

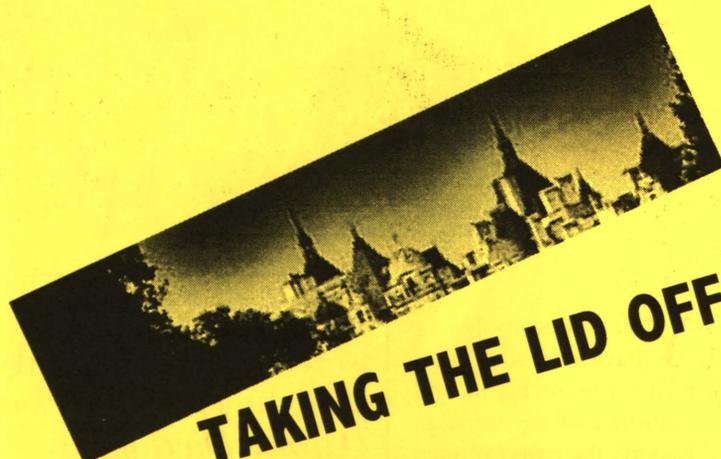
MAGONIA 92



CONTEMPORARY
VISION AND
BELIEF

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JUNE 2006



TAKING THE LID OFF WHITEHALL



Joe McGonagle
examines the life and
times of Julian
Hennessey,
a pioneering British
ufologist who teased
UFO information out of
Whitehall many years
before the Freedom of
Information laws, and
in the process made a
complete nuisance of
himself to the
Government. Good
man!



And Kevin McClure
looks at the lies and
fantasies behind the
'Spear of Destiny'
legend.



EDITORIAL NOTES



MAGONIA 92

Incorporating MUF0B 138
JUNE 2006

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SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS

Magonia is available by exchange with other magazines, or on subscription at the following rates for SIX ISSUES:

United Kingdom: £9.50

Euro Zone: £20.00

USA: \$25.00

Elsewhere: £12.00

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European subscribers should pay using euro notes.

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You will probably have seen some mention in the papers and elsewhere of the 'Condign Report', the report of the Ministry of Defence's

definitive 'UFO Project'. Squeezed out of the MoD through the Freedom of Information Act by researchers Dave Clarke, Andy Roberts, Joe McGonagle and Gary Anthony, the report was commissioned on behalf of the Defence Intelligence Staff in 1996 to provide background for the MoD's claims that UFO reports were "of no defence significance". An unnamed researcher - probably a retired senior RAF officer, according to Clarke - studied UFO reports from the Ministry's files, but undertook no first-hand investigation: the logic being that as the report was Top Secret, any questioning of civilians would lead either to its premature publicity, or to claims of Men in Black interrogating witnesses!

The main aim of the investigation was, implicitly if not explicitly, to support the MoD's line on UFO reports, and to assess whether the UFO phenomenon itself posed any sort of threat to national security. In doing this the unknown compiler has taken a trip down some of the lesser-trod paths of UFO research, and come up with some conclusions that the world of ufology has found difficult to assimilate.

But the one aspect of the report that ufologists of all persuasions will judge it on is that it concludes that some UFO reports are generated by an unknown phenomenon - hastily adding that there is no evidence that this is an extraterrestrial phenomenon. Instead it leaps back a few decades to the era of Donald Menzel and the early years of Phil Klass, and suggests that the most puzzling reports are probably the result of atmospheric plasma phenomena, and describes these throughout as UAPs (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena), consciously or unconsciously using the terminology devised two decades ago by Jenny Randles. So nothing new there then, for ufologists at least, but it must be counted as something that an official government report is willing to accept the possibility that at least some UFO reports cannot be explained by our

Condign: Severe and well deserved (usually of punishment). Concise Oxford Dictionary.

current level of scientific knowledge. Isn't this what ufologists have been wanting to hear for years?

Well, maybe, but we

are an ungrateful lot, and that's not the response the report generated. As always, contributors to the essential *UFO UpDates* discussion group were quick off the mark, basing their comments on brief reports that appeared in some papers before the full report was released, and you'll probably not be surprised to learn that the response, largely from America, was cries of "whitewash", "waste of time", "garbage", etc. Obviously a few people felt it not was actually necessary to read the report before dismissing it!

