these bases and see if there are any interesting ways of going in further. Are there any open doors, then we could just walk straight in. What are they going to do? Take us to court, prosecute us, and advertise the fact that there is an underground base with an open door? So it's going to be really stupid for them to want to go down that line. But they may do it anyway just to be petty so really, we haven't got too much to worry about apart from stumbling across something that they didn't think anybody would know about or go looking for. We maybe might rattle somebody who had a gun and was a bit trigger-happy and think, "Oh shit, I'm meant to be protecting this" and we could then maybe get injured.

That was the worst case scenario but our intent was never to cause injury to any military personnel or to steal anything dangerous, or anything of that nature. I think with the type of reporting I was doing on it, I was saying, "We are hanging around this base and finding out all its little foibles and its security but really, it does appear to us that if we did want to get in, we probably could. And that should be a legitimate security concern to the people who run this base".

The point then later on was that when we did actually gain access to the base on a number of occasions, we publicised it. We did actually say what we had done and we did try to explain a little bit about how we had done it. It was obvious that apart from what we had written, there was an awful lot that we weren't saying as well. We didn't say exactly how we did it because we didn't want everybody emulating what we had done and maybe getting into trouble. They might follow exactly what we did and come up against some new security feature that had been implemented. We always held a little bit back because we didn't want people to get in trouble. We were prepared for it ourselves but we didn't want anyone else to get into trouble doing the same things that we had done.

We did always tell people that it was very risky and that we didn't advise it, and although we stood to get into trouble for having done it we were going to do it anyway on the basis that if this base is insecure and we can just walk in, then we will. It was kind of like, why not?

Some people might argue that anti-terrorist security at these bases is none of our business but I would respond by saying that if it appeared that you had a brain and could get away with it, that the military would then actually be aware of what we were attempting to do. So they weren't actually protecting themselves.

SM: Was your interest in crop circles running parallel to your interest in Rudloe or as your interest in Rudloe perhaps wound down, was it then a case that at that point your interest in crop circles took over?

MW: I think it was in 1992 that I first came down to Wiltshire to look at the crop circles. Because I didn't take much of what I had earlier read about crop circles seriously, I wasn't fully aware that circles were a happening phenomena. I was quite surprised that, even though I was heavily interested in UFOs and reading up a lot about them, when I went to the Cardiff UFO conference in about 1991, I saw a talk by Colin Andrews and I was surprised by it. I was quite shocked that this

subject seemed to be happening almost to order. Unlike UFOs, the evidence didn't disappear or dissipate. It was there for you to actually visit and go in.

Listening to these reports about how these things couldn't be made by humans and how strange they were, it did take my interest and I wanted to go and look at crop circles. So I went down to Wiltshire and started hanging around doing sky watches many nights of the week and on weekends and speaking to people and gathering as much information about the subject as I could. And eventually, I came to the conclusion that probably a lot more circles were being made by people than a lot of the well wishing believers were prepared to accept. So I started diverging off in a differing opinion. I couldn't understand how so many researchers could not realise this because the evidence was quite plain.

SM: Well, what was that evidence to you? The common response is that they are just so complicated, or many of them are, and that surely even a gang of men, even overnight, wouldn't have enough time to put all that together.

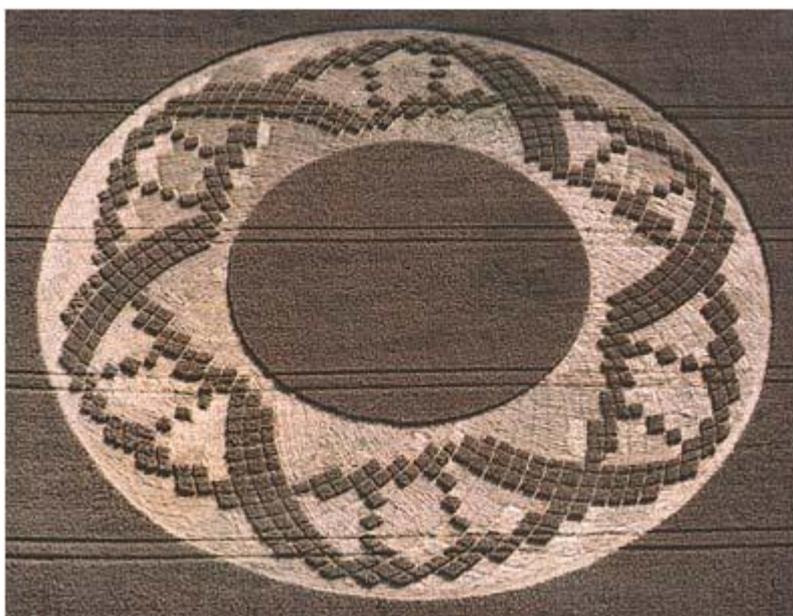
MW: That is the argument that has been put forward but I was meeting people who were, cagily at first, explaining to me exactly how it could be done and giving me graphic information about how you would achieve it and how it is achieved and who was responsible for certain things and the techniques involved, which aren't ridiculously complicated. And they achieve effects which mesmerised people and caused people to stop using their critical faculties, their brain, to analyse what they were looking at, and they just kind of go, "I don't need to analyse this because it's so wonderful and amazing and it couldn't be done by people so I'm not even going to bother to try and look". They would rather just sit there in the lotus position and soak up the energy than actually look at how it could be done. I was actually more interested in looking at how it could be done and I was hoping it wasn't people: I was really investing a lot of hope in it being something paranormal or extraterrestrial but couldn't really find it.

Coming down to a rational standpoint and looking at the evidence I had in front of me, looking at the information that was given to me by circle makers, I was being told by crop circle researchers that I would find certain effects in circles and that I would see unbroken stems and things like that. So it was very important for me to get into a crop circle very early on so that I would be one of the first people in to try and find that there was no damage and I was finding damage all over the place. In fact, there aren't any circles about really that don't contain stem/stalk damage but crop circle researchers will look for and pickup stems that don't have damage and will ignore the other 80% that do and hold that up as proof of what they are saying. When I point out to them that there is in fact lots of damage in a particular circle they will say, "Oh, well when were you in it? You must have come into it later on during the day after a lot of people had been in there trampling all over it." I then tell them that I have been in there since seven o'clock in the morning and no one else had been in it but they just won't have it and what I say couldn't be possible and that I obviously wasn't in there first.

I would have these arguments with people which were circular in themselves and I just couldn't get through to some of the researchers that I would find evidence that people had been in there – they just didn't want to see it. So I thought, well, okay, they are telling me that I'm wrong and they are telling me I am wrong because I wasn't the first person in. What's the ultimate way to be the first person in? It is to create one. If you create one, nobody can argue with you that you weren't the first person in. Then you keep that to yourself, you keep it secret and you then wait for them to be the first person in and you then ask them, "What do you think?" And if they say that there is no damage, you know that either they are making that up or that possibly they are not looking at it very well. That's the perspective I went into it with – a kind of experiment on the

researchers to see whether or not they could actually tell what was human made, which I knew to be human made because I had made it and also to see the circles made by others who I had no reason to disbelieve had made them as they certainly did know a lot about the subject and would tell me what I would find. Their stories always added up whereas the researcher's stories always had problems and would fall down in certain ways and you wouldn't find what they were telling you that you would find. Unfortunately, there was always more credibility in what the circle makers were telling me.

So I started to steer away from the researchers. In 1992 when I first started going down there, I was a believer and then I started to realise that it was people and I thought, "Well, I'm getting told that I am stupid for thinking this and that I'm an idiot. I know I'm not an idiot because I can investigate the case just as well as anybody else can and I'm finding it very different so I think that a belief system is going on here and there is dogma and people are spinning this in the way that they want to spin it." I thought the only way I could prove what I thought was to become a circle maker and finding out from that side.



So in tandem with my UFO research, I would be up on the hills watching the skies with other researchers and we would maybe see strange things and photograph them and share the experience. And there were times when I would be up there at night and it would be quiet and maybe nobody would notice me disappear and I would pop off with a couple of people and

make a crop circle. Eventually, this became a fanatical thing and I became much more interested in it because what had been simple circle stuff at the beginning had started to challenge me. Could I make a better design? Could I equal what the people who were doing really complicated designs were doing? Was I capable of doing that? Was it possible? Could this be done within the hours of darkness? So it became a personal challenge then to find out what I could do – could I make them to the same standards?

So I started to increase the team size of the people I would use and I would work on their teams and they would work on mine. I would get invited out and general trust would build up and even though I was a researcher, it became known that I was also a circle maker secretly on the side as well, so I could be trusted.

So eventually I got to learn that all the circles made down there, apart from a few, are made by people. And you know who they are, where they are going out, what time, you know who's on the team, you know how many people it took, and whether they encountered any problems and whether they managed to meet the expectations of their original design or whether they had to change it on the fly.

You get to hear all the stories and so crop circles stopped being a mystery for me, at least from the point of view of knowing the origins of crop circles.

But what started to become more interesting to me then was learning all the stories from circle makers about strange things that had happened to them whilst making circles. I had had a few things happen to me as well and they started to blend in to my interest in the UFO subject because what they were talking about was strange flashes of light in the sky, unusual light orbs, spheres and things like this. Also coincidences that would happen when they were making circles. Maybe they might be out making a design that somebody had predicted but they had not told anybody about it. I was getting all these stories and they started to match up with things that we were starting to have experiences with whilst we were out making circles. These were things I couldn't talk to anybody about because it was all secret. We were doing this as an experiment, not only to find out if we could do it but also to see what people would think of it and whether or not they would know the difference between what they believed to be extraterrestrial and what we were doing.

Plus, also, we were having our own strange experiences and there were also circle makers who were telling us the same things were happening to them and backed it all up.

SM: I know that one of the experiences you had was missing time. What else? You mentioned orbs.

MW: I went out one night on my own. I was sitting in the house on my own. I usually go out with a team of people, two minimum, generally three because you need somebody to hold a string at both ends and you need somebody to walk a line, so you need three people a lot of the time – it works out well. But I couldn't get anybody together that night – it was just too much short notice, so I was sitting in the house on my own and I had this urge to go and make a crop circle. I thought it was too late and I just couldn't do it and it wasn't going to happen. But I just got this overwhelming feeling, it was a very strange thing, I just got this feeling that I *must* do something and it's a driving "thing". Other circle makers have talked about this as well and I just felt I *had* to do it; I *must* go out that night and make a circle. I thought it was bloody stupid because I couldn't see how I could do it on my own.

Somebody told me that they used a tripod once and they weighted it down with a bag and that was just enough to hold the string for a short distance. As I thought about it further, I thought maybe I could actually do it in the end but that it was going to be awkward. I needed a design but it couldn't be too big because I couldn't work too far because pulling the tape would pull the tripod over. So I made a small six fold petal design which was quite simple. Six geometry. I don't know if you realise that if you do a radius of a circle and keep the radius measurement on your compass, that radius will measure six times around the outside of a circle perfectly. That means that with a very simple initial measurement which starts with your tripod in the centre of the circle to your outer radius that you inscribe, if you keep that measurement you can put six posts in very quickly around the edge and then you can inscribe inwards six times into that and then you get a petal shape.

So working with this number system, I went out and chose a field near Avebury. I walked into the field and I could hear somebody. When I picked my spot I could hear people nearby. This didn't frighten me because I knew how close you could get to people and not be discovered, as long as I wasn't whistling or speaking. The sound of crunching crop actually sounds very similar to wind passing through

trees or just wind rushing past your head, so it is actually disguised quite well. So I didn't have a problem working this close to people and the whole situation just felt right and it felt like I should be doing this.

SM: This was in the middle of the night?

MW: Yes. I get the vibe to carry on and continue. I did the circle and I could still hear the people nearby. It sounded like they were playing music as far as I was concerned. I thought I could hear a guitar and some chanting going on. There was the odd bit of laughter. I finished the circle and left and decided the next day to try and track down any one that might have heard or seen anything that night that might have been unusual because sometimes people do report that when a crop circle appears, they will see strange lights in the sky above where it has appeared although it will just be strange things like we've had weather affects and orbs. So I just wanted to know was there anybody in the area and see if I could find out who these people were who might have been nearby. I didn't have to look very far because I went into the pub and bear in mind that at this time, it wasn't known that I was a circle maker.

So I said to somebody, "What is this circle about in Avebury that I've heard about?" The guy said, "Oh yeah, yeah, it's really mad. Diane Krishna was up there with her friends and they were doing a meditation ceremony up there and it appeared really close to them. They were meditating on a sixfold design and then it appeared really close to them."

So I tracked down Diahann Krishna and said I had heard she was in the area and she confirmed the story. They had been meditating on this design and it appeared a couple of hundred feet away from them. That is just one of many examples I could give you of times when I and other circle makers have felt an urge to do a particular type of design and it's ended up either being very coincidental for us or for somebody else. Or two teams have maybe been working on a similar design in the same area and we haven't given details of this design to anyone else, it's been secret, so how did we all manage to converge on the same part of the countryside doing similar designs on the same night within a short distance of each other, unaware of each other's presence?

This is really the fascination I have with the crop circle subject. It marries really well together with an interest in the paranormal, telepathy and UFOs and just general strangeness. There is a genuine weirdness behind the making of crop circles. If people are misinterpreting them as being from somewhere else, maybe they are picking up on the vibe of what is out there in the same way that we are picking up on the vibe of what is out there to go and create something. Where does this the come from? Where does that idea come from? Is it projected from party A to party B or is it projected from an above intelligence down to both parties to actually think this thing or go out and do it? And this is what I'm interested in; finding out answers to that. That is why I have carried on my crop circle interest. I think I would've finished years ago if it wasn't for the fact that there is something in it that has kept on drawing us back. There is a fascination.

SM: Judging by the way you phrase that, I presume you haven't come to an answer that satisfies you yet.

MW: I couldn't decide really whether or not it was telepathy or whether we are getting spoken to by some other higher thing.

SM: There was a report about four or five months ago of this guy cycling past a field, and he saw this crop circle forming in front of him. I've seen film of an orb hovering above a field and a crop circle forming underneath it.

MW: You know where that came from, don't you? It was made up footage. I can absolutely 100% confirm that to you. The guy who did it worked for HTV. John Wade is his name and he lives in Bath, and his number is in the telephone book. He did it as a little stunt and he thought he could get a TV programme out of it where they say, "Hey, look what we have managed to pull off and get past people, and they think it's a real". But the program never came about and eventually he admitted to it, and has been interviewed on camera. He is a graphics expert; he works with video engine stuff for broadcast television, but it is actually a very poor piece of footage when you actually look at it. I'm into video editing myself and I've got pretty professional gear here which I use for analysis of UFOs and things. It is piss poor what he's done there, but it really is great footage if you don't know much about video. But it wasn't done to look like it was real video and it's easy to spot as a fake from that point of view.

SM: When we first started talking about crop circles, you said that the vast majority of them were made by men. By implication then, some, a small number, aren't.

MW: Well some, we don't know. I generally go on the basis that I know who is doing most of them because I know the people involved, and we often drop a hint to each other about what's going on. We are also able, as circle makers, to see when a circle is made by a person, very easily, because I have an eye for that. What may not impress us very much because we can spot it sometimes just goes straight past the noses of crop circle researchers who think, "Wow, that can't be done by people".

So often, though there are a few every year that come from sources that we don't know, you can still generally look at them and notice if it still has the hallmarks of a human made circle. There are very few every year that actually come into the category of what I would consider to be potentially unusual and they tend to be the simpler circles like swirl damage or the smaller things that don't have designs of patterns to them. Generally, I think you can say that if something has a complicated design element to it, that there must be an intelligence behind that. There has to be just more than plasma vortices then damage or lightning. There must be a hand involved; either an alien hand or a paranormal hand or human hand; it has to be one of those.

Really, the most sensible solution in most cases, if you know what you're looking at is to say it's a human hand. It's the stuff that just happens to look quite rough and that it might have appeared as a swirl or something similar; those are the types of things I'm interested in as possibly being the real crop circle phenomena because they don't have a design element. They are actually more abstract than the types of stuff that we are involved in which is actually quite geometrical and complicated.

"In his obsessive drive to persuade the world that crop formations are all man-made art, planker Matthew Williams recently set up his own live presentation at Devizes Town Hall. MARY BENNETT found his arguments seriously wanting..."
<http://www.swirlednews.com/article.asp?artID=431>

SM: Which one was it that brought the prosecution about? Which specific crop circle?

MW: I had been making them for a long time before the prosecution. It was many years down the line of me being a circle maker and making quite a lot of stuff out there.

SM: It seemed, from the sound of it, entirely a malicious prosecution. Malicious in the sense that "we just want to nail Matthew Williams".

Man fined £100 for making crop circle

<http://archive.thisiswiltshire.co.uk/2000/11/7/231902.html>

MW: I took umbrage with Michael Glickman's pointed statements that these things couldn't be created by people. So I thought I would try and help him understand that these things can be made by people. I will approach him I thought and offer him the opportunity to see us making these things. We will do it in an environment where he won't be able to say, "No, no, no, I can tell the difference". Because what we will do is provide him with a circle where we tell him we've made it and then we will also implant one into the many circles that appear during the summer, and we won't tell him that we've made that one, and we will allow him to make his conclusions, and later on all will be revealed. As a balance, he wouldn't be able to say that one is crap and can't possibly be regarded as the same sort of material that aliens were making. Later on in the season after he may have offered an opinion on this circle that it was a brilliant alien effort and that it couldn't have been done by people, we would then show him the evidence that we did it.