But even the more thoughtful commentators found Condign (incidentally, were assured that the code-name was randomly generated, and has no connection to 'Condon') curiously unsatisfactory. There are a lot of good things about it; the first one being that it actually exists, that someone actually thought that it would be a good idea to undertake a detailed internal report on the subject. Secondly that for someone coming onto the subject from the outside, our anonymous author has done his homework and read up on the literature. Dave Clarke commented at the press conference launching the publication how curious it was to see photocopied pages from his own books in a Government document, stamped 'Top Secret'.

It's equally curious to see pages from the works of John Michell and Paul Devereux treated the same way, along with 'Top Secret' maps of leys and fault lines at Warminster, but it does at least show that Condign's author had read outside the usual range of Whitehall and MoD reports.

Part of the Report's brief was to judge if UFOs represented any threat to aircraft, and it concludes that there have been a number of deaths as a result of aircraft either trying to avoid or to connect with UFOs. Perhaps one of the most unexpected parts of the report is the suggestion that both the Russian and former Soviet and the American governments have investigated the UAP phenomenon, and

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Julian Hennessey with J Allen Hynek at their meeting in 1970



JULIAN HENNESSY

Portrait of a British UFO Pioneer

Joe McGonagle

UNTIL NOW THE contribution of Julian Hennessey to British ufology has been largely unrecognised. As will be shown in this article, we would not have anything like the volume of official documentation that we now enjoy, were it not for his extraordinary efforts.

Born in Scotland in 1946, the thought of extraterrestrial life captured his imagination from a very young age. He used to spend time at Calton Hill observatory in Edinburgh, discussing things such as the possibility of life on Mars with the professor who operated the observatory. His interest in ufology was ignited by a sighting of what was most probably Sputnik I or Sputnik II in 1957/58. He was helping his father (a television engineer) adjust a television antenna when they both noticed a pair of bright objects passing overhead (this makes it more likely to have been Sputnik I, the booster of which also entered orbit). Shortly

afterwards, a report appeared in the local press about a party of potato pickers that were terrified by a saucer-shaped object which swooped over them while they were travelling on a coastal road near Musselburgh. This article fuelled his interest even further.

By 1963, Hennessey had moved to London, and was initially employed in the Borough Engineer's department in the London Borough of Brent. He joined the London UFO research organisation (LUFORO), which was later to be a founding group of the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA). Whilst with LUFORO, he spent many hours in their library at Hampstead reading books, newspaper clippings, and magazines. On one such occasion, he came across an issue of *The UFO Investigator*, the journal of the National Investigations Com-

mittee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), an American UFO research group. He was impressed by the quality of the content in the journal, and subsequently became a subscriber.

The earliest example of UFO-related correspondence to or from him which I have, is a copy of a letter from Richard Hall of NICAP dated 18 June 1963, thanking Hennessey for some material that he had sent, and also for allowing NICAP to quote his name as a member of NICAP.

In 1964 Hennessey established contact with a group of enthusiastic investigators that went under the name of "The Fleet Street UFO study group", and ventured on a few field investigations with them. He also lived close to Brinsley Le Poer Trench (later to become the Earl of Clancarty) and had access to his extensive personal library. In the same year, Hennessey met Dr. J. Allen Hynek, and exchanged address details with him. What began as a mutual interest in UFOs between Hennessey and Hynek was to develop into a friendship as time went by.

Hennessey decided that there was some potential in writing to official organisations and embarked on what was to become a campaign of letter-writing set to last at least fifteen years! Early examples of his correspondence include letters between him and the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Soviet Embassy, Jodrell Bank, and the (British) Air Ministry. The first example of correspondence between Hennessey and the Air Ministry that I have come across is dated 18 December 1963 and is a response to a letter from him dated 13 December. The letter is in itself innocuous, simply stating that they don't generally send details of sighting reports to anyone other than the person making the report, that the majority of reports can be explained in mundane terms, and that there was no cover-up in regard to "flying

saucers" as far as they were concerned.

By November 1964 at the age of eighteen Hennessey was already creating problems for the British Air Ministry. In an internal memo¹ from A161 (Air technical intelligence, defensive weapons systems) to S4f (Air) (Air Ministry Secretariat), the author wrote:

"Hennessey. We had no official reports on any of this 'Investigators' list of sightings. However No. 4 - although we are given no year even, could be the same as an official report to A161 through SRATC [Southern Region Air Traffic Control-JM] early in 1963. This latter sighting was in fact window [material ejected from an aircraft to confuse enemy radar-JM] being used in a Bomber Command exercise - the Aer Lingus aircraft flew right through it, even though they had been warned to avoid the area. But we do not give Hennessey this information."