Professor/Master Geometer Michael Glickman

I tried approaching him, he wasn't interested in taking part in any experimentation or any demonstrations; he didn't want any contact with circle makers whatsoever and he was quite close minded it seemed to me. This was a bit frustrating because from a research point of view I thought this wasn't really benefiting crop circle research.

So I looked at it from another way. I had a man here who calls himself a professor and is using this title to strengthen his case that these things cannot be made by people and is appearing on television and radio and in magazines and news sources using all his might as a professor to make these claims. I know that he is wrong. I know he is wrong because of my position as circle maker and I feel he is actually cheating the public by taking this position forward, and he is not prepared to look at any other arguments. So he is not a scientific person by definition because he will not look at anything that actually sways the argument against his theories. I felt I had to do something to stop him going out and doing this. He wouldn't cooperate with me so what I thought I needed to do was to get a third party involved and provide information to the third party which will show what we're talking about, and then act as a judge and let them observe what Michael's interpretations are over the period of time where we do this. One ideal person I thought to do this would be radio

show host Whitley Streiber because he had Michael Glickman on his show quite regularly speaking about the crop circles subject.

So I approached him and said, "If you have got a guest on your show who really is getting it badly wrong and is misrepresenting the state of play to an American audience of however many hundreds of thousands and it is unfair to your public to be receiving this information, would you be interested in an experiment which would help to actually balance this out so that you know where your guest is coming from?" And he said yes, he would be very interested in it and that he would keep it secret.

My intention, and I explained this quite clearly, was not to make it an embarrassment or an expose but I wanted him to be an impartial judge so that we could say to Michael, "We asked you nicely to look at what we were saying and you wouldn't listen. Now we have got Whitley to act as a judge; will you now accept an opportunity to come out and look at what we are saying because we are as interested in the paranormal side of this subject as much as anybody else. We think there is a lot going on that needs to be investigated that you and many others are not prepared to listen to us because you think that circle makers are just complete and utter bastards and should be locked up and are scum bags".



Whitley

Streiber asked me to provide him with details of a circle I was going to make and said that we would wait to see what Michael thought of it, and then we can take it forward from there. I said that was fine and so I provided him with the details of a crop circle I was going to make and he was meant to keep this a secret for a specific length of time until the experiment was fully finished. He just went straight to Michael Glickman and told him that we were "out to get him" and that he should be aware that the circle makers were trying to shit on him and therefore, don't listen to anything that we have got to say and that this particular circle was definitely man made. So he tipped him off.

As Michael thought we weren't being very nice to him, he decided to get the police involved and see what they had got to say about this. He contacted the farmer. The farmer who's field I was going to work in had been sympathetic to crop circles appearing there, and he used to put his son on the gate and make a lot of money from charging people to go into the field. I didn't realise that he had sold the farm about a month and a half before I made the circle. So the guy had come in and he had never had crop circles on his land before. Glickman rings him up and asks him if he knew anything about it and whether he had given me permission? The guy said that he hadn't given anybody permission to do it. So Glickman suggested he ring the police and tell them that I had done this and that they had absolute evidence that I had done this because I had provided a diagram to somebody in advance. Michael Maude was the farmer's name.

The police are rung; they speak to Maude and then come round to my house at nine o'clock in the morning with 16 police officers. They turned the place over and arrested me. They asked me if I created the crop circle and I tell them yes as I didn't feel I could actually deny it at that the point as I had provided pretty good evidence to Whitley Streiber that I had done this, so what was the point? In certain situations I seem able to think fairly quickly on my feet and I thought that if Glickman was stupid enough to think that he could convince the world that crop circles are made by aliens by getting me arrested, then fucking arrest me. The police seemed surprised that I didn't deny it. I said to them that obviously

Glickman or Streiber were involved in it and they replied that they couldn't comment but that I wasn't far wrong.

They took me away and processed me, and everything came to a head. Glickman then turns around and tells all his followers and acolytes that he had nothing to do with the arrest of Matthew Williams, nothing to do with it at all. Later, I get the full written statement from the police, in black and white, and it's signed by Michael Glickman. I get a copy of it from my solicitor and then when this surfaces later, Glickman simply reverses his statement and then starts telling people that he was really pleased to have been involved in the arrest of Matthew Williams, and that he was proud of it. I thought this guy can change his colours like he changes his bloody shorts.

I thought it was outrageous so I did a little bit of digging. He said he had worked as an architecture professor for UCS, and so I rang them and asked to speak to the architecture department. I was put through to a woman called Carol Gustin and I described to her who I was and told her I was just trying to validate the professional credentials of Michael Glickman who claims he was a professor at your university. She said that she seemed to remember him from a while back and that he gave a couple of lectures there once but he wasn't a professor. I asked if somebody would be able to call themselves a professor if they were actually just giving a couple of lectures. She said that he was kind of professing but he wasn't actually a professor. He would have had to have been on our staff and retained as a professor.

I took this back to the crop circle community and it caused absolute uproar, as you can imagine. The follow-up to this was that he then stopped calling himself a professor and now calls himself Master Geometer Michael Glickman, so it obviously had some effect on him even though he still says that he was a professor but chooses not to use the title. I thought the term "Master" was a title given to you by others and that you couldn't go round giving yourself the title of a Master.

So yet again, we have questions about people active in the crop circle community who uses very big titles to validate their research. Another one that came to mind was Dr. W.C. Levengood. It's ridiculous really. He goes around calling himself Doctor, a biophysicist. Well, it turns out that he's not a doctor. He believes he's a doctor because he was given an honorary title by the American Academy of Sciences, which is a national body. He was given an honorary title because of his work as a biophysicist i.e. he has got a degree level standard of knowledge and he works on his own in that field, so he is open to consultation, but he is not a doctor. Now he claims that his honorary title is equivalent to a doctorate. There are a lot of these people around in the crop circle subject who are very, very high faluting and you can't challenge them because they are experts of great repute!

I've got to say I do believe in the crop circles, I really do believe in the weird and paranormal aspects of them but I think the charlatans are not the crop circle makers. The bloody charlatans, half the time, are these crop circle researchers who go around telling people things on the basis of their so-called expert status and they are not really experts at all. They are just like you or me.

SM: When the 16 police officers turned up on your door, they confiscated your hard drive as well, didn't they? They kept it for ages and ages.

MW: Yes they did and they broke the PC and the hard drive, the video and sound cards, and basically blew the bloody machine to bits. Eventually I got it back

after much goading and taunting by the police, which I found a real eye opener. They would ring me and tell me that they had some really good news for me about my PC and that I should come to the police station. So I go down to the police station and trot in, relieved to be finally getting it back only to be told that there was in fact no news on the PC but that I could have this summons instead. Fucking wankers. And they kept on doing stuff like that to me so I got a bit pissed off with it all. Eventually, when I did get the PC back, it was all broken and I took it to a local computer store and asked them to tell me how the machine had been broken. They said it looked like somebody had applied voltage to the motherboard and that the hard drive had probably been dropped on the floor. They said it wasn't normal for the whole thing to go like that and that it had been systematically smashed.

So I took the report that the computer shop had given me to the police and asked them why they had done it. They said that they had wanted the computer initially to look into whether or not I was making crop circles but I had admitted to them from day one that I had been doing that and I had shown them my diagrams. I told them that I wanted reimbursement but they said they weren't going to pay me a penny because the machine broke due to fair wear and tear.

So I instigated court proceedings against them and before it was due to go to court, they capitulated and came up very quickly with a cheque.

SM: So there was certainly an element of maliciousness on their part.

MW: Oh yes.

SM: Do you think all this was tied in with the observation of you by Special Branch?

MW: Yes, I do. It was very much in my mind that, upon an opportunity, someone would get into my premises and do something like plant a bug or check on me in some way and having worked in Customs and Excise and knowing the procedures and systems that are in place, if somebody's name comes up on the computer system and is searched on the PNC or whatever, then alarm bells will ring in all sorts of government departments that you wouldn't think. So a police officer could pull me over in a car and do a name or number check and within 20 seconds, headquarters for Customs and Exercise in London would be aware of this because I was an officer and I would be known to them. Special Branch would be aware because I am known to them for hanging around Rudloe Manor. MI5 would probably know about it because I am on their files as a subversive that they may be looking into. They can very quickly get on the phone and speak to whoever has requested this information. The police officer won't be aware, when he gets the call back, of anything untoward going on but a call can be made and then further requests can be made of an officer to actually detain a person or to do a search of their vehicle and actually start asking more questions than he normally would. This is routine and it does go on, so I knew this was the case.

So when I would get stopped at Rudloe Manor and questioned, I knew that this would probably somehow filter back down to my bosses at work. And I did start to get shit for this. I got pressure put on me at work and I was getting loads of grief and things happening, and eventually I got kicked out of Customs and Excise on really bogus departmental charges. They said that I had hacked the departmental computer system. What I had actually done, on their request, was to design a database which I had been working on for months, with supervision from my boss who was given permission to do it by his boss, who had been asked for an allowance to do it by the IT department. I completed the project and

everybody was using my database. And then they pulled me up and told me that they had to take my ID off me and put me on suspension. When I asked why, I was told it was because I had put an icon on my desktop. It was an icon to access the database but I was told that I couldn't do that and that it was a breach of security. They wouldn't listen. You know the score; you can read between the lines of what was going on. They didn't like what I was up to outside the department and it came down from on high, "Get this bastard out and do it anyway you can". They kept insisting that they had never given me permission to put the icon on the desktop. That was it; end of career in Customs and Excise.

SM: Did you ever have trouble getting into the States or other countries?

MW: No.

SM: So there was never a problem with that. It didn't follow you.....

MW: I never admitted to a criminal record when I signed the Visa waiver.

SM: Were you aware that you were being watched by Special Branch?

MW: No. But there was a time, when we first started looking into Rudloe Manor, me and Paul, and we were doing our magazine *Truth Seekers Review*, and we were aware once a being watched from a car which was parked in his housing estate at a distance. Paul alerted me to it. He noticed the guy had been sitting there in a vehicle for a while and he kept looking up at the house. I peaked around the corner of the window and saw the man too. We were working on the magazine which contained conspiracy stuff and bits and pieces and Paul decided to go and get the camera and take a picture of him.

So we took a few photos of the guy and figured that if we stepped outside with the camera and the guy reacted, then we would know for sure he had been watching us. Eventually, he looked up again from his newspaper, saw us with the camera, smiled, started the vehicle up and drove off with a funny expression on his face. We wondered what the hell that was all about.

So we were watched on that occasion. I would imagine that it would be routine for people who were doing that sort of thing to listen in on telephone calls but I wouldn't imagine you would be able to detect it.

Also, there was an incident where I was coming across the Severn Bridge. Now this situation was very suss. I had been followed for a long way past Bristol by a police car. I went all the way over the Severn Bridge into Wales and as I slowed down, they slowed down also, at a distance. They were way back but I could see them. As I sped up, they too sped up to keep pace. So I decided to pull off at the next services and pull up by the pumps, get out of the car, sit on the bonnet with my arms folded and wait. The police car comes straight in, straight up to me; he jumped out with his notebook in his hand and asks me where I was going? In reply, I asked him why he had been following me all the way from Bristol. He replied that he didn't know what I was on about. The fact that I was sitting on the bonnet on my car waiting for him to approach me seemed to be irrelevant. Again he replied that he didn't know what I was on about and asked me for my name. From this point onwards, it became, "Fuck you is my name, Mr Fucking Piggy. Fuck you".

I got arrested because I refused to give him any details. They alleged that I wasn't wearing my seatbelt! I took it to the Crown Court and lost. The judge said to me, "Why would they lie?" Indeed, why would they?

SM: So they have had lots of "goes" at you.

MW: Oh yes. They have had me a few times for various things, but I just think, "Fuck off". It's been very petty. What they are basically saying is, if we want to get you, we will get you and there is nothing you can do about it. But it isn't going to make any difference to me. They are going to have to do something a bit bigger than get me for not wearing a seatbelt to frighten me.

SM: Do you think that currently, you are still of interest?

MW: I don't know. I hope not but I don't know. I don't care either. If they come here in the middle of the night and tried to get me, I will try to defend myself but if I end up dead or something weird happens to me, then I guess a lot of people will work out what happened.

SM: I think if they had wanted to do that, that might well have happened already.

MW: It tends to happen to people like those poor bastards working on missile projects at Marconi and who ended up all jumping off the Clifton Bridge somewhat mysteriously.

SM: That seems to have stopped now but that was weird.

MW: Yes, very strange stuff but I think you have got to be somebody or know something that is really a serious threat before you become a target for getting bumped off. I'm not important enough. It might have happened in the States. There was that very strange case of Philip Schneider. His widow has sent me a load of paperwork, and it was a very bizarre case, just how somebody can tie their hands behind their back and then strangle themselves with a rubber hose. How do you do that?



Philip Schneider

SM: In terms of a public profile, you have kept a fairly low one over the last few years. Any particular reason?

MW: People have asked me to give lectures and so on. I think the amount of interest in me as a UFO researcher has gone down because a lot of people have associated me with the crop circle subject, and because a lot of bad information which has been circulated about me by researchers who say, "You don't want to believe him, he's just a government agent, he's just trying to tell everybody that the crop circles

are made by people so that you don't believe in the wonderfulness of the aliens making them any more". A lot of people go okay, that sounds plausible and so my popularity in certain fields has gone down.

Then again, I haven't really been out doing much of my stuff because *UFO Reality Magazine* went bust and I was quite friendly with them. Then *Alien Encounters* magazine shut down and I was quite friendly with them also. Although I worked as a consultant for *UFO Magazine* and they used to use a lot of my photos, unfortunately when Birdsall died it all went to shit. There's not much of an outlet really for my work.

I was quite saddened really as well because even though I knew Graham and worked as a consultant for him, he didn't believe me in relation to the crop circles. He wouldn't have it and he was actually quite nasty to some people that I had taken on board to prove a point that we were making about the crop circles such as Ron Russell and Simeon Hine. You mentioned earlier missing time episodes in crop circles; well Simeon Hine came out with us one evening. We do an oration before making a crop circle to try and instil some energy and to get something going, so we stand there and say something like, "Whatever intelligence is out there, please give us good guidance in the making of the circle. We hope it is for the good and we hope that people experience good from it. Please give us any protection we need and thanks very much". Sometimes we finish it off in different ways. On this particular night with Simeon, we asked if it was possible if anybody out there could give Simeon an interesting experience because he wanted to see if we are telling the truth about the paranormal and crop circles. Then we had this strange time thing which has been documented.

Ron Russell, who is a friend of his - he used to bring people over on tours and show them around the crop circles and while he was doing that, that would help fund his research - he would take out electromagnetic meters and measure the crop circles and he believed that if you had a high reading on this equipment, it would prove the crop circle was genuine. Ron seemed like a nice guy so I invited him to come out with us, providing he didn't shit on us like Mr Glickman. He agreed so we made him a circle and he measured it and he said, "I've got to say, it's got the highest reading of any circle I've ever gone into. So what the fuck does this mean? Now I have got to re-evaluate what I believe about what I've been telling people over all these years; that the higher the reading you have, the more likely it is to be unusual. I have got to go and rethink this thing. You guys are really freaking me out. What the hell am I going to do?" I suggested that he tell it like it is.



Graham Birdsall

So he did start telling people how it is and so did Simeon Hine and because they started telling it that way, they got shat on too. The two of them got accused of being government agents, just like me! Next thing you know, bloody Graham Birdsall turns round and starts mimicking this bollocks thing about everybody being government agents, me, Ron Russell etc. He comes out in his own

magazine as saying how he remembers Ron Russell going round in the United States with a hat asking for money for crop circle research because he was going to buy a plane. Then Graham claimed that the money disappeared and that's Ron Russell for you! I contacted Ron and told him what had been said. He said that Graham had got his facts entirely wrong. The money had been handed over to a Las Vegas conference organiser who apparently was very good friends with Graham. The money was actually spent to buy an aircraft but they didn't realise that buying an aircraft in eastern England meant it was going to take about 1 1/2 to two hours to fly to over to where the crop circles were. They bought the aircraft over the Internet, thinking it was going to be a great idea but didn't realise that they had bought part of shares in an aircraft that wasn't going to be flyable from where they thought. So as this article appeared, they were actually in the process of selling the share in the aircraft so they could buy another one that was closer to the crop circle area down here.



Ron Russell

I phoned up Graham and suggested to him that he should have checked with me before he wrote this as he knew I was into crop circles rather heavily. He was writing about Ron, who he didn't know very well, and explained to him who had held the money. I suggested that he printed a retraction. He did print a retraction but still added that he didn't like Ron Russell and that all crop circle researchers were untrustworthy. I felt that Graham couldn't print rubbish like that if he was trying to present himself as a credible magazine editor. God bless him and I was very sad to see him go but on the crop circle subject, he didn't come to me and he didn't ask me for any

information on crop circles, and he printed lots of stories by crazies in his magazine, and I was supposed to be friends with him.

In closing, can I just mention the following very quickly, because this hasn't been published enough. There is a guy called Stewart Rixon. He did live in Devizes but I think he might now live in Marlborough. He came to town and set himself up with a magazine called *Truthseekers*. A lot of people started thinking that was me and started subscribing to the mag. It had some very similar articles to things that had appeared in our magazine. People were asking him if he was *Truth Seekers* and he was saying in reply, "Yes, I am *Truth Seekers*". He basically came along and took the name.

I contacted him and asked him if he thought it was fair that he took the name I had been using particularly when you consider that I lived in the same town as him. I asked him if he could call it something slightly different or, if not, then to put a little disclaimer somewhere in his magazine saying that he was not associated with *Truth Seekers Review* and Matthew Williams. His response was, "No, no, you're a government agent". He wouldn't in any way comply. I bumped into him in Safeway's and asked him why he was doing this? He told me to get away from him because I was a government agent! Okay, so he doesn't want to speak to me but I would like to mention that I am in no way connected with Stuart Rixon and *Truthseekers* magazine. It's not the magazine we used to produce and I would like people to know this because I think he is taking my name in vain a little bit and steering people off in a different direction. That's

okay, that's fair enough but I just think that people are a little bit confused as to what is going on, because I live in the same town.

SM: I think you're taking it a lot more calmly than I would, frankly. Matthew, my thanks.

Matthew's web site is at <http://www.truthseekers.freeseve.co.uk/>



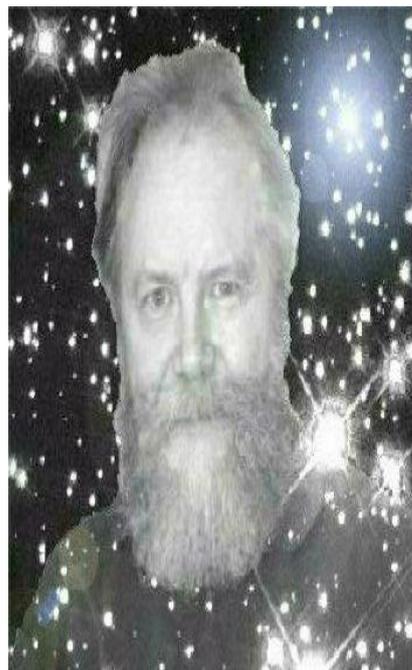
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SEPARATED AT BIRTH # 2

By Crass Parr



BRIAN BLESSED MAD THESPIAN LEGEND



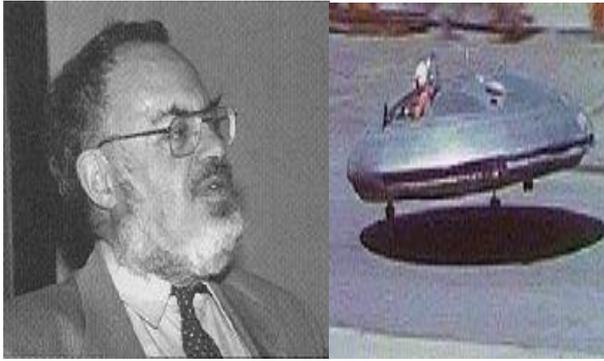
ALFRED LEHMBERG MAD UFOLOGICAL LEGEND



NEIL BURNSIDE MI6 THE SANDBAGGERS



STUART MILLER EDITOR & SAD BLOGGER



STAN THE MAN FUSED WITH THE PROTOTYPE AVROCAR



DAVROS from Dr WHO



GEORGE KNAPP UFOLOGICAL TV JOKER



JEREMY BEADLE SAD ITV JOKER



JEDI GOLFING

Wendy Connors' Night Journeys in Ufology: 1974-1977 Case Recordings, National UFO Reporting Center (Seattle WA), Vol 01

Copyright 2006 (May) by Wendy A. Connors

Total running time just over 44 hours, with 252 tracks, digital print guide, mp3 format

Available from <http://www.fadeddiscs.com>

Reviewed by Robert Barrow (courtesy UFO UpDates)

At first, the Piper Cherokee pilot sounds hesitant about describing his experience high over Colorado skies. But he trusts the interviewer enough to begin opening up and, as the recorded phone conversation from 1977 continues, he describes in detail the huge, seemingly metallic, elongated spherical object he encountered during an otherwise routine flight. Approximately the size of a DC-3, the UFO paced his aircraft and approached the pilot's right wing, forcing him to instantly bank hard to avoid a collision. How close did the thing get, asks interviewer Robert Gribble? Without skipping a beat, the pilot firmly responds, "TOO damned close!" Indeed, the mysterious object with a stainless steel-like texture closed in to a very uncomfortable distance of only 50 feet from that vulnerable right wing. An FAA representative, also interviewed about the case on the recording, expresses bewilderment and curiosity about what the pilot saw, but doesn't doubt his story. . .

With this, her most ambitious and gigantic compilation (44 incredible hours) to date, Wendy Connors has produced the ultimate UFO-related audio documentary, and if the listener doesn't come away from a thorough audition of this disc convinced that UFOs are absolutely real, and perhaps deadly serious business, then the listener may require either a generous brain transplant or relocation to a TV sitcom, where evidence of something strange never interferes with the all-is-normal fantasies upon which some of us construct our daily lives.

Sing the praises of UFO-related films and videos all you want, but never dismiss the importance of audio. There's something about the recorded voice, disembodied from a visualized talking head. Often the raw, unadulterated self-narrative of one's UFO experience reinforces the incident's integrity, and frequently voice inflections and choice of words can betray a hoax or delusion. But make no mistake, sounds hold our attention as we use our minds in an attempt to comprehend the unseen, if not the unknown.

In this remarkable collection you won't find gaggles of stuffy scientists postulating what UFOs are or are not. Instead, refreshingly, here are folks from every walk of life reporting their UFO experiences in disturbing detail, sometimes right after they occur, and sometimes as they happen in real-time - witnesses in denial or scared out of their wits, or people who simply seek an explanation following the most bizarre event their lives will ever know. The depth of military and government agency involvement or cooperation evidenced in these telephone recordings, it must be noted, simply astounds.

Connors' most recent work for her Faded Discs project involves putting into digital format hundreds of hours of phoned-in UFO reports obtained from Robert Gribble's National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, a service Gribble operated for twenty years, gaining credible UFO reports from all over the world until 1994, when Peter Davenport took over the data collection responsibility. Gribble, a UFO researcher since 1955, and his associates had conducted on-site investigations and interviews where necessary and amassed literally a wealth of tape-recorded (reel-to-reel and audiocassette) UFO documentation just from phone conversations. However, the world was nearly denied access to this monumental historical exercise:

"Robert Gribble was going to toss out his materials," Wendy Connors relates, "but then decided I might find them useful. I did, and what we are listening to is his gift to the UFO community. We all owe him a great deal of gratitude."

Connors describes Gribble as a treasure: "I listen to every single call he received and select what I feel is the best to put on the compilations. I also include a few reports that offer a balance to show that some sightings, although mundane, can affect people - and to show that people are more honest than not about describing what they saw. I can only remember three recordings I thought were suspect, so far.

"I really worked hard to be selective enough to zero in on the better reports and cover such areas as pilot cases, UFOs near water, triangles, radar/visual incidents, abductions and close encounters of the third kind. Also, and most important," Connors advises, "I wanted to provide human interest cases profiling that people of all types not only see UFOs, but are intelligent and reliable, even if they are only goat farmers. I hope I succeeded."

And succeed Wendy Connors does with this new entry. She knows how to pick the audio essentials, just as she did with her contributions to the late Peter Jennings' UFO documentary on ABC-TV. The program had its detractors, but in this reviewer's opinion the montage of UFO witness audios that opened the report - some of them provided by Connors, earning her a place in the end credits - gave the show a powerful start.

So - just how does one review this 44-hour colossus? Maybe it's best to start at the end, because the beginning, like most of the entries here which cover the years 1974 to 1977, takes care of itself.

Skipping far ahead to track 242, an intriguing, if not amazing, report from 1977, nearly 20 minutes long, demands our jaw-dropping attention as Gribble interviews a Naval Intelligence pilot. Having just flown a reconnaissance mission at 60,000 feet for the Central Intelligence Agency somewhere between Tokyo and Hawaii at night, he encountered a large triangular craft. Pacing his F4-11 Phantom for almost a half hour, the thing appeared dark with no lights or outward signs of propulsion equipment.

One detail raising an eyebrow with Wendy Connors was the revelation in the pilot's narrative that the object exhibited a surface appearance like foam rubber. "Track 242 is a 'barn-burner' event," she emphasizes. "A few tracks earlier on this disc is another description of a triangle with a foam rubber-like surface texture. This certainly offers some additional data on the black triangles. I've never read of this before."

Speeding ahead in excess of Mach 2.2, the F4-11 Phantom's bizarre visitor easily remained within 50 feet of the left wing.

Sporting the most advanced technology available at the time, the Navy pilot utilized all the aircraft equipment he could in an attempt to identify the bogey, including turning on a powerful light and aiming it toward the object - which continued to evidence itself as a solid craft.

"This (object) had no effort at all in keeping up with me," the pilot informs Gribble. . .it defied all the laws of aerodynamics. There was no reason for it to fly."

When the UFO eventually sped away, "It took it less than ten seconds to get out of radar range - less than ten seconds to go 150 miles." The pilot acknowledges that the UFO became a momentary "speck" on his radar before it disappeared, and by the time he consumed another three seconds to flip the radar detection to a 500 mile range, the thing had already absconded at a tremendous speed, leaving no trace. The pilot's response to Gribble's question about how solid the radar return appeared was simply: "Perfect." Missile sensors and detection equipment aboard the F4-11 indicated no evidence of heat or thrust from the mysterious flight companion.

Throughout the interview, the pilot reflects integrity and intricate knowledge of his field, and doesn't hesitate to offer Gribble names and addresses to contact, to the extent that he can after his honest and puzzled description of the experience. (A footnote here: Many reports of triangular craft are sprinkled throughout this project.)

Connors' latest disc isn't for those who prefer to swallow, toothpicks and all, the latest popular UFO explanation - "plasmas" - or for those impressed with the amusing concoction of "sleep paralysis" by hopelessly uninformed Ph.D. voodoo chefs. Truly, as we explore this collection, each time we read in the track-by-track print guide that a particular case involves a "possible abduction" our skin crawls as a witness describes the ideal circumstances for an abduction, frighteningly unaware of the personal implications. And no, these folks aren't snugly tucked into bed, waiting for a (sigh. . .) sleep incident to be conjured up.

In this regard, the compilation includes such witnesses as a no-nonsense trucker in Montana whose tanker truck engine was apparently disabled by a disc-shaped UFO, temporarily stopping his watch in the process. Was there an abduction during this, his second recent UFO encounter?

Indeed, eight entries alone concern early reports of the 1975 Travis Walton abduction in Arizona, some called in by people who know Walton and the other young men involved.

Another weird incident involves a pregnant woman in New Mexico, driving a car with her young son aboard, who is unpleasantly surprised when a large blue object touches down in front of her truck and then returns to the sky. This incident involves vehicle electrical interference, perhaps a huge chunk of missing time and a possible abduction. "I don't remember, you know, seeing it leave or anything," she advises Robert Gribble, who has a knack for listening sympathetically. "I just remember looking at the (highway) car lights that were coming towards me, and it was more like I was in a daze or something." Following the encounter, her son frequently speaks of the lights they saw.

The first 18 tracks on the disc are what Connors labels Anatomy of a UFO investigation, effectively laying out both the chaos and solid research involved in 1975 when strange activities occurred over the U.S. Pacific Northwest. Was a UFO involved? A missile? A meteor or electrical phenomena? How did one object seen

falling from the sky become five? Was there a crash and then a crater? Follow the phone calls and judge for yourself.

Faced with 252 tracks, it's impossible to attempt covering the abundance of wonderful mysteries available here. Yes, UFOs abound, and there's also a little Bigfoot, a trace of horrible animal mutilations and a genuine passport to the world of the unknown. One hardly knows what to make of a sergeant from Malstrom AFB when he and four friends report a confrontation with a "hideous" 15 feet-tall hairy creature that charges them after they fire a warning shot in the woods. But UFOs always take center stage at the National UFO Reporting Center, and Wendy Connors' personal selection process assures that each entry here is worthwhile, credible and often adorned with exciting and/or highly bizarre qualities. A reading of the print guide itself would make one eager to spend 44 hours with this audio document.

One caller, formerly a cadet pilot at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas in 1954, relates a story of a UFO landing 30 feet from his group, only to zip away vertically when confronted. A retired Air Force pilot almost sounds annoyed when he calls to report his car being followed by a large gray object accompanied by several smaller objects, and as is the case with many witnesses on this disc, he first made an official report to a government agency which referred him to Gribble's organization - a tribute to NUFORC's relationship with the military and police at several levels all over the country.

A Utah man relates how an object chasing his car causes a tingling in his neck and extreme electrical interference as the alternator, gauges and "everything went crazy." Numerous UFO-auto encounters are featured on the disc, as are UFO-aircraft incidents, and many cases involve multiple witnesses of good to excellent caliber. A brief but highly curious event reported by a private pilot in California involves three arrow-shaped objects flying in formation and disappearing at high speed. In Washington, an egg-shaped UFO maneuvers around a police helicopter, affecting the instruments.

Among other disc tracks is the case of children at a California school who watch a Saturn-like UFO hover over their school, accompanied by a massive vibration in the area. During one of many triangle reports included here, two police officers observe such an object with red and blue lights within 60 feet, hovering near a power generation plant, and it departs at high speed.

You say you're looking for the really, really unusual stuff? How about an incident where two green objects pace a car and gently lift it off and then back onto the road? And for those who pray every night that every troublesome debunker and hardline skeptic in the world will one day have that special UFO experience, track 212 features nothing less than a formerly doubting physicist who observes four objects on a horizontal flight path. "I sat there in a state of shock for about five minutes, because I had never believed in these things before," he confesses to Gribble, "but this is something that I've never seen before and that I can't explain.

Connors readily points out that the witness "is flummoxed by the sighting, as he didn't believe in UFOs - a perfect illustration of the phenomenon's effect on the scientific mind set when confronted with the reality of it."

Nomination for a very creepy award would be track 224, in which three young people in the state of Washington experience a close encounter of the third kind. This UFO makes noise, chases their car, lands and leaves, but not without causing electrical problems and physical effects on the passengers. Of considerable

interest is what may have been a UFO occupant crossing the road in front of their car. "It looked like a tree was crossing the road," admits the caller, confessing his fear amidst nervous laughter. "In other words," Gribble asks about the entire event, "you were pretty scared?" The young witness replies, "Petrified."

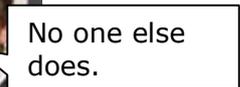
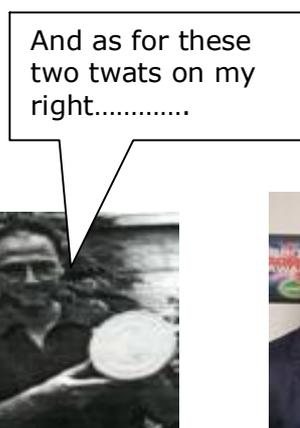
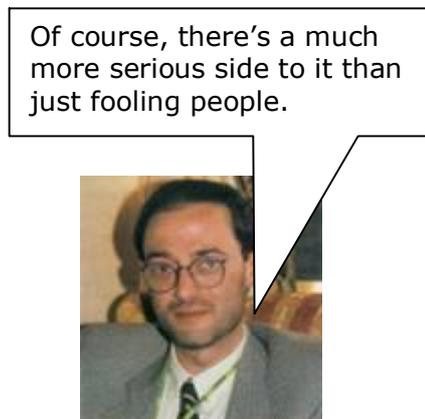
Finally, though the disc surface has barely been scratched in this review, there's a 25-minute section that absolutely must not be ignored, a UFO incident capturing the attention of at least four separate Midwestern U.S. radar facilities. From December 17, 1977 we hear an enigma in progress as Gribble attempts to sort out the status of two objects flying at supersonic speed, tracked on radar. During this ufological roller-coaster ride, the UFOs actually chase an Air Force plane, reverse course and, incredibly, may have caused equipment failure at both the Ellsworth AFB RAPCON unit and the South Dakota Weather Station. At one point, an Air Force tech sergeant tells Gribble, "Just a few minutes ago, right after we started tracking these things, we completely lost all of our radar equipment." After some checking with equipment maintenance people, Gribble is further advised: "Our radar has completely quit on us and we cannot find out the reason why." And as if things aren't already peculiar enough - maintenance men at one facility discover the external radar antenna inexplicably bent over and disabled, even though the area winds aren't blowing much in excess of 30 m.p.h.

Dramatic UFO encounters are more the rule than the exception with this disc, but even after Connors stuffs our ears and minds with hours of truly disturbing UFO evidence via the Gribble collection, she includes at the end a "Supplemental Recordings" section, a half dozen miscellaneous selections from the NUFORC recordings archive.

Is there anything wrong with this compilation? Yes. We have no way of following up on most of these cases to learn their eventual status, and we can thank the passage of time for that. We suspect, however, that most of the incidents described remain mysteries, and the faceless voices telling us of their encounters seem no less credible and puzzled now than they originally did almost 30 years ago. Without the intervention and digital audio magic performed by Ms. Connors, these remarkable recordings may have become merely something for the morning garbage truck to pick up, haul to a landfill and destroy forever. That, dear reader may be the scariest thought of all.