Quite why they were not willing to tell him this confounds me. In the formal reply² to Hennessey, dated 1 December 1964, he was informed in respect of this case that "there was no investigation, and no conclusion can be formed" because it was not reported to the Air Ministry - a blatant lie! One of the reports that Hennessey enquired about in the letter related to this memo took place in October 1954. This fact takes on some importance later in this article.

In between writing to the Air Ministry and waiting for their response, Hennessey had not been idle. In a letter dated 28 November 1964 to Richard Hall (who was at that time the assistant director of NICAP), he mentioned that he was enclosing a letter from the Prime Minister's office (Harold Wilson was the PM at the time) which was sent to him in confidence and therefore was not for publication. He went on to say that he had contacted all of the foreign embassies in

London and received encouraging replies from three of them. (In a recent conversation with Hennessey, he told me that the Thai Embassy was the most co-operative at the time). He had also started canvassing members of the House of Lords for their views on the topic, and replies were trickling in, most of them dismissive or non-committal.

"This man Hennessey is becoming a nuisance. He now phones me up at the office and on the last occasion asked whether I lived at Gunnersbury Park, which I do, since he might want to contact me at home! I denied being in the phone directory."

Hennessey used every channel available to him in order to further his investigation into UFOs, much to the chagrin of the staff at the MOD. A flustered clerical officer at S4f (Air) mentions in an internal memo³ dated 9 December 1964 that "This man Hennessey is becoming a nuisance. He now phones me up at the office and on the last occasion asked whether I lived at Gunnersbury Park, which I do, since he might want to contact me at home! I denied being in the phone directory."

Hennessey was very diligent when it came to keeping records. If something came to his attention from sources other than documentary, he typed a 'Note of possible interest' and inserted

it in his file system. One such note recorded a Parliamentary Question (PQ) raised by Sir J. Langford-Holt in the House of Commons on 21 June 1966 which was in part related to historical reports. At the end of the summary, Hennessey wrote, "Note: In a recent telephone conversation with the Min. [Ministry of Defence - JM] it was stated that they

S4f (Air) sought advice on behalf of the PM's office as to how they should respond to an enquiry from Hennessey. S4f (Air)'s response⁶ dated 13 January 1967 included a recommendation that any future enquiries by Hennessey to No. 10 should be forwarded to S4f (Air) and they would respond. Interestingly, No. 10 responded to Hennessey's enquiry directly in a letter⁷ dated 8 March 1967, though there wasn't much of any real significance in it. They also occasionally responded directly to him after this date, primarily in respect of queries which he raised which were related to the UN.

He was encouraged by responses he had received from the Prime Minister's office to his suggestions that the UN would be a suitable platform for an international investigation on the subject of UFOs, one of which (dated 25 July 1967) contained the following paragraph: "As the reports of sightings continue to appear from many parts of the world, it is quite understandable that there should be a growing interest in seeing some responsible international effort made to seek explanations of these phenomena".

This previous correspondence with No. 10 was used by Hennessey to his advantage, implying (though not actually saying) that he was making enquiries on behalf of the PM. Evidence of this is found in a letter dated 14 April 1967 from him to Dr. Edward Condon (head of University of Colorado public investigation of UFOs) "I thank you for your letter of April 6th and shall assume that you will communicate with me at a later date regarding my obtaining two advanced copies of your final report on your UFO study for transmission to the Prime Minister of this country."

Hennessey's first major coup appears to have been from the USAF. In *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*

could not find any trace of earlier records".

In response¹ to an enquiry from Hennessey on 27 October 1966, the MOD wrote "As indicated in my letter dated 6 September 1966 the figures for reports of UFO sightings prior to 1959 are not available. A recent Parliamentary Question asked for figures covering the last ten years but we were only able to supply those from 1959 onwards. We are therefore unable to elucidate on those sightings prior to 1959."

Hennessey's dialogue with No. 10 Downing Street was starting to raise some anxieties. A memo⁵ dated 23 December 1966 from the Assistant Permanent Secretary to the Minister for the RAF to

by Capt. Edward Ruppelt, Ruppelt described a document which he claimed to have seen known as 'The Estimate of the Situation'. According to him, this document confirmed that the USAF concluded that UFOs were of extraterrestrial origin. There was much debate as to whether or not Ruppelt did see such a document.