Alien Autopsy Footage Apparently Not Real!! Cripes!



Condign Report;

Well we had to, didn't we.

Interview with Joe McGonagle



The Condign report itself can be found and downloaded at:

<http://tinyurl.com/kqll2>

The Fab Four's own web site, where all sorts of background, comment and other material related to Condign and indeed other Ufological material can be found at

<http://www.uk-ufo.org/>

Some references to clarify the interview; DAS used to be Air Secretariat 2A, the desk in the UK Ministry of Defence that was manned by Nick Pope. This was the public contact point when reporting a UFO sighting and is now generally considered to be the MoD's "UFO Shop Window". DI55 are an upper intelligence unit within the MoD, highly secretive and whom it was long believed, correctly, received the better and more interesting UFO reports.

SM: How long before the report was published did you get to see a copy?

JM: I didn't get to see a copy until the Wednesday before publication; was it the 8th? No, that can't be right; was it the third or the fourth may be.

SM: Was it a printed copy?

JM: I saw a copied copy which Dave Clarke had copied for me. What happened was, on the 28th of April, Dave had already been told by the MoD that they were

going to post it out on the Friday. He said that he was going to be in London on that Friday so he would come in and pick it up. So he got his copy by hand on that Friday.

SM: Do you know if it is going to be published in hard copy?

JM: I doubt it very much. As it's something like 450 pages long, the expense involved in doing that is going to be prohibitive.

SM: So somebody in the MoD has basically just run it off on a printer?

JM: Yep. Actually, a bit more than 450 pages because this thing has been going on from roundabout August of last year. We knew the existence of the report back then.

SM: When did you first become involved with it? At what point?

JM: It's very difficult to explain. There were a series of FOIA requests that Dave, me, Gary, and Andy were working on together. We got some documents in, I think, of June last year which indicated that there was something.

SM: As I recall from the Executive Summary, am I right in thinking that the first suspicion that there was something going on was when Dave Clarke read in a letter from DAS that DI55 were no longer taking UFO reports?

JM: That was in a newspaper, I can't remember which one now, but I actually picked up on the same thing myself and I wrote to the MoD in about 2001 asking on what basis they had decided to do this. The reply was very, very off and just said that after so many years, they haven't found anything of any intelligence significance and decided that they didn't want any more reports. But they didn't mention Condign or a report or anything like that, because they didn't know about it.

SM: Somebody else said that the whole thing had emerged because the word "Condign" by mistake was put in a reply in writing to somebody.

JM: I don't think so, no. There was a request for documents from a DI55 policy file and amongst them, it mentioned that there had been a discussion between what is now DAS and DI55. DI55 basically said that they had been saying for years that there was no defence significance but that they couldn't really be sure of that because they had never done a study. But DAS said that they didn't want to do a study. DI55 kept pushing it and eventually said, "Stuff you. We are going to create a database and we are going to produce a report."

SM: DAS didn't want to do a study because that would give credibility to a subject that they have always knocked back?

JM: Yes. The thing that came out was that from a PR perspective, they didn't want to display any interest in UFO's so they didn't want word of the study to get out. Also, the author is known to the media and he didn't want his identity connected with DI55.

SM: Do you know who he is now?

JM: No. I thought I did, I rang the guy and I'm pretty sure he's not the author. So I am still looking.

SM: How do you know then that the author is known to the media?

JM: Because he said so.

SM: And he is a retired pilot?

JM: Well, we don't know that. He flew with the RAF in the 1950s but I don't know in what capacity he flew with the RAF. He may have been a scientist.

SM: And he supposedly had his own sighting?

JM: Yes. He filled in a report form in the 50s and one of his comments was that it hasn't changed since then, and it hasn't substantially.

SM: But if he hasn't wanted to put his name on the report, is.....

JM: Oh, his name is on the report, it's just blotted out.

SM: At his request?

JM: No, it's common practice to blot out names of officials.

SM: If you were able to track him down and he was able to speak to you, what would you say to him?

JM: Quite a few things; what were his personal views on UFO's, what was his view on the constraints placed on him during the report and that he wasn't allowed to consult anybody, is he aware of the disturbance it has caused within ufology, has he actually read any of it and does he agree with any of it?

SM: Why do you think upon receiving this report, DI55 then just said, "Right, let's just forget it from now on"? Do you think they just accepted the conclusions?

JM: The conclusion was that they had learned nothing of intelligence value and that conclusion is correct; they hadn't learned anything of an intelligence value but that's because they hadn't been investigating reports. All they had been doing was logging them, ticking a box on a form e.g. aircraft, and filing it. On the very rare occasion where they did actually follow it up and asked for radar tapes, it's been inconclusive. There are very, very few cases where they have actually done anything other than read, guess, and file.

SM: Why do you think that is? Simply because over the years they have learned there is naff all they can do about it?

JM: That's one. The other thing is that you shouldn't forget that the guy on the UFO desk has other duties as well which are more immediately critical. If they are going to do a diplomatic clearance for a flight, that's got to be done that day. UFO reports take a backseat in that case.

Another thing is that they are confined to the office. They can't afford to take a day off from the office to go and follow up a UFO report in Yorkshire. They are constrained as well by their own role. That is a reflection, if you like, of a policy decision that UFOs are not important. So who ever is in the seat at the time, no matter how enthusiastic they are, they are constrained by a policy from higher up.

SM: But why does the MoD consider UFOs not to be important?

JM: Because there has been no incident in the UK of a UFO having any effect on defence.

SM: Rendlesham?

JM: The trouble with that one was that the MoD didn't get to know about it until a couple of weeks later, so there was buggar all they could do about it anyway. Also, there was confusion on the dates and they checked the wrong radar tapes. That was a total copout on the part of the MoD and the USAF.

SM: Gun camera footage. Now they are saying that if they had any, they can't find it.

JM: Yes. Back in the 70s, Ralph Noyes who used to fulfil the UFO desk role, in fact I think he was head of the Department, told someone that there was some gun camera film and efforts to trace that have failed.

SM: Do you think they are lying? Without wishing to get into a conspiracy thing.....

JM: If I thought they were lying, I would come out and say it. They have certainly lied in the past but in this case, I think they have made efforts to trace it and can't find it. But they had the same problem with the Flying Saucer Working Party.

SM: In some ways the FSWP I can understand because it just became an historical event of significance to ufologists but not to the MoD.

JM: Oh, it was. Don't forget that set the policy for the next 30 years. It was significant, and it is actually mentioned in the Condign report but at the time the Condign report was written, they couldn't find a copy of the FSWP. It was written before its discovery. They knew it existed but they didn't know they still had a surviving copy.

SM: I see. You are painting a picture which confirms their alleged attitude, which is some indifference.

JM: Extremely so, yes. That is absolutely the attitude, certainly at a policy level. When Nick Pope was on the desk he had some personal enthusiasm for it but he was still working to the constraints that were imposed upon him, so he couldn't leave his desk and in effect, he couldn't really investigate. He did the best that he could with the resources available. So he did look at some of the radar tapes, he did speak to witnesses on the telephone occasionally but other than that, he couldn't visit a location, take photographs, check the facts from the report; those were the sorts of things he couldn't check and as a consequence, all of the MoD UFO reports are regarded as a very unreliable and that's the whole thing that Condign has been based on.

SM: What's your personal reaction to it now at this moment in time, because I appreciate Joe that I can ask you this question in another month and I might get a different answer.

JM: No, I don't think it would be different. I am frankly very disappointed that they spent three years basically wasting the effort and I think they should go back again and do it properly. I shall be actually pressurising them to do that as well.

SM: But on what basis do you think that their effort has been wasted?

JM: Because of the underlying data. Not only that, but the actual author of the report didn't have the opportunity to consult anybody.

SM: So really it sounds like he couldn't have done a proper job to start with.

JM: Correct, even though he thinks he did. He did the best that he could under the circumstances. Having said that actually, there are some leaps of faith within the Condign report that illustrate that the author didn't really understand some of the problems. Things like he has accepted estimates of height, size, and so on from the descriptions contained in the MoD UFO reports, although he does say that the data is not very good but he still uses that information to arrive at conclusions. It's just like the terms they used for the Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq.

SM: In other words, faulty intelligence. Do you know what the MoD's feelings are currently as to the public reaction to the report? Do you know what they are thinking about how it has been received?

SM: No. I know they did anticipate a lot of interest. I don't know if they anticipated much criticism, but they probably did. They were prepared to go live and release the documents at the same time that they released it to Dave Clarke but Dave argued the point that we had been waiting for these for round about a year and we wanted the opportunity to go through it before they published anything.

SM: What was that whole experience like for you? The half a week or whatever it was down in London with the media, the TV, it must have been an absolute whirlwind.

JM: Couple of things really; it was an anti-climax.....

SM: Why?

JM: We travelled down on the Sunday. The BBC News 24 interviews had been arranged already so we had time to get to the hotel room, get changed and then get a taxi to the BBC. That was a quick in and out job. We were probably hanging around for about an hour before we got on air. We got on air for about six minutes and then we were out again; that was it.

The following morning, we were picked up at some unearthly hour, I think it was like 6:30 a.m. by taxi, and whisked off to the BBC again for BBC breakfast television. We were starving although there were some bloody mouldy croissants and jam though I was looking for a cooked breakfast. Again, whisked into the studio, six minutes, out again and then we also did some radio interviews that Dave had been booked down to do. Then we were whisked off in a taxi and as we sat down to breakfast, Dave got a phone call from the BBC saying, "Where are you?" He told them that he was having breakfast in London. They replied that he was supposed to be doing another interview with the BBC science correspondent. The BBC seemed quite disorganised and their hospitality wasn't very good. Incidentally by the way we got paid absolutely nothing for anything.

SM: That did go through my mind about whether you were paid for interviews.

JM: I certainly wasn't. David did I think receive something for some recorded interviews that he did on the Tuesday after he returned from the Fortean Times

conference. I don't know how much but it certainly wasn't a great deal. Myself and Gary Anthony and Andy got absolutely nothing.

SM: Were Gary or Andy with you down in London?

JM: No. Gary broke his leg a while back and wasn't fit to travel but what he did do was a very good admin backup, if you like. He handled any overflow of media calls and kept an eye on the Internet for us and let us know what was going on there. Andy was meant to come down on the Monday but the train connection was cocked up and he didn't quite make it.

SM: So he didn't actually get to London?

JM: No.

SM: Was he bothered?

JM: I imagine so. I haven't actually spoken to him since. I don't know.

SM: I asked you a few moments ago if you knew what the MoD's reaction was to the public's reaction to the report. More specifically, are you aware of what the DAS desk now think and do they believe their worst fears are now realised?

JM: One thing about it was that they were very interested to find out about the report.... (at this point the conversation descends into laughter on both sides). Other than that, I can foresee something happening like them deciding that because of what is contained in the Condrign report that they no longer want to bother. I hope not but that is a possibility.

Or, once the weaknesses are pointed out to them formally, which they will be, they then will come under pressure to carry out a proper study. Although that is a corner I will be fighting, it is going to take them a while to prepare it. But that is my intention to come up with a verifiable critique of the report. If necessary, I will get MPs involved with it and I will campaign for a proper evaluation of the situation.

SM: Given that this was a highly secretive report originally with only 11 copies made, what persuaded them in the end to release it because regardless of what you think of the report, given their behaviour over the last 50 years in relation to this matter, it was a very brave thing to do.

JM: They didn't have much choice. Under the Freedom of Information Act, they have to justify the withholding of any information and I think probably their first knee-jerk reaction was to withhold all. Then someone probably pointed out to them that they couldn't withhold it all because a lot of it was in the public domain already. This is why it took so long to get released; they had to go through it page by page and decide what they didn't want to release and then try to find justifications that would stand up as to why they couldn't release that information.

SM: It seems their only concern really was revealing weaknesses in Britain's national radar defence system.

JM: There were a couple of interesting ones; international relations.

SM: Ah. Right. How do you interpret that? America?

JM: That's one. There could be some technical intelligence about Russia for instance contained in there.

SM: Yes, it was interesting how Russia was spoken of positively in connection with this.

JM: Positively in the sense that they have actually carried out a study which I'm wondering if it has been made public actually.

SM: And a slightly odd phrase that there is a belief that there is some informal work being done in America which suggests an official interest. I don't see the sequitor there but I do find that very interesting.

JM: I think they might have said that there might be a higher level of interest. I can't remember if that's actually in the report or in some of the associated correspondence. I'm going to put an article out at some point on that correspondence because that in itself is very interesting. One thing it demonstrates is a bun fight between the DI55 and DAS, DAS saying that we don't think you should bother and DI55 saying, well we are going to.

SM: What do you think are the most significant points or highlights of the report that stand out for you? I'm not necessarily talking about the science but the little tidbits that are tucked away here and there.

JM: There is an acknowledgement that UFOs per se exist but that's never been denied by the MoD though that is the first time it's actually been expressed that way I think.

SM: UAPs!

JM: The fact that they have actually carried out the study is important. It's something they should have done a long time before and the actual fact that they have got their act together and done it is important. It's unfortunate that it's turned out such shite but there you go.

SM: I actually think that's the most significant aspect of the whole thing; that they had actually done this report.

JM: It is interesting that there is nothing in that report that couldn't actually have gone to DAS, but it wasn't given to them. It could have been useful to them to actually help identify causes and stuff like that and I think that is down to their attitude in the run-up to it; them being sort of disinterested and suggesting that it wasn't really worth it. I think as a consequence, they got left out at the end of it.

SM: What is your opinion of the reaction amongst ufologists?

J M: I was pleasantly surprised actually. Dave certainly expected a case of shoot the messenger. There have been one or two posts like that but generally speaking, that hasn't been the case. Overall, I think people realise that we didn't write the report and I think there is some appreciation of the fact that we actually went out and got it, even though some say we were given it. That is definitely not the case. Colin Bennett said that.

What's more, I'm not even going to have a bash at Nick Pope, because basically, it's not worth the effort.

SM: You've all had a go at him really even if it's just been on the website with those rather over the top copyright disclaimers.

JM: All that is really doing is stating the obvious; that this was a real UFO project as opposed to conducting a role and there is a big difference. But I can't take away the fact that he was involved in the 1993 discussion for instance. But that didn't directly lead to this. This would have happened whether that discussion had taken place or not.

SM: But at least he was consulted.

JM: Yes and I wouldn't deny that. When he was in the role, he did try to get other departments and senior staff interested but again, he was constrained by the policies around him.

SM: Do you think there is more to come?

JM: I think this is probably the last really big thing although I could be mistaken because I don't know. There will be other less significant discoveries.

SM: You know that or you think that?

JM: I think that. The only other thing is this article that I'm going to write highlighting the goings-on between DI55 and DAS which should be quite revealing. But it's not going to be answering criticisms in the report.

SM: Joe, my thanks.



There's A Rock Out There With Our Name On It



We've all seen the movie and got the T shirt etc. We all know that at some point in the future, either soonish or so long off that we'll all be dead and it'll be somebody else's problem, that an asteroid will smack into our planet. What damage that will cause will depend on the size of the thing and where it lands. Five metres wide and there'll be a big hole in the ground. Half a kilometre wide and there will be a serious problem or two.

There is inevitably a great deal of rubbish talked about this problem and a fair bit of scare mongering too. I thought it best if I went to the most renown expert I could find who was prepared to talk to me to see if I could get some commonsense out him about what we should really be expecting and also to find out what we could do about it.

I tracked down Professor Palaeo Ontology at the University of Manchester in the north west of England. This interview was recorded on July 20th 2006.

SM: How serious a problem is this? Should we be scared?

PO: That's a bit over dramatic. It's only a minor problem but it does affect a lot of people around the world. It's easily dealt with.

SM: Ahh, now is it? Because my impression was that there was no consensus amongst scientists as to how to approach the problem. Some want to nudge it, some want to explode it, some want to bombard it with rays.

PO: That's a bit drastic. There's no need to go to those lengths at all. You're going to seriously hurt people doing that. Where did you get those ideas from?

SM: I thought those methods of dealing with them were common knowledge but obviously I appear to be misinformed. So what do folk do if there's one a quarter of a mile wide out there?

PO: Is this meant to be a serious interview? A quarter of a mile wide? You must be joking! They're never bigger than a few millimetres.

SM: Now it's my turn to ask you if you're joking. If they are only ever as big as you say, then we haven't got a problem.

PO: Well indeed. And forget about beaming things at them or whatever. Just a bit of cream will usually do the trick.

SM: What? You mean fly out there to one, coat it with cream, give it a cuddle and ask it nicely not to hit us? Are you bonkers? So Okay then Proff; what the hell do we do about asteroids then?

PO: I haven't got a frigging clue pal. I specialise in haemorrhoids.

SM: You mean you aren't a geologist at Manchester University?

PO: Am I fuck. I'm a professor of haemorrhoids.

SM: Is there a difference?

PO: A difference between what?

SM: Asteroids and haemorrhoids.

PO: I suppose not.

SM: Can I ask you a question about asteroids then?

PO: Go on.

SM: They're very big aren't they?

PO: Massive.

SM: How should we deal with them?

PO: Fly out to one, coat it with cream, and ask it nicely not to hit us.