Many ufologists had sought confirmation from the USAF and been met with denial. It would seem that Hennessey managed to obtain confirmation in writing from the USAF that this document actually existed. I haven't seen the documentation to directly support this, but Richard Hall indirectly confirms it in a letter dated 17 April 1967 to Hennessey, in which Hall wrote: "Thank you very much for the carbon of the Air Force letter acknowledging the existence of the 1948 Top Secret Estimate. You are correct that this is a first."

In a telephone conversation Hennessey confirmed to me that he managed to obtain such acknowledgement after several attempts to do so via correspondence with the USAF. He also mentioned that J. Allen Hynek had told him that he had also seen the document described by Ruppelt.

In the meantime, Hennessey had been stirring things up again back at the MOD. He apparently requested access to MOD UFO files on behalf of the Condon enquiry, offering his services as a "go between". This is discussed in an internal memo⁸ dated 4 May 1967. The memo indicates that while there were no reservations on the grounds of security, the MOD did not want to set a precedent which could increase their workload and expenses. Consequently, they turned down his offer.

Another direction that Hennessey had been applying gentle pressure to was the United Nations. Not only had he been in touch with members of the UN outer

space affairs group (with some encouraging responses), but he had also written to the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, trying to cajole them to put forward a suggestion via their UN ambassadors that the UN undertake a full scientific investigation of the UFO phenomena. None of them expressed any commitment to do so.

An incident occurred on 28 April 1967 at Berry Head, which involved the Coastguard, and an unidentified conventional aircraft which appeared to circle a stationary or slow-moving UFO over the English Channel in daylight. There was also a report that the object was detected on radar. The MOD's initial response was that it might have been "a reflection of car headlights or some sort of meteorological phenomena"⁹. Hennessey was to take this up directly with the MOD at a later date, though he did query the report in a telephone conversation¹⁰ with Mr Allen (desk clerk at S4f 'Air') of the MOD on 6 June 1967. Another topic of discussion on that occasion was the matter of UFO records prior to 1959, during which Hennessey was informed that "they [reports prior to 1959 - JM] had all been destroyed including the unsolved cases".

To give some indication of the scope of Hennessey's activities, it is worth mentioning a letter that he wrote to Richard Hall dated 17 June 1967. This amounted to five full pages and was in effect a status report of his current activities. The headings were; Ministry of Technology (UFO Data); United Nations; Poll of Embassies; Poll of cross-section of members of House of Lords; Poll of cross-section of members of House of Commons; General information. The latter heading encompassed eleven separate activities, mainly related to correspondence with politicians and organisations in

the USA. One particular item in the General information section provides an insight into his view of the state of British ufology at the time:

"On a lighter note, BUFORA and other fad groups are getting a lot of publicity here about their coming June 24 Skywatches.

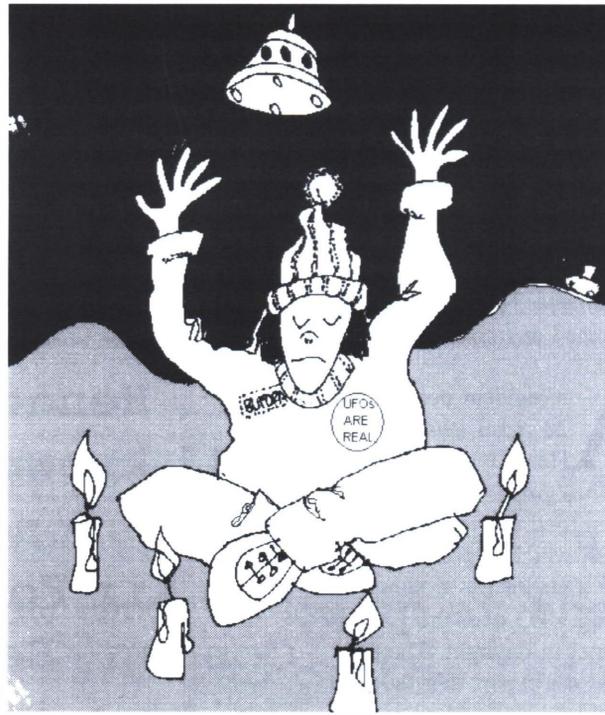
"Mr. Hennessey is well known as a correspondent to both the Air Force and Condon. He has written in the past to Condon describing himself as having been, "engaged in confidential work for the Prime Minister", on U.F.O's since 1964 and asking for reports "for submission to Mr. Wilson". It would seem wise to treat him with some caution."