SM: You're taking the piss now aren't you?

PO: Probably.

The editor would like to thank the publishers of Fortean Times for permission. Err that's it.

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"A Saucerful of Secrets": An Interdisciplinary Analysis of UFO Experiences

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This article focuses on a supernatural experience widely reported in the United States—the sightings of anomalous lights, including so-called "ghost lights," orbs, unidentified flying objects (UFOs), and other labels attached to the observance of unexplained lights or aerial phenomena. The use of folklore theory, an experience-centered approach, and cognitive anthropology provides an enriched perspective on how UFO experiences are perceived, interpreted, and incorporated into broader traditions. Considering a sample of the frequency rates of such experiences with this integrated approach reveals personal experience narratives to be both the foundation for modern belief in UFOs as well as the primary reason why the UFO phenomenon remains a fixture in American culture. Taken together, these approaches suggest that so-called UFO encounters are often based on real, sometimes bizarre experiences that both inform and are formed by existing cultural traditions and mental schemas. This article grows out of a larger study of anomalous light experiences among college students.

A 2001 survey of 183 college students at a regional university in North Carolina found that nearly one in four reported having a unidentified flying object (UFO)-like experience or anomalous light sighting of some kind (Dewan 2006). This finding was relatively comparable to similar studies undertaken over the past several decades.¹ Additional follow-up interviews were conducted with students willing to discuss their experiences further and with other individuals reporting similar experiences from around the country.

Because such tantalizing data necessitate a more holistic approach to analysis, the use of folklore theory, the experience-centered approach of David Hufford (1982a), and insights from cognitive anthropology suggest that UFO accounts may be understood more fruitfully to be based on real, unusual experiences that instigate a complex interaction between the event, existing cultural traditions, and mental schemas. Accounts of anomalous light experiences are best categorized as a particular type of personal experience narrative, the memorate. A detailed case study of interviews conducted with three members of a single family illustrates the integration of these three theoretical perspectives in the analysis of narratives, concluding that personal experiences play a major role in the development and maintenance of the UFO phenomenon. Whereas much of the past research focused on the study of anomalous lights as a whole, my study particularly emphasizes aerial anomalies generally included within the realm of the UFO phenomenon, in part because of its exceptional growth and popularity in

American culture during the past fifty years. The UFO domain has grown to include, for example, animal mutilations, crop circles, mysterious figures known commonly as "men in black" (or MIB), alien abductions, and speculations concerning varying degrees of government conspiracy. For the purposes of this article, UFOs themselves are placed within the more straightforward category of anomalous lights while concurrently understood to exist as part of a broader social movement.

A Three-Pronged Analysis of Experience

The presupposition of this article is that a study of anomalous light experiences (or any other contemporary supernatural experience) is fertile ground for social scientists. For cultural anthropologists, it is an opportunity to examine the ways in which cross-cultural phenomena are interpreted, shaped, and suited to both western and non-western cultures. Psychologists can use anomalous light accounts to explore further the relationship between cognition and experience, as well as issues of observer reliability and variance. Sociologists are provided statistical rates of experience and belief in extraordinary phenomena in local populations. Folklorists are able to study a modern dynamic legend in the making, including the genesis and transformation of legend in popular culture. Peter Rojcewicz maintains that folklorists, armed with an enriched understanding of the UFO experience, are "more likely to perceive the numerous continuities between UFO-related phenomena and various folk traditions" (1987:148). The humanities are also vital to the study of such experiences. Historians, perhaps, have been the most active in this field, and their research is integral to any discussion of the emergence of social beliefs. Philosophers and religious scholars have also begun to take notice of supernatural experiences within populations.² UFOs and anomalous lights, as Hufford has argued, should be readily devoured by any student of belief, though few have attempted to do so (1995:39).³

Without taking into account all avenues of investigation, a comprehensive, dynamic understanding of anomalous experience remains lacking. I find that the following three distinct, yet interrelated approaches serve to broaden analyses of UFO encounters.

An "Experience-Centered" Approach

As Linda Dégh has argued, it is not necessary or even prudent for the folklorist or anthropologist to determine whether such phenomena as UFOs belong to the natural or supernatural world (1977:244). Of particular relevance to these scholars are the beliefs that arise out of such encounters. In early societies and cultures, the available dominant traditions directly informed extraordinary sightings of celestial phenomena, taken variously as supernatural signs, omens, and miracles.⁴ Similar supernatural traditions continually compete with the rationalist paradigm today, despite predictions more than thirty years ago of their demise (Bullard 2000:151). This rationalist paradigm, described by Brenda Denzler as shaping a scientific methodology "committed to understanding nature solely in terms of discoverable processes that operated according to abstract principles and laws," remains embedded in a largely secular worldview that stands in obvious contrast to said supernatural traditions (2001:70).⁵ With such an ideological competition in mind, familiar patterns of belief must conform to the available historical and cultural traditions in which they arise and are disseminated in order to maintain popularity among specific populations. Having said this, the intention here is to neither advocate nor refute the claims of respondents.⁶ It is premised, instead, on the assumption that the majority of these respondents *believe* they have witnessed what they have actually reported seeing. For, as Bill Ellis has noted, sane and intelligent people are fully capable of

perceiving such experiences to be paranormal or extraordinary in nature (1988:269). Hufford states that most academic theories have assumed that folk beliefs—especially beliefs concerning the supernatural—are false or unfounded, “nonrational,” and nonempirical.”

Hufford’s experience-centered approach directly contradicts this assumption by proposing that much folk belief about the supernatural is actually reasonable and rationally developed from experience. In other words, he argues against the assumption that all spiritual belief relies entirely on faith (1995:11). These ideas are fully elaborated in Hufford’s book, *The Terror That Comes in the Night* (1982a), which focuses on the “Old-Hag” tradition found in Newfoundland. The tradition involves the experiencer waking from sleep unable to move, often with the sensation of something pressing down upon his or her chest and accompanied by the presence of an apparition in the room. This experience was commonly interpreted to be an encounter with not a living human, but a supernatural creature that was either acting on its own or called upon by another person to carry out an attack. Hufford found similar (yet lesser known) traditions in the United States and asked the simple question, “Why is a particular believed narrative stable across time and space?” (1982a:xi, 8–11).

Hufford holds that certain elements of some supernatural traditions exist independently of culture (1982a:15). The roles of perception and interpretation therefore, are differentiated. Although existing cultural traditions provide the basis for the interpretation of experience, the core experience itself may be universal and entirely separate from such traditions. The implication is that individual perceptions of extraordinary experiences are cross-culturally uniform, and it is only in the subsequent interpretation of the experience that cultural traditions play a role. Furthermore, despite some surface variation in the interpretation of causality, narratives from separate cultures often share common core elements in recounting these experiences.

Classifying Anomalous Experience as Folklore

Beliefs and narratives concerning anomalous lights are part of folklore, in the sense that they represent ideas and explanations that fall outside dominant, logically interpreted notions of the world and are maintained through their circulation in family, community, regional, national, and sometimes international levels that often oppose or are in direct conflict with dominant ideologies. A folkloric approach to understanding such narratives requires the researcher to examine them in several ways. First, such narratives must be understood, in part, within the framework of particular cultural and historical contexts.

The patterning behind such accounts and how they conform to traditions through time must then be identified. Finally, an examination of how such narratives are performed, retold, disseminated, and circulated within the community is essential.

Before such an analysis is undertaken, however, it is best to define these accounts more fully. As stated above, a relatively high number of participants in this survey (approximately 25 percent) reported having anomalous light experiences. If this number proves to be anywhere close to national estimates, it is fair to speculate that personal UFO narratives have a significant impact on the maintenance of the larger UFO phenomenon.

Therefore, I will begin by focusing on these first-person accounts. In terms of folkloric categorization, it makes sense to understand first-person UFO accounts as part of the genre of *personal experience narratives* defined as “a prose

narrative relating a personal experience; it is usually told in the first person, and its content is nontraditional" (Stahl 1989:12). Furthermore, the content of these narratives is based on actual events experienced by the storyteller. Yet such accounts generally do not enter into tradition, according to Sandra Dolby Stahl, and they usually do not contain supernatural (or "supranormal") content. Stahl reserves these types of accounts for the *memorate* category (1996:556–7).

Memorates were first defined by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1948, 1977) as first-person narratives about a supranormal event that render something that *might* be real or remembered, distinguished from legends in that they lacked the traditional content and stylistic qualities characteristic of traditional legends. In von Sydow's view, if a particular memorate generates enough interest in a population and is consequently retold by different people, it may become a memorial legend. Modern folklorists now concede that memorates may also include second- and third-hand accounts of the original narrative that retain the original's primary details (Sweterlitsch 1996).⁷ First-person UFO accounts should be treated, therefore, as Linda Dégh has argued (1971, 1977), as memorates. Furthermore, although there is much debate on the matter, I consider the memorate a subcategory of the personal experience narrative, if for no other reason than that UFO accounts are, literally, narratives about personal experiences.⁸

Bill Ellis (1991) eschews the term "myth" in describing anomalous experience accounts in favor of "legend" and "mythology," noting that Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi (1983) broadened the original definition of legend as an oral narrative to include performance of a recognized legend through real actions.⁹ By this definition, the larger UFO phenomenon may be seen as a group of various legends, from interpretations of mysterious lights to accounts of alien abductions, following the "classic" motif.¹⁰ Ellis understands legends to be part of a dynamic "cultural 'belief-language' " that aids in making sense of unusual experiences (1991:40–2).

The memorate-legend dichotomy in folklore is certainly controversial, and UFO experiences highlight the problem of categorizing these experiences and associated beliefs. How UFO memorates sometimes progress into belief legends is not entirely clear, though some folklorists speculate that this occurs through repeated retellings of particular memorates. Conversely, there is the question of whether these memorates are largely the expression of preexisting folk beliefs (Sweterlitsch 1996).

Anomalous light accounts that continually circulate in local or regional communities over an extended period of time may be conceived as legends, yet both experiencers and storytellers must contextualize these legends to make sense of them. To do so, these experiences are incorporated into larger traditions. Such "global bodies of lore" often contain supernatural or "superscientific" elements and, in the case of the UFO phenomenon, serve as a primary context for *both* the initial perception and subsequent interpretation of many of these experiences (Ellis 1991:43–4). To generalize, beliefs informed by personal experiences may be linked into local or regional legends, whereas legends in turn are linked into global bodies of lore. Belief informs memorate; memorate informs legend; legend informs belief. This method of categorization enables one to contextualize a UFO experience.

Culture, Perception, and Anomalous Experience

Although the interaction of belief and experience is certainly complex, the incorporation of cognitive anthropology enriches a folkloric analysis of this issue.

In doing so, the extent to which culture holds dominion over individual perceptions of experience must be addressed. A central issue involved in the study of extraordinary experiences relates to the question of how they are perceived, reported, and interpreted in a cultural sense. Cognitive anthropology maintains that recollections of past memories are not mental copies of stored originals. Rather, they are schematized, mental reconstructions of past events that are reassembled in particular circumstances for particular purposes (Schrauf 1997:439–40; Garro 2001). As Robert Schrauf has found, the cognitive analysis of autobiographical memories reveals several key elements: “[R]ecollection of the personal past is (1) essentially a reconstruction of the past, (2) prompted by a person’s affective states and ongoing beliefs and goals, and (3) constituted by the sociocultural world of the rememberer” (1997:429).

During an experience, a process of revision in light of the person’s beliefs and expectations occurs immediately, if not simultaneously with the experience. Once the memory is encoded, subsequent recalling acts as a reconstruction that involves the affective (emotional) states and social circumstances (e.g., campfire story) of the rememberer. Furthermore, sociocultural factors shape one’s expectations about reality, and what one remembers directly depends on one’s expectations (Schrauf 1997:429–30). Although Schrauf’s study examines autobiographical memory across a long span of time and is not directly applied to single, specific memories of events, the ability to apply this approach to specific memories appears to be implied. There is also no discussion in Schrauf’s work of whether different types of experiences are recalled differently. For example, how is the recall of a particularly traumatic or exciting event fundamentally different from a more mundane, yet equally significant, memory? Linda Garro has argued that individuals tend to remember specific events that have some emotional impact on them (2001:117).

Despite this fact, whether one is recalling an encounter with Bigfoot in Yosemite National Park or Mr. Miller in the town grocery store, it remains understood that both memories are, in reality, social reconstructions. Interpretations of experiences are rooted in cultural meaning—that is, the typical interpretation of an event evoked in people as a result of their similar life experiences. Thus, there is the assumption that a different interpretation of the same event would be evoked in people with different characteristic life experiences (Strauss and Quinn 1997:6).

It follows, then, that two individuals witnessing a strange glowing light in the forest at night may arrive at different conclusions about it. One with an extensive background in UFO literature might interpret the light as an extraterrestrial spacecraft, whereas the other might have more familiarity with ghost lore and, in turn, interpret the event as an encounter with a ghost light—a phenomenon known throughout regions of many states, including Texas and North Carolina.¹¹ These cultural meanings are created and maintained in the interaction between extrapersonal and intrapersonal realms. These realms, the outside world and the individual psyche, are far from being isolated from one another (Strauss and Quinn 1997:7–9). Individual psychology and the surrounding culture, therefore, must be studied in conjunction in order to understand fully how these experiences are perceived and interpreted.

Meanings are based on cultural schemas shared among people who have had similar socially mediated experiences. Schema theory in cognitive anthropology holds that “information processing is mediated by learned or innate mental structures that organize related pieces of our knowledge. . . . [S]chemas . . . are not distinct things but rather collections of elements that work together to

process information at a given time" (Strauss and Quinn 1997:49). Thus, schemas may be considered as general knowledge of any sort, from simple to complex. Claudia Strauss and Naomi Quinn use the example of the lumberjack to highlight this point. The flannel shirt schema, overalls schema, beard schema, and beer schema work together to create a general lumberjack archetype (in the author's imagination). Schemas can reconstruct our past events, determine the meanings imparted to ongoing experiences, and impart expectations for future experiences (1997:48–9).

Because cultural schemas are ingrained into our thought processes, interpretations of experiences, Strauss and Quinn argue, typically arise automatically and are not pondered (1997:59).

In the case of an anomalous experience, however, it is questionable to presume a lack of reflection on a potentially emotional incident. At the same time, if a witness passively observes a strange object in the sky and years later watches a television special on UFOs that provides similar accounts, he or she may be inclined to recall and reflect on the event in light of its now-meaningful status.¹² Garro, discussing scholarly conceptions of autobiographical memory, relates academic debates to the pertinent question of the act of remembrance, asking whether people simply retrieve "an essentially veridical record of an original event, faithfully capturing what actually transpired" (2001:107). Whereas her answer is an emphatic "no," Garro adds that, though accuracy of memory is one of the primary issues involved in the study of autobiographical memory, the fact that such memories are essentially cognitive reconstructions does not invalidate the accuracy of memory. Rather than address questions of accuracy and inaccuracy, Garro instead stresses the importance for scholars to conceptualize remembering as "a multifaceted process" involving cultural, social, and cognitive facets that occur before, during, and after an experience (2001:105, 117, 132–3).¹³

By use of cognitive schemas, a bridge can be built between folkloric and experiencecentered approaches. Such schemas draw on cultural themes, yet at the same time are built from personal experience. For example, cognitive anthropologists would agree with Hufford that actual personal experiences are at the base of memory, but they would argue that cultural forms may subsequently shape the form and content of the recollections. Folklorists, on the other hand, add the study of specific templates or stylized forms, in which these accounts are narrated conventions or motifs. Combining all three approaches, UFO accounts may be understood at the level of core experience, as well as through its subsequent forms created through cultural filters and integration into the larger UFO body of lore—applied below to a multiple witness sighting of a strange aerial object.

The Spectrum of Experience

In addition to the survey of college students conducted in 2001, more than twenty in depth interviews were conducted with students and various individuals from around the country. The personal narratives they shared reflect the social and psychological influences underlying the overall interpretation of their experiences. These interrelations often appeared quite perplexing on a surface level. For example, in 1986 a family of three witnessed a series of sightings of an anomalous object over a small town in Pennsylvania. For a period of several weeks, nearly all the residents of the town witnessed a strange, low-flying spectrum of lights sweeping a nearby field. Now living in Florida, each family member—daughter, mother, and father—took away something significant from

their shared experience. The following are their individual recollections of the object that I collected in my interviews with each family member: Daughter: I was only, like, two years old. All right . . . I don't remember the initial part—being in the car when my mom saw it by the airport. I don't remember seeing the light then. Um, I guess it was flying over the trees; it was over really far in the distance and it was flying over some trees. And the main thing I remember was that it was moving kind of slow; at times it would hover. At other times it would move kind of slow. And the lights were just reddish-pinkish colored, and green lights. And they would just kind of move in swirling patterns. That's what I remembered. It was definitely not an airplane or anything. . . . Yeah. They were just moving in a really weird pattern. And I heard of other cases other people have had where they've seen the exact same thing. The lights moved, like a figure-eight kind of. Just kind of intertwining each other, kind of. The daughter was considerably younger during the sighting, so her observation of swirling lights was reaffirmed by later accounts. Her mother was able to describe the lights in much more detail: I was driving home . . . it was dark, and I happened to see a spotlight. Something was hovering over the airfield, and there was, like, a spotlight coming from the bottom of it. So right away, I thought it was a helicopter. I'm interested in helicopters and things like that, so I started driving really slow to see what was going on. [But] I couldn't see any other lights except this spotlight showing down on the airstrip. I was curious; I thought for sure it was a helicopter. I rolled down my windows . . . and there was no sound at all. A helicopter you would definitely hear, you know; the sound of a helicopter hovering. And this wasn't very far from the roadway, so I would definitely have heard that. But it was completely silent. All I saw was this bright spotlight shining, and it was hovering. And it really scared me at that point. I was like, "What is this thing?" I was alone, so I took off and went home. And when I got home, I mentioned it to my husband. He said, "Oh yeah? We've been seeing things lately."