BUFORA is going out armed with Geiger Counters, Cameras, Binoculars, and Magnetic Detecting equipment with "lots and lots of hot tea." Recently BBC TV Cameras were down at Warminster in Wiltshire, where UFO's and strange happenings are apparently still going on. They filmed a member of BUFORA whilst conducting some serious research into UFO's - he was sitting in a field at

dusk surrounded by candles, waving his hands, and muttering strange unintelligible words in an effort to communicate with the UFO controllers and entice them to land beside him. I think that if they saw *him* you would never receive another UFO report! They would be on their way back home."

In connection with one of Hennessey's other 'projects', he had written to No. 10, stating amongst other things that "Secretary General U-Thant [of the UN - JM] approved the outlining of a plan for global investigation into UFOs to be presented to the Outer Space Affairs Group"¹². Hennessey had gained the impression from NICAP literature that McDonald's presentation to the UN was of greater import than it was in reality. In any case, it caused a flurry of signals¹³ between the Foreign Office and the UK [diplomatic] Mission in New York. One of these signals dated 4 August 1967 from the UK Embassy in Washington to the foreign office included the following poignant text:

"We have compared notes with UKMIS New York on Mr. Hennessey, who, in addition, is well known as a correspondent to both the Air Force and Condon. He has written in the past to Condon describing himself as having been *Quote* engaged in confidential work for the Prime Minister *Unquote* on U.F.O's since 1964 and asking for reports *Quote* for submission to Mr. Wilson *Unquote*. In answer to a subsequent enquiry by the Department of the Air Force, we have assured them that he enjoys no official status (see Owen's letter Z/0618 of 10 March from the Cabinet office to Hewson in this Embassy. UKMIS New York tell us that copies of letters from 10 Downing Street to Hennessey are on the files of the Outer Space Affairs Group in the U.N. Secretariat. These have presumably been provided by



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Hennessey himself. It would seem wise to treat him with some caution."

Probably through his canvassing of the members of both Houses of Parliament, Hennessey cultivated working relationships with a number of interested politicians, including Airey Neave, Sir Patrick Wall, Sir John Langford-Holt, and Sir Eric Bullus. If he was unsatisfied with responses that he obtained from the MOD he would write to one of these to put his questions to the MOD on his behalf. One such occasion was a letter to the MOD from Sir Eric Bullus on 5 July 1967. Unfortunately, I don't have a copy of this letter, only a response¹¹ dated 14 August 1967 from the MOD. The most significant part of the response appears to be:

"There seems to have been some misunderstanding about Ministry of Defence records.

We have not lost any files. All Ministry of Defence papers, however, are retained only for a specific period once action is complete. The period relates to the importance of the papers and in the case of unidentified flying objects is five years. Thus, only reports which have been received since 1962 are currently retained.

Nevertheless, should it ever appear that a report was of special significance, then the papers would, of course be retained for more than five years. This has not yet been found to be necessary."

Sir Eric and Hennessey would later argue that the destruction of files containing information about cases such as the 1956 Lakenheath-Bentwaters radar/visual case resulted in the loss of material which might have been useful to science.

Another example of co-operation between Hennessey and sympathetic MPs were Airey Neave's efforts to persuade the Parliamentary and Scientific committee to undertake an assessment of the UFO phenomena. Quoting Hennessey directly from a letter to me in October 2004, "Although this Committee's program was full at the time, Mr. Neave had intended to try to get it included in a future program but his life was ended tragically by a bomb in his car."

Up until this point, Hennessey had been operating as an extension of the NICAP (US) organisation. The earliest reference that I have for any intention to form a UK branch (known as a sub-committee in NICAP terms) is in a letter from him to Gordon Lore (who had replaced Richard Hall as assistant director of NICAP) dated 6 October 1967. It would take some time before he had assembled what he regarded as a suitable Committee.

1967 was a busy year for Hennessey. In addition to the workload described so far, on 29 October 1967 he wrote to Don Berliner (Berliner was active in NICAP at the time and had become a personal friend of Hennessey following a visit to the UK earlier that year) that he had more than forty cases which he was following up. This didn't seem to prevent him from continuing to harass the MOD at the same time though.

One of the cases which he followed up was that of Mr. Angus Brooks on 26 October 1967. This case elicited another unbelievable response from the MOD, so it is necessary to provide an outline of the case here.