Shortly thereafter, she began seeing it again in the same area: After that, we had been noticing this thing up in the air with its lights flashing. It was like a pinkish—I wouldn't even say red—they were like pink and green lights going all the way around whatever it was. It had to be pretty big. . . . It got to be funny after a while because we'd always be saying, "Where is this thing?" We got used to seeing it all the time. Almost every night. In fact, one night we were coming home from shopping and my husband said, "We're going to follow this thing!" We could see it was going over to the same area where this airstrip was. For some reason it would go to that same spot. I don't know if it was looking for something or what. It was a very small airport; just one little airstrip. Just off of a country road . . . we followed it. So we followed it, and sure enough, it was in the same area, but on the opposite side of the road, where there was a house in a field. This thing was hovering, and again, you could not see an outline of it. It was close to us, and I was scared to death. My husband stopped the car, and we sat there. I wanted to leave; I did not want to be there. The same thing was happening, and it was showing the spotlight again.

All it was doing was showing a spotlight, and when we stopped—I don't know whether it didn't want us there or what—it didn't do anything to us but it took off. And we both looked back to see where it went. I said, "Where has this thing gone?"

Was it hovering above us or what?" But it was gone, like in a flash. We could see it in the distance, flashing again, the green and the pink lights were flashing. And it was gone! I mean, this thing was fast . . . in a flash it was gone. . . . For a couple of months on any given night, you could look up and around anywhere you

wanted to, and all the sudden you'd see it and say, "Oh, okay, there it is." It got to be a familiar thing to us because we'd see it all the time.

The mother reaffirmed her experience with the accounts of her husband, friends, and others in town who shared their stories. She estimated that she saw the object approximately fifty times during a span of several months. The father, hearing about the object from people in town before witnessing it himself, was also intrigued by mysterious activities in the town during the initial sightings of the anomalous object:

A guy in Forest City the same week and time asked me, "Have you seen anything on the way home at night?" I looked at him, and I said to him, "Well, have you seen something?" And he goes, "Yeah." And he said, "Me and a lot of other people." I said I didn't want to say anything; I didn't want other people to think I was crazy. But a lot of people saw it. There were [also] quite a few vehicles up around there within the next day or so. They looked like utility trucks, only they had antennae on them and stuff. One of the guys up there said they were from the Aerospace Agency. They were checking something out . . . Now we saw this thing off and on for quite a few weeks. It wasn't just one or two nights. And there were hundreds of people who saw it. Not just a few of us. I was one of the people that more or less didn't say anything about it, but people got quite vocal about it. It was well known.

Here, the father speculates on the activities of presumed government agencies to support his and other's beliefs that the anomaly was nothing of a mundane nature. He then provides his own description of the object:

Now these weren't shapeless objects; these objects had a shape. They were . . . shaped like a discus. You know, I'm not going to say a flying saucer. . . . The center of the object didn't seem to move, from what we could see. We saw it early in the evenings; it wasn't even dusk. We got a good look at it, and a lot of people got it on film.

One night I was out at the house and I looked out and I could see it coming across the [valley]. I told [my wife], "It's here, your buddy is back!" So we went chasing it! And [it was the] same place, up near the airport. We stopped, and I got out and my wife was yelling, "Don't stop! Don't stop!" [Laughs] But I looked at it, and the one thing about it—the lights were moving and everything—but it didn't make a sound. It was completely silent.

Dewan: Now what was the closest you ever got to it?

Father: That one night? Less than a quarter of a mile. It was pretty close. Now, I did not have binoculars or anything, but I've got pretty good vision from far away. And . . . it was interesting to say the least. The main fuselage of the craft did not appear to move. It stayed stationary. But the lights moved around it very fast. I'm not saying they were on a moving ring, but they were alternating very quickly. There was a red, blue, green, and white light. And when the thing moved sideways—either side—some lights would get brighter than others, depending on which way it went. And when it went straight up, the white lights got intense. They were like, boom!

White light.

The father further provided a description of the odd-colored craft as it took off: It was just as if . . . it would be perfectly still, and then it would just, shoom! Just take right off [vertically], straight as an arrow. And I mean it was *gone*. In a

second it was out of sight. We see the shuttle and everything take off here [Florida]. That shuttle is in reverse compared to what this thing could do. I'm not kidding you. I mean it was unbelievable how fast it was moving.

The mother also noted that the lack of noise associated with the object was unsettling: You don't hear a sound. The first thing, like I said, when this thing was hovering, when it came into my mind, I said, "It's hovering, so it's got to be a helicopter or something." But it was silent. The runway where it was hovering isn't that far away from the road. So it would be very loud if it was a helicopter. Even if it was just a little helicopter, it was probably just a couple hundred yards away from the road, this runway. We would have definitely have heard something if it was a helicopter of some sort.

As a result of the episode, the daughter later took an intense interest in UFOs and extraterrestrial life, saying, "I definitely think what I saw was not anything that we know of. I definitely think there's other intelligent life out there somewhere." When I asked why she classifies it as extraterrestrial, she responded, "Um . . . just accounts I've heard. There's too much evidence, really. I mean, you hear of all these things, and it's just hard to believe that there's not something out there. I guess you could say I'm kind of a conspiracy theorist too. You know, you hear of all these things like Area 51, and from everything that I've read, it's just kind of hard not to believe that there's nothing else out there."

The mother, though much less versed in UFO literature, expresses similar sentiments: I definitely couldn't identify what it is. . . . The first thing in my head would be some sort of UFO. It had to be something from somewhere else. . . . I always thought with all these different encounters that people have had and things that people have seen, you know, there's got to be something to it. You know, they're always saying they're hoaxes, and people are just making things up. But from what I saw, I would think there's definitely got to be something from another galaxy or whatever, you know, coming. There's got to be other life forms. . . . And with everything that other people have seen, they can't all be hoaxes, you know?

The father, even less familiar with UFO lore, maintained a limited interest in pursuing the matter, yet still provided similar speculation as to the origins of the anomaly: "I don't think we have anything that's this [technologically] advanced. If we do, I'd be really surprised. That'd really be something. You know? If that is of earthly origin, I hope to hell it's our government that has it!"

In the above case, it becomes quite apparent that there exists a complex interaction between the experience itself and the cultural influences from which the family draws to make sense of the experience. In the daughter's case, for instance, her later exposure to UFO literature directly affected her interpretation of the experience. All of the family members concluded that the anomaly was likely of extraterrestrial origin, the father even touching upon the familiar themes of governmental conspiracy long associated with UFO culture. The concept of the alien remains a dominant symbol of the unknown in modern American culture, and it is to this symbol that these and other witnesses inevitably turn in their interpretations.¹⁵

The accounts provided by the family are best understood as memorates rather than as legends. Memorates, as first-person narratives, are helpful to folklorists in that they are typically less influenced by popular culture. Furthermore, they represent a proactive/reactive dichotomy between cultural traditions and individual experiences (Bennett 1999:39).

We have here an example of how a personal experience narrative, in the form of a memorate, takes on greater significance in terms of its contribution to the larger body of UFO lore. Certainly, all three family members drew from the UFO tradition in their individual interpretations of the experience, yet their interest in and knowledge of UFOs was limited prior to their experience. Their observation of the object, hence, served to validate the entire UFO phenomenon. Just as important, over time they have each crafted their own validating accounts passed on through subsequent tellings and retellings. This family, for instance, expresses little trepidation in recounting their experiences to interested parties. Their accounts serve to personalize aspects of the broader UFO lore, which generally remains relegated to popular culture. Over time, second- and third-person retellings of this account may alter key aspects of the original experience, thus melding the original memorate into a legend representative of "a strange citywide UFO encounter" motif, complete with a sinister government cover-up. Through their dissemination in the community, the accounts ultimately serve to maintain interest or belief in such phenomena. We see here, how the interplay between personal experience and existing cultural traditions is truly complex. The experiences related on a regular basis by these and other people are unarguably a major reason why the UFO phenomenon remains so popular in American culture. The witnesses, however, obviously drew from the existing UFO lore in their perception, interpretation, and *validation* of the experience, evident in the daughter's remark, "I've heard of other people's cases where they've seen the exact same thing . . . on TV once in a while, like the Discovery Channel if they have something on," as well as the mother's, "When I see something on TV on the subject, it kind of interests me because I want to know if it's the same thing we saw. . . . I think there was something on [television] a couple of weeks ago and it sounded almost like what we saw. . . . That's what is really interesting." Within this framework, experience and tradition (in the form of media representations here) are ultimately coreliant.

Not to be lost in a discussion of this interaction of experience and tradition is the fact that this family experienced *something* out of the ordinary (at least in their eyes). Also, we are forced to assume that they believed their shared experience was real. Following the line of investigation suggested by Hufford, we might ask, Are there core elements of their experience consistent with aspects of other UFO experiences? Despite the high variation in types of lights and objects associated with UFOs, there are several shared elements in many reported UFO experiences around the world:

UFOs are usually not sought out by witnesses, and thus, sightings occur randomly, though "waves" of UFO sightings may occur in certain regions.

Most UFO sightings occur at night.

UFOs appear in a wide variety of colors, shapes, and sizes, often appearing elliptical, cigar-shaped, or triangular to observers. In many accounts, UFOs exhibit strange or seemingly impossible maneuvers and accelerations. The majority of UFO accounts note the complete lack of noise associated with the anomaly. This is also indicative of the fact that most observers believe they are witnessing a craft of some sort. The family's sighting contains all but one of these characteristics. All of their observations of the object occurred at night, and, though the shape of the entire object was unclear to them, the father did remark that the spectrum of lights was elliptical in movement. The object exhibited a seemingly impossible maneuver, shooting straight up into the sky and disappearing in a matter of seconds. All three witnesses also noted their puzzlement at the lack of noise during the sighting. Finally, although the sightings were atypical in the sense that they appeared to follow a nightly pattern over the

course of several weeks, they would constitute a "wave" of UFO activity in the region, defined by Martin Kottmeyer as a period of time when UFO reports amass at well above average rates (2001:646).

By use of Hufford's approach, it is reasonable to conclude that their accounts are consistent with other UFO encounters in its sharing of these key, core elements. If their descriptions of the object are taken at face value, one must use caution when discussing the degree to which cultural sources, particularly those provided by the UFO tradition, affect the reliability of such observations. UFO encounters are certainly a global phenomenon, and cross-culturally shared elements may be indicative of a truly universal phenomenon modified to varying degrees by cultural and historical contexts.

This leads us to another important question: how do the three descriptions of the anomalous lights compare? The daughter described the anomaly as a swirling of reddishpinkish and green lights. Her mother also described seeing rotating pink and green lights, except she noted that they appeared to be rotating around a larger, darker object with no discernable outline. The father described red, blue, green, and white lights alternating around a distinct, larger elliptical shape. The key discrepancy here lies between the dark, larger object both parents discerned within the rotating lights. Another interesting difference in the accounts is the mother's observance of a bright spotlight emitting from the object onto the field below. Both parents felt that the primary light was "sweeping" the field below, almost as if in search of something on the ground. Yet the father, even after being pointedly asked later in the interview, maintained that he had seen no searchlight.

Taken without consideration of the effects of memory, it might be concluded that each individual's immediate perceptions of the object differed significantly. Yet other factors, such as the father's estimation that they had seen the object perhaps a dozen times over a period of several weeks—in opposition to the mother's claim that they had witnessed it perhaps fifty times over the course of several months—lends strong support to the idea that their reconstructed memories have much to do with the narrative discrepancies as well.

In discussing these observations, the family members were describing something they witnessed more than fifteen years ago. Incorporating schema theory, one would expect to find variation in the three descriptions of the anomaly over such an extended period of time. The parents, as mentioned above, differ in select details of the object, including the color of the lights and the presence of a spotlight. The mother, during her initial perceptions of the object, tried on certain mundane schemas that did not match her perceptions. For instance, the object did not behave in the way she would expect of a helicopter. Although the location of the object was the same, its shape, the swirling lights, and the lack of noise emitted by it were not consistent with the schemas she already had in place for conventional aircraft. In processing the experience, she then relied on a different set of schemas to make sense of what she was perceiving. This group of schemas invariably led to a UFO "archetype" in her mind, similar, but not identical, to the one formed by her husband. We would certainly expect these schemas to be shared by all three, while at the same time being somewhat individualized. The similarities in the three observations have already been noted: the approximate size, shape, and maneuvering of the object, along with the lack of associated noise. Are these similarities in the observations due to the family processing their perceptions to fit a shared UFO schema, or, as Hufford would argue, are they simply witnessing the same event and thus providing similar accounts? The answer is likely that both are true in some shared UFO experiences. It also remains likely that the incident had been discussed between them previously on

at least one occasion. Nevertheless, it remains that the individuals, at the time of their experience, had a limited knowledge of the UFO phenomenon, and thus their preexisting UFO schemas did not account for specific shared details in their observations that are core elements in many UFO experiences.

In this case, we may have an example of a personal experience that differs from the existing UFO schema and thus serves to alter it.

Differences in the accounts, however, may highlight how schemas affect later recollections of the event. For instance, we return to the fact that the mother recalled a searchlight emanating from the craft and thought that the object, in sweeping over a field repeatedly, was searching for something. The father expressed similar sentiments yet saw no searchlight, even finding it peculiar that no searchlight was present. It is not unreasonable to hypothesize here that, in recalling the incident over time, cultural schemas filled in certain aspects of the details of the incident in the mother's mind. If she felt the object was searching for something, a searchlight would make sense. UFOs emanating beams of light are prevalent in the body of UFO lore, particularly in programs on the Discovery Channel and other television channels, from which the mother had later drawn most of her knowledge about the phenomenon. The searchlight schema might thus filter into her memory over time (or perhaps closer to the time of the incident) both to fill in unclear details and to reinforce her expectations of the experience. In this sense, schemas may account for similarities in descriptions of experiences (shared schemas allow their perceptions to fit) and for slight differences in descriptions based upon an interaction between a preexisting schema and a unique experience for which the witnesses have no prior context.

This leads to another question: What cultural facets may inform, and help reconstruct, the recollections above? As mentioned earlier, all three family members concluded, somewhat independently, that the craft itself was a UFO and therefore of probable extraterrestrial origin. The UFO as an extraterrestrial craft reflects a contemporary American fascination with alien life. Jodi Dean argues that understanding this fascination requires focus on not only the stories and experiences, but also "the practices and technologies that enable the stories to be told," including various books, magazines, television specials, and websites that transmit information about UFOs and aliens (1998:5). In a "technoglobal information age," the extraterrestrial explanation predominantly fills the traditional role of the supernatural other and in part may suggest both a reconciliation of oppositional epistemologies and a direct response to the political hegemony of science.

Moreover, witnesses of such seemingly extraordinary phenomena will inevitably be drawn to extraterrestrial explanations in pursuit of what Ellis describes as a "convenient cultural language" for phenomena that a rationalist paradigm would allow as solely the result of misperception, hoax, or insanity (Dean 1998:5, 170, 180; Ellis 1988:268). This account provides an excellent framework for using multiple approaches to understand extraordinary experiences. Only touched upon here, such an interdisciplinary analysis forces the researcher to negotiate between experience, perception, and interpretation.

Although one must conclude that the three individuals had some core experience that certainly appeared out of the ordinary, the experience itself cannot be entirely separated from cultural influences and memory reconstruction. Furthermore, the true nature of the experience itself may be of secondary importance. The most important realization gained from this account is that, within the UFO phenomenon, experience, folklore, and cognitive processes have a

dynamic relationship, simultaneously informing and influencing one another within the context of an evolving modern tradition.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to incorporate multiple scholarly approaches to understanding anomalous light experiences. Of particular importance is a study of the evolution of the UFO phenomenon in American culture over the past sixty years. Sightings of a wide variety of unusual aerial phenomena have exploded in number over the course of the twentieth century, even in the face of newfound knowledge in the areas of astronomy, geology, and meteorology. Conceptions of such phenomena have also changed over this time in conjunction with the rapid replacement of religious cosmologies with scientific paradigms.

These shifting conceptions lead into the realm of folklore, and it is largely from a folkloric perspective that researchers will be able to understand both how and why beliefs and narratives pertaining to anomalous lights both change and are maintained on local and national levels. The contexts of narrative performance, as well the interpretations of these experiences, reflect a growing spiritual yearning among some individuals that are satiated by neither traditional religious ideals nor scientific skepticism toward the supernatural.

In this context, the UFO may represent (however imperfectly) a bridge across this schism. This is not meant to reduce the UFO experience itself to a mental construct created out of such desires. On the contrary, some observers of anomalous phenomena may *logically* come to their extraordinary or supernatural conclusions after consideration and subsequent rejection of more “down-to-earth” explanations. Furthermore, rather than reconciling scientific and religious notions of the world, these beliefs may ultimately subvert them in favor of a “blurred reality genre” that Rojcewicz refers to as *crack experiences* (1989:12).¹⁹ In any case, it remains likely that UFO beliefs (be they reconciliatory or subversive) arise, at least partly, out of core experiences. What new facets of UFO experiences, using an integrated approach, are presented here?

First, there is the need for researchers to begin focusing on UFO experiences themselves. With data suggesting that as much as a quarter of a given population will report having a UFO-like encounter, it is reasonable to argue that the UFO phenomenon remains a fixture in popular culture today not simply because of whatever appeal it might have in the collective imagination of the population, but also because of the high number of personal experiences. Personal experience may indeed serve as the foundation for the entire phenomenon. Folklorists interested in motifs have generally been interested only in the performance aspect of personal experience narratives, yet here we have an interesting example of individual accounts informing a much broader tradition. Therefore, the experiences themselves represent a modern association of memorates intricately tied (as in both informing and being formed) with broader UFO legends and the larger body of UFO lore as a whole.

Using an experience-centered approach, we find that many of the accounts share certain core characteristics in description and observation that distinguish them from other anomalous experiences. Cognitive anthropology, however, suggests these experiences are unlikely to be both perceived and recalled in a cognitive vacuum, and there exists the probability that cultural schemas play a great role in the initial perception and subsequent recollections of the experience, even though research into remembrance of particularly anomalous experiences is limited. Furthermore, as Roy D’Andrade notes, the atypical nature of the events

themselves may limit the degree to which schemas fill in for the actual perceptions (1995).

Tying these perspectives together, we are left with an enriched understanding of a ubiquitous and often puzzling social phenomenon: the UFO tradition is founded on real, often strange, experiences that both inform and are formed by existing cultural traditions and mental schemas. This complex interplay should be a primary focus for any scholars examining this tradition. Ufology itself has a growing body of literature written by folklorists, psychologists, and historians. Yet these scholars spend a great deal of time simply talking past one another, and, as an unintentional result, the UFO phenomenon becomes all the more confusing.

Thomas E. Bullard noted more than a decade ago:

If nothing else, [the UFO phenomenon] is a parable in the sky to teach that alleged or actual real-world phenomena need investigation from many perspectives. No one has cornered the market on truth. Humanists, social scientists, behavioral scientists, and natural scientists all have contributions to make, since this complex phenomenon refuses to drop neatly into the lap of any one discipline and yields to no one line of inquiry (1991:49).

Although Bullard is certainly correct, I contend that scholars need to develop a synthesis of such analyses. What is proposed here is an interdisciplinary approach, one in which the folklorist (or whomever else) also acts as a sociologist, anthropologist, psychologist, and historian.²¹ As early as 1964, Lauri Honko was making a similar argument pertaining to the study of memorates, including the incorporation of genre identification, frequency analysis, perception psychology, and memorate-legend interaction, to fully understand how personal experience contributes to collective belief (1964:108–9). Forty years later, little has been done to develop this type of study. This article attempts to illustrate how such an approach may be undertaken, while simultaneously highlighting the need for folklorists and other scholars to broaden our investigative scope in regards to complex social phenomena.

Notes

1. For example, Brenda Denzler (2001) cites several anonymous surveys conducted in the 1970s among engineers and scientists that showed an 18–22 percent positive response rate to the question of whether the respondent had ever seen what could have been a UFO (Anon 1971, 1979). Denzler's own poll of members of a UFO community found that 53 percent reported having a UFO-like experience (2001:173). A 1976 poll of members of the American Astronomical Society (conducted by physicist Peter Sturrock) found that approximately 5 percent had witnessed UFO-like phenomena (1994a, 1994b, 1994c). More recently, a 1997 Gallup Poll revealed that about 12 percent of Americans thought they had seen a UFO (Newport 1997). Although my survey had more than double this response rate, such an increase is understandable given that my questions were more broadly based (avoiding usage of terms such as "UFO" altogether). Concerning general rates of anomalous experience, Andrew Greeley (1975) found that roughly one-fifth of the U.S. population reported having frequent paranormal encounters, while James McClenon's (1994) survey of American college students found a range between 18 and 40 percent positive response rate for various supernatural experiences.
2. David M. Jacobs (1975) and Richard Dolan (2002) have written fairly comprehensive histories of the UFO phenomenon in the United States during the course of the twentieth century, while philosophers such as Michael Grosso (1989) and religious scholars (Denzler 2001) have also written works on UFOs.
3. Exceptions to this in folkloric examinations of UFO-related phenomena include Rojcewicz's use of an experience-centered approach in examining the MIB phenomenon (1987), and Thomas Bullard's analysis of alien abduction accounts (1989). Dewan, "A Saucerful of Secrets" 199
4. For a discussion of strange celestial phenomena observed globally before the twentieth century, see Jacques Vallee's *Passport to Magonia* (1969) and Thomas Bullard's discussion of the topic in Jerome Clark's *The UFO Encyclopedia* (1992).
5. In his controversial essay "Traditions of Disbelief" (1982b), Hufford argues that academics examining supernatural traditions have generally premised their research on the assumption that such beliefs

are inherently incorrect. He deems such assumptions as ethnocentric traditions in their own right: traditions of *disbelief* that are, in reality, as much based on faith as those to which they stand in opposition.

6. Some scholars have argued that such a position is essentially a dishonest one (Glücklich 1997; Bosco 2001). Rojcewicz (1989:5) goes so far as to directly challenge folklorists to consider “naturalistic and supernatural explanations” of anomalous phenomena, taking both folklorists and anthropologists to task for unconsciously adhering to dogmatic notions of scientific materialism. Although I do not feel that I am being dishonest as a researcher in not assigning truth values to the specific experiences, I strongly feel it is worth mentioning that some scholars do take issue with this position.

7. Von Sydow (1948) originally created the term *fabulate* to refer to third-person narratives of an unknown source. Such a term might also be useful to describe second- and third-hand retellings from a known source.

8. Bullard uses a different method of categorization in regards to abduction reports, arguing that, though abduction accounts are understood to be memorates on the basis of their first-person character, the memorate in this instance should be understood as a subgenre of the legend because of their shared motifs and general adherence to older supernatural kidnapping traditions (1989:152, 1991:10).

9. Another terminological issue concerns the usage of *myth*. Extraordinary accounts, including those of UFOs, are often described as being mythic in nature (Ellis 1991:43). Bullard (2000) maintains that the term *myth* has been used differently by various writers in ufology. In everyday usage, the word is used to describe a false belief. Skeptics such as Donald Menzel often use this definition when describing UFOs, arguing that UFOs are mistaken efforts to understand the unknown (1972). Bullard points out that folklorists usually define myth as a creation story of a culture that explains the origins of humans and the universe. Anthropologists add that myth is true to its believers and false to nonbelievers, whereas psychologists see myths as expressions of the unconscious mind. (Bullard cites articles by Alan Dundes, William Bascom, and Lauri Honko in *Sacred Narrative* [1984] to discuss these different uses of the term myth.) Myths may be understood to be all of these things, except in the context of everyday usage. Therefore, when anomalous light experiences are said to contain mythic aspects, it is not meant to imply that such experiences are believed to be inherently untrue (Bullard 2000:159–60).

Still, competing definitions of *myth* hinder the ability to classify UFO beliefs as such, and it is probably best, when discussing the term, to refer to the traditional folkloric definition as outlined by William Bascom (1984), who noted that myths share certain defining characteristics. In general, they are sacred narratives involving nonhuman characters and are considered to be truthful accounts of events occurring in the distant past. Myths account for the origin of some present state of reality—be it in the form of the larger world, humankind, or aspects of nature. These characteristics help to distinguish myths from other forms of prose narrative, including legends and folktales (Bascom 1984:9). If we are to commit to this traditional definition of the term, it would be difficult to categorize UFO beliefs or encounters as such.

10. Such a motif would typically involve the witness waking from sleep, sometimes unable to move and with the sensation of a strange presence in the room. The witness may then be transported by the presence (often represented by a small, humanoid form) to a “ship,” where he or she may undergo a variety of experiences, including invasive medical procedures and dialogue with various entities. Examples of this motif can be found in such studies as those of John Mack (1994, 1999), Budd Hopkins (1983, 1987, 1996), and David M. Jacobs (1992).

11. My own “ghost-light” expeditions in North Carolina include visits to numerous ghost light locales including Greenville’s Pactolus Light, Wilmington’s Maco Light, Fayetteville’s Vander Light, and the famous Brown Mountain Lights near Asheville. Many of the legends associated with the lights are near identical in detail—typically involving a railroad conductor/fiancé/watchman who has had the misfortune of losing his head. Visitors to the lights (e.g., thrill-seeking teens or the occasional wily folklorist) typically partake in a ritual of parking their cars at the end of a clearing and flashing their headlights in the

200 *Journal of American Folklore* 119 (2006) direction of the ghostlight’s supposed location. Results vary, but ghost light accounts have been collected regularly by members of the North Carolina Folklore Society (Stansel 1973).

12. One of the specific goals of this project has been to evaluate how these experiences may alter a person’s worldview, particularly his or her cosmology. Very few attempts have been made so far to study this kind of change, yet several of the accounts provided by respondents in the survey, as well as the work of others who have undertaken such studies, suggest that dramatic shifts in cosmology do frequently occur and that the consideration and reevaluation of such events may continue throughout a person’s lifetime (Ring 1992:173–93).

13. Studies of recall and remembrance remain pressing issues in current neuroscience. Jill Neimark’s recent article in *Discover* (2004) highlights the ongoing work of Harvard psychologist Richard McNally and his colleagues into the study of memory repression and remembered events such as sexual abuse and alien abductions. The prevailing view among these scientists calls such recollections false memories constructed by the mind as a consequence of a variety of possible factors, including actual trauma and fantasy-prone personalities. As such their understanding of memory closely parallels that of cognitive anthropologists: memory is a dynamic reconstruction of the past rather than a series of mental “snapshots” of past events. In general, cognitive anthropologists have not addressed investigations into the realm of anomalous experience, though the study of these experiences through a cognitive approach may yield interesting results regarding distinctions in recall and interpretation as pertaining to anomalous and everyday experiences. Naturally, witness accounts would be the best place for cognitive anthropologists to begin such a study.

14. Here, the daughter is referring to the “supersecret” military installation near Rachel, Nevada, believed by many in the UFO community to harbor alien spacecraft. For a more detailed discussion of

the folklore surrounding this facility, see Ronald Story's *Encyclopedia of Extraterrestrial Encounters* (2001).

15. Dean has examined the notion of the alien as a dominant twentieth-century cultural icon and its relationship to conspiracy cultures that aim to challenge the political hegemony of modern science (1998).

16. Such characteristics of UFO experiences were originally noted by Jacques and Janine Vallee in *Challenge to Science: The UFO Enigma* (1966).

17. Kottmeyer (2001:646–58) notes several such UFO “waves” in the twentieth century, including major American flaps in 1947 and 1952, as well as a French wave in 1954 and a Latin American wave in 1965.

18. Examples of global UFO cases may be found in Clark's *UFO Encyclopedia* (1992) and Jacques Vallee's *Confrontations* (1990), among others.

19. While attempting to find a term to adequately describe the fuzzy plane of reality upon which some UFO experiences seem to exist, Rojcewicz concurrently warns folklorists against “premature naming” of such poorly understood phenomena that, he argues, serves to inhibit further knowledge (1989:12–3).

20. In her survey of several UFO communities, Denzler found that a large proportion (29 percent) of the individuals did not affiliate themselves with traditional religious denominations (2001:161–78).

Although it remains open to speculation whether such beliefs inform their experiences, or vice versa, of the 53 percent of this sample that reported having had a UFO-type experience, the majority (68 percent) reported having a prior interest in UFOs.

21. Several others within the realm of ufology (e.g., Appelle 2000) are beginning to make similar arguments.

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The Daily Spurt

(from an idea suggested by someone who wishes to remain anonymous)

75p



FILEY MAN IS A REAL LIFE ALIEN HYBRID

"Russ Kellett has six small hearts which are pumped by a mini advanced gas nuclear reactor on the left hand side of his frontal lobe."

Dr. Bunsen Berner - UK gov'n't chief scientific officer

"I'm stunned. I thought it was indigestion"

Russ

X-ray at Leeds General Hospital reveals truth!!!!!!!

And this is how, anthropologically speaking, he got there.....



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This in no way invalidates my video collection

Whatever you think of rods and orbs, they certainly fascinate some. In yet another well researched and written article, Kithra examines the phenomenon

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

By **Kithra**

Three curious light phenomena have begun to gain interest on the Internet in the last few years. They have been named Light Circles, Orbs, and Rods. And each has as many sceptics as believers. If you search the web you'll find a fair few articles on each of them, from both points of view, and so here I'm just going to introduce you to the basic information about these anomalies.

LIGHT CIRCLES

A very strange light phenomenon seems to have appeared across the western world during the last decade. In essence this anomaly consists of geometric circles of light that are mostly seen in clusters on the sides of buildings. They were first noticed in the USA, but now there are reports from as far away as Australia and Europe.



New York, USA



Vienna, Austria

Picture Credits: <http://www.taracanada.com/CircleofLight.html>

Many of the lights look as though they are a reflection of the sun, and often contain an X-shape within the light circle. However, the number of lights that are seen does not tally with the amount of windows to be found in the building from which they seem to emanate. And while some of the reflections seem to change very rapidly, others remain the unaltered.



Edinburgh, Scotland



Notting Hill, London

Picture Credits: <http://www.taracanada.com/CircleofLight.html>

But scientific explanations have been unforthcoming. One idea is that the reflections are caused by the inward curve of the surface of the window glass, with the "X" being due to interference from the light reflection. At the following site a scientist states his opinion that: *"The concavity of a windowpane would have to be considerable, a few millimetres, depending on the distance of the reflection and size of the glass sheet, what is not observed in practice. Forces, which would cause such bending deformations, e.g. due to the pressure against the window frame, would have to be very strong. The next issue is, that sheets of glass are not completely flat but slightly wavy, what normally adds to further dispelling of light. The result is that, normally, there is no clear reflection at longer distances anymore. This 'waveness' of windowpanes is not uniform, but random (it originates from solidifying of glass) and it is therefore unlikely that this would cause any straight interference. At the same time the sunlight is not coherent enough to cause coherence on such a large scale (its coherent length is 1 micrometer), so that all internal structures inside circular reflection can, from a physical point of view, be caused by mere focussing of light."*

In answer to which, the site comments that: *"this thesis raises at least three questions for which there are no answers yet: (i) why would the concave surfaces appear in such masses just lately (ii) why would light circles appear in some cases as reflections from some windowpanes only and sometimes as reflections from all windows of a building (iii) why there appears, if a windowpane's surface is concave, an additional form, in most cases a bright X, in the centre of a round reflection? Furthermore this thesis does not consider reflections in the form of a [rhomb](#) or an [octagon](#)."* You can also find many pictures, from around the world, at the same link:

http://www.cdk.si/grz/sv_krogi_e.htm

Most of these light circles appear to coincide with the sun's angle and are often seen at certain times of the day, e.g. early morning, midday, and late afternoon. However, others are only seen during particular seasons of the year. And some have only been observed when there is bright moonlight. But, even more strangely, some have been seen when people have actually made a wish to see them. This last occurrence is very akin to the one in which a person wishing to see a UFO claims to have seen one.



Berlin, Germany

Picture Credit: <http://www.taracanada.com/CircleofLight.html>

In an article, by J. D. Rabbit, entitled: *"Circles of Light"* he explains this in the following paragraph: *"Numerous circles have also been reported and photographed under other circumstances. They have appeared on bedroom walls after the occupant had read an article about them; they have appeared on the sidewalk in apparent response to people wishing to see one; they have even been*

seen on automobiles and clothing, in one case remaining on a man's shirt as he went inside. Another man was sitting in a café when he saw one on the side of a bus passing by; another man reported seeing them on every house he passed as he walked down the street. Exceptional forms, such as a bright "X" inside a rectangle, also appear. Some designs have been observed to change significantly in as little as 15 minutes. In two cases noted thus far, the light reflected from windows on the homes of Transmission Meditation participants to form circles visible on the adjacent houses. No physical healings have been reported in association with the circles, but some claim the designs grow brighter when people meditate near them."

<http://www.mcn.org/1/miracles/circles.htm>

Exactly as has happened with Crop Circles, the intricacy of their geometry has developed over the years. And the following link goes into far more detail about the article mentioned above, by J. D. Rabbit. In it she speculates that the designs may be related to Sacred Geometry, and that they continue to evolve from the original eight basic shapes; adding that perhaps both phenomena share a common origin.



*Light images seen on a Denver, Colorado, hotel since November 2000
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, June 2001*

Picture Credits: <http://www.taracanada.com/CircleofLight.html>

On the scientific side it states that: *"Physicists who have examined this phenomenon note that in order to produce such a focused image, the windowpane would need to take on an extreme curvature or concavity, as much as several millimeters, which is not evident under normal observation. The extreme force needed to produce such a bending deformation would certainly threaten the integrity of the glass itself. Furthermore, sheets of glass are not normally flat but slightly wavy due to the solidifying process during fabrication. This "waviness" is random, which makes it very unlikely to result in straight interference (i.e., straight lines such as the patterns produce in the image). Finally, the limits of coherence in sunlight itself (its coherent length is 1 micrometer) would not allow it to reflect without fuzziness on such a large scale. This means in sum that the shapes within the circular reflections cannot, from a physical point of view, be caused by mere focusing of light."* You can read the whole of the article here:

<http://www.taracanada.com/CircleofLight.html>

ORBS

The subject of Orbs is far more complicated than either Light Circles or Rods. There are many sites devoted to this topic and they all have different ideas, from alien life forms to spirit lights.

Are they lens flares, dust, insects, moisture, etc? They are seen both indoors and outdoors. However, a great many people seem to believe that they are the first manifestations of a ghost, and some have been seen that appear to show faces inside them.

These little spheres seem to be made of light that can differ in colour, size, and clarity. Mostly this phenomenon appears to show up on digital photographs, although there are instances where they have been caught on 35mm film.

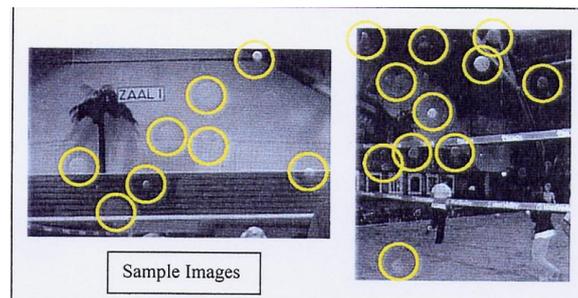


Picture Credit:

<http://www.thesupernaturalworld.co.uk/index.php?code=02&file=orbs.php&title=Orb's&cat=articles>

But, those who are experienced in photography, especially digital photography, maintain that the Orbs are nothing more than an artefact of the camera, possibly caused by a fault in the lens. The following site gives a good explanation of how such faults might cause an Orb to appear, and it also includes other reasons that one may show up:

http://www.btinternet.com/~dr_paul_lee/orbs.htm



Picture Credit: http://www.btinternet.com/~dr_paul_lee/orbs.htm

Even this site, devoted to paranormal investigations, is unconvinced that Orbs really are ghostly manifestations. You can read their very informative article about digital photography, and their own experiments, and conclusions, here: <http://www.parascience.org.uk/misc/method/orbs.htm>

Meanwhile, over on the hufos.net site there is a most interesting article about Orbs, including the actual photos that were taken during a skywatch in Wharram Percy, Yorkshire, UK. This is a deserted mediaeval village that had originally been occupied since the Iron Age. You can read the description, and see the images, here:

http://www.hufos.net/the_orb's_phenomenon.html

From another paranormal web site, The Institute of Paranormal Research, comes a commentary that also mainly suggests the Orbs are some type of camera malfunction. Although it does also suggest that some of them are genuine paranormal anomalies. You can read the reasons for this idea here:

<http://www.iopr.org.uk/4832/18832.html>



Picture Credit: <http://www.rit.edu/~andpph/ppic-work/images/orbs-6540.jpg>

In an article entitled: "Orbs - conscious life forms from other dimensions?" from late in 2005, Beth Fowler, Head of Investigations for Alberta Paranormal Investigations, looks at the phenomena from both sides, the sceptics and the believers. She also mentions the theories that they might be Guides and Angels, or Aliens, and concludes by saying that she thinks they are some type of consciousness. You can read her article here:

<http://www.tracieaustin.com/viewarticle.asp?ID=112>

On the other side of the fence comes a piece of writing, by Dave Julian, who believes that the Orbs are due to energy transference, between a source and a spirit, in order that the spirit can manifest. In it he states that: "*What are these balls of transparent light we find in photos taken in allegedly haunted places? I won't tell you I know the answer to this question. No one has the true answer to this question yet, but that's part of the job of researchers and investigator. One of the leading theories concerning what orbs are and the one that I lean towards the most is that they are not the spirit at all. The orb is the energy being transferred from a source (i.e. powerlines, heat energy, batteries, people, etc) to the spirit so they can manifest. This may not even be a conscious thing the spirit is doing, just a natural way they get their energy. This would explain why the orbs are round balls. According to the laws of Physics energy being transferring like that would assume is natural shape of a sphere. This theory can also be tied into the EMF readings we get during spirit activity.*" He then goes on to detail the photos he took, with a 35 mm film camera, during a visit to a cemetery. It makes a most interesting read, and you can find it here:

<http://theshadowlands.net/ghost/orbs.htm>



Picture Credit: <http://media.mgbg.com/wjtv/photos/unexplained/yazoo/janis-orbs.jpg>

And here is an article from someone who also believes that the Orbs are probably ghostly materializations. They think that: *"The orb is the basic energy pattern of the spirit world and is the most common."* They also question why it should be that if you have several people all taking pictures of exactly the same spot, at the same time, only some of the processed film shows Orbs, while the rest do not. And they query the idea of these Orbs being due to dust by saying: *"What about dust and dirt being stirred up? Can that be the cause of the orbs? If that were the case, I would think that there would not be normal photos in a sequence of photos from the same camera and location. All of the shots in a sequence should have the dust or dirt in it. We find that most orb photos do not appear in consecutive photos. All photographers present should get orbs if it is dust being stirred up as well."*

<http://www.xmotu.com/orbs.htm>

Yet another idea comes from the spiritlights.co.uk web site. Here they believe that Orbs are a type of intelligent life that exists side by side with us, but on a different dimensional level, that is only seen occasionally. This intriguing idea also suggests that perhaps the Orbs are trying to communicate with us. And they also make the following, very pertinent, point: *"Alternatively are we to believe that all the manufactures of photography/video equipment be it in digital format or conventional film, have and continue to make the same error in production, used the same faulty hardware/components and or software? Even if this was the case surely they would of rectified the problem by now."* They end by saying: *"When it comes to the video evidence which is usual shot in night vision (filming in/or using infrared light) the sceptics would have us believe that these orbs/lights are dust, although they can clearly be see flashing and are always transparent!"*

<http://www.spiritlights.co.uk/orbs/whatareorbs.htm>

Brian P. James, from APRA, has written a piece entitled: *"The Riddle of the Orbs?"* in which he looks at the whole subject of Orbs. Starting with the history of photography during the last few decades, including the introduction of flash photography, he describes his own experiences with the photography he undertook while researching ways to reproduce anomalous photos that he'd seen taken by other people. He continues by examining modern digital cameras and how they work. Then, describing his own research, he states: *"The vast majority of these early 'orb photos' were taken in the Southwest of England, which were taken in crop circles at dusk or even at night, and often during drizzle; this immediately raised concerns to me. Notwithstanding any 'paranormal' aspect, here we had photos being taken in a situation – i.e. in a ripe cereal crop - where dust and all manner of small insects (if any of you think of those small black bugs as 'thunderblight' you are wrong, they are 'harvest bugs' - I know from 17 years in the grain and malting trade!) that would be present in front of the camera and flash. We also had obvious small droplets of moisture on occasions - surely a recipe for spurious images?"*

Well, that was fascinating because I live in the South West, and I had no idea this is where some of those Orbs originated. He also points out the following information: *"My own research effort covered precipitation effects (such as mist, drizzle, rain, snow and hail) as well as particulates (dust, pollen and smoke), and insects etc. I note that in the reports from the SPI National Skywatch in Rendlesham Forest in August 2003 that many people were capturing 'orbs' as they wandered round the forest at night while continually taking photos - now, let's think logically here... The forest floor is pretty dusty in the summer months anyway, but this was after one of the driest summers in Britain for over 20 years, and here we had 40-odd people tramping through the undergrowth - is it any surprise that cameras were picking up numerous orb-like particulate reflections?"* However, he adds that he is not debunking all of the Orb images, just that they need very careful consideration before any conclusion is drawn. You can read his work, and see the photos he took, at this link:

http://www.apra.org.uk/riddle_orbs.htm

And finally, for a wholly scientific explanation of what these Orbs might be the following site is as good a place to start as any. It introduces itself thus: *"Here you will be introduced to the "colorful" plasma energy orbs discovered in Gulf Breeze, Florida in 2000. If you are interested in learning more about the true "nature" of a tropospheric plasma orb, a careful study of our sample film and digital camera images, as well as all supporting scientific research work and theories, is an excellent place for you to begin. "Initial Study on the Nature of Orbs" under our Research link button on this Home Page, contains many groundbreaking observations and theories in the area of plasma energy physics and ball lightning, and you will find it is written in an easy to understand manner for "beginners" just venturing into this fascinating new field of tropospheric energy studies. We hope you enjoy learning more about Unified Field Plasmoids, and that our work will inspire your own further discoveries and contributions from around the world.*

This site is being offered as a "springboard" for college and university level students, with multidisciplinary applications in the areas of lower atmospheric plasma physics, quantum mechanics, math and specialized photography."
<http://orbstudy.com/BIZyCart.asp?NEXTPAGE=Index.htm&GROUP=Special&STYLE=Base&CLIENT=OrbStudy>

If you'd like to investigate the idea of "Unified Field Plasmoids" for yourself the site also contains links that are categorised as follow:

<http://orbstudy.com/BIZyCart.ASP?STYLE=Base&GROUP=Contents&NEXTPAGE=Catalog.htm&THISPAGE=Index.htm&CLIENT=OrbStudy&ACCOUNT=3017>

TITLE DESCRIPTION

[Section I](#) Orb Study Home Page

[Section II](#) Introduction to "The World of the Earthly Plasmoids"

[Section III](#) Sample Digital Images

[Section IV](#) Research "Initial Study on the Nature of Orbs"

[Section V](#) Dedication to James Clerk Maxwell (the "Father" of Color Object Photography) [Section VI](#) Unified Field Plasmoids and the Quantum Theory

[Section VII](#) Unified Field Plasmoids - Atoms and Light Quanta

[Section VIII](#) Orb Study Research Level - Sample Photo Submissions

[Section IX](#) Identifying Camera Problems

[Section X](#) Multiple Equipment Validation Experiments

[Section XI](#) Orb Study Around The World

RODS

As with the two previous phenomena it seems that opinion about the Rods is also greatly divided.

Basically, it seems that they first appeared on film taken by Jose Escamilla in March 1994. However, they could only be seen if the film, or video, was slowed down, although they can also be seen in some photographic stills. But so far, apparently, they cannot be seen with the naked eye as they move too fast.

Back in 1994 Escamilla, a filmmaker was shooting footage in Midway, New Mexico, but since then he has also managed to capture these Rods in other film footage. His description of them is that they have a cigar, or cylinder, shape that can be anywhere in size from a few inches to quite a few feet in length.



Picture Credit:

http://www.aerialextreme.com/images/stockvideolibrary_extra_14.jpg

At times they can also be captured on underwater film, although mostly they are seen in the air. In many ways they resemble some sort of animal, with different varieties having been seen in both The Americas and Europe.



Picture Credit: <http://members.tripod.com/apone0/>

So are they really a new flying species, or are they in some way related to UFOs? On the other hand, perhaps they're related to the Rod-shaped Orbs captured on film taken during paranormal investigations.

In an article at the following link the author, Michael Merchant begins by stating: *"To prove the existence of rods we must first examine and eliminate what the skeptics claim they are, most notably sun glare, insects, internal artifacts of the camera, birds, scratches on the lens, or pollen and dust particles."* He then proceeds to describe how he sets up his camera so that such possibilities can be eliminated. After which he examines some of the debunking ideas and makes very plausible counter-arguments. Then, showing some example photographs, he

concludes by stating that his own opinion is that Rods are real creatures and deserve to be taken seriously. You can read what he says here:

<http://www.forteantimes.com/exclusive/rods.shtml>

Others, of course, have suggested that they are alien entities, or probes. While the sceptics maintain that they're simply camera glitches, insects, or even high-flying birds, caught on camera. Some have described the Rods as being "sky fish" because they seem to move with the same undulating motion.



Picture Credit: <http://tranzine.democlub.com/15/skyfish.jpg>

And, on the subject of debunking these, at the following link you can read a short article that does exactly that. It does so by basing its evidence on how cameras work:

<http://www.ufotheatre.com/rods/rods.htm>

However, one of the best articles I've come across that looks at the whole Rods phenomena can be found on the ufos-aliens.co.uk web site. This sets out the pros and cons of the two theories that Rods are either extraterrestrial, or a new earth based life form. It also includes a fair amount of film footage, together with the history of how some of the photographs were taken, including details of who took them. And it includes what some of the scientific researchers, e.g. biologists, zoologists and entomologists, say about them. There is also a report from a meteorologist in relation to a Rod that he saw flying into a tornado, and being totally unaffected by it, including footage of this particular event. The piece ends by giving some 'tips' from Jose Escamilla on how to capture Rods on video film. You can read the entire article here:

<http://www.ufos-aliens.co.uk/cosmicrods.html>



Picture Credit: <http://www.ufos-aliens.co.uk/cosmicrods.html>

What are we to make of these strange lights? You'll have to make up your own mind. Personally, I'm not very scientifically minded, and I know nothing of photography. So, for now, I think I'm just going to remain open-minded.

Kithra

<http://kithraskrystalkave.org.uk>



Presents

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Documementbusters Personnel left to right: Dave Clarke, Andy Roberts Joe McGonagle, Gary Anthony

IF THERE`S SOMETHING STRANGE IN THE BRITISH SKIES, WHO YA GONNA CALL?

If THERE`S SOMETHING SECRET IN THE MoD VAULTS, WHO YA GONNA CALL?

IF YOU NEED NICK POPE DUFFED UP, WHO YOU GONNA CALL

THE DOCUMENTBUSTERS!

(not suitable for children; some scenes contain images of extreme boredom)

BURMARSH

Researcher Chris Rolfe from Kent has had a long standing interest in the case of the unidentified object seen over the home of Michael Howard, the then Home Secretary in 1997. He and I wrote an updated piece on the case for UFO Magazine (UK) shortly before it closed. Chris made a recent FOIA request about the case and this was the reply he received.

Mr Chris Rolfe Our Reference
006 &

09-02-2006-090127-
20-02-2006-

093712-005
Folkestone
CT19 5SF

Date

10 March 2006

Dear Mr Rolfe

I am writing concerning your two Freedom of Information requests concerning a UFO sighting in the Burmarsh area of Kent in 1997 and the future release of information about UFOs. As both requests are similar, I will address them both in this letter.

First it may be useful if I explain how our UFO records are currently constructed. The UFO sightings reported to the MOD and public correspondence about UFOs (some of which also contain reports of sightings) are filed on paper files in the order in which they were received. They are not segregated by date of sighting or geographical area and separate files are not opened for each incident. As it is common for individuals to continue to write to the MOD about well known events for months, sometimes years, after they have occurred, it is possible that there are reports or correspondence about any particular event in any of the files from the time it occurred until today. If there was press or parliamentary interest it is also possible that information may have been included on UFO policy or parliamentary files at anytime during this period. When answering Freedom of Information requests we endeavour to locate all of the information relevant to the request and to release as much information as possible. However, I hope you will appreciate that if we were to search all of our paper records each time, the costs would quickly exceed the £600 limit set for compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. We therefore usually only look for information immediately around the time of the event.

With regard to the reports sent to the MOD from UFO Monitors East Kent concerning the alleged events in Burmarsh in March 1997, I can confirm that our files do contain correspondence from your organisation. This includes a witness report and petition from residents of Kent. We also have your letter to The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP and your letter to the Kent County Constabulary. This correspondence spans a period between April 1997 and March 1999. None of these were held on our file covering UFO sighting reports received between January and July 1997 so may not have been located when the researcher requested UFO reports in Kent in March 1997.

You also asked if the incident was looked at by any other Government Department, such as DI55, DSTI or DI61. I should inform you that the departments you have listed are a part of the MOD and we have no evidence that any of these were consulted about these events. The Department's Air Defence experts were consulted and confirmed that there was no unauthorised military activity in the UK Air Defence Region on 8 March 1997. The London Air Traffic Control Centre also confirmed that there was no unusual or unauthorised air activity, civil or military in the area. The Home Office confirmed that there was no such security incident involving the Home Secretary.

Finally, you asked about the future publication of UFO Sighting Reports. It is our intention to make UFO information available to the public whenever possible. Since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 a great deal of information has been released in response to requests for information and some of this can now be viewed on the Freedom of Information page of the MOD website at www.mod.uk. We also seek ways to proactively release information and we are currently compiling a database of brief details of each sighting, listed by the date they occurred, rather than when they were reported. As we hold records covering a 25 year period, this is an ongoing project, but the database has been completed for sightings between 2002-2005 and these are also available on the MOD website. In addition, we are looking to place scanned images of UFO reports into the MOD Publication Scheme starting with reports received in 1985 and progressing towards the present. Before any of the reports can be released the witnesses personal data must be removed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and for such a large number of reports this is likely to take a considerable time to complete. However, time permitting, we hope to start releasing this information shortly.

I hope this is helpful. If this information does not address your requirements or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of these requests, then you should contact the undersigned in the first instance. Should you remain dissatisfied, then you may apply for an internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB.

If you are still unhappy following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

L C Unwin

That's all for issue 16 folks. See you again soon with the next bundle of fun and frivolity. Who knows, one day I may even take this subject seriously.