On 26th October 1967 at 11:25 (AM), Brooks was walking his dog at Owermoigne, South Dorset. He first sighted a contrail, then another object approached from the same area of the sky and levelled out about 2-300

feet above the ground and a quarter of a mile away, where it slowed to a stop. It initially appeared as "A central-circular chamber with a leading fuselage at the front and three separate fuselages together at the rear". Two of the rear sections then rotated around the central chamber to form a cross. The object was translucent. He observed the object for about 22 minutes, before it changed shape again and climbed out of sight "at immense speed". The MOD response will be covered later in this article.

Another case that Hennessey was investigating occurred on 11 November 1967. A DC6 aircraft piloted by Capt. Underhill encountered a delta or cone shaped object during a flight near Barcelona, Spain. The MOD refused to entertain the case because it occurred outside British controlled airspace.

By the 8th November 1967, Hennessey's unrelenting pressure on the MOD both directly and through the services of sympathetic MPs caused a major shake-up in the way that the MOD handled UFO reports. In a memo¹⁴ of the same date from S4 (Air) to DI55¹⁵ and OPS (GE) 2 (RAF)¹⁶ is a summary of actions from a meeting which took place the previous day between the various departments concerned. Paragraph eight of the memo reads as follows:

"I sincerely hope, given a successful outcome to the many letters which this Loose Minute commits me to write, we shall have covered and made arrangements permitting prompt access to all reasonable sources of information about activities which might give rise to UFO reports. If I have overlooked any aspects of this problem, perhaps you will let me know. I will of course, keep you informed of the progress which I make."

In response to another letter from Hennessey, S4f (Air)

wrote¹⁷ to him on 27 December 1967 acceding to a request from him for a meeting, and requesting a summary of the points which he would like to discuss at the meeting. Hennessey replied¹⁸ on 31 December as follows:

"Dear Mr. Ackhurst,

Thank you for your letter of the 27th. Although you drew my attention that we have had long correspondence on the UFO subject, I am still of the opinion that a meeting would be of value providing that the Ministry's replies are full. As the points that I would raise are comprehensive, I shall define them to a certain extent, they are as follows:-

"The seeming lack of coordination between police forces of the U.K. and the Ministry which results in many UFO reports lying uninvestigated in police records; the fact that the ministry does only appear to have a couple of odd cases where it has sufficient information to positively identify an object but could not; does the Army, Navy, and Air Force have regulations governing the reporting of UFOs made by military personnel to be channelled to the Ministry; why are there no provisions or regulations requiring civilian airline pilots to report any UFOs they observe to the Ministry of Defence; what use is access to European radars to S4(f) when it will not even investigate a case involving a British airliner making a close encounter with a UFO over Europe; how does the Ministry view it's role in the face of UFO projects at the Universities of Colorado and Toronto also the Soviet commission; what cooperation if any, is the Ministry giving to these projects; how does the Ministry view the establishment of these projects in the light of it's own negative findings over so many years; if scientists on these projects stated that they were convinced that UFOs were real,

would the Ministry review it's policy and look into aspects other than air defence implications; why were British Military Intelligence sources in Russia supplying data on UFO reports to the United States Air Force; what amounts of expenditure is involved in investigating a major case, and how much is spent per year in investigating UFOs.

Cases to which I would be referring to are the Stoney Cross sighting by G.N. Pestrige and P.C. Holloway; the Hindley sighting by two police constables on August 10; the Berry Head sighting by coastguards on April 28; the Wing Commander Cox sighting on October 24; the Barcelona DC6 sighting on September 11; the Robinson sighting of October 27 which involved two Lightning aircraft; the Fordingbridge sighting by Mr. Farlow on November 6 involving E-M effects; the Aer Lingus sighting of November 21 over the Firth of Clyde; and, finally, the two BEA sightings one on November 15, over Florence and the BEA Vanguard sighting near Sydenham on November 17 which involved radar and visual trackings by RAF Aldergrove and Bishop's Court.

"If you would write and let me know at least two days in advance of when the meeting can be arranged, I shall confirm my ability to attend. Yours faithfully, [signed] J.J.A. Hennessey"

It would appear that 1968 was about to get off to a flying start! Indeed it did - whilst waiting for the details of meeting arrangements from S4(f), Hennessey was hatching yet another cunning plan for a worthwhile project. In the US, NICAP had started a project to have major airlines channel UFO reports to them. This project was known as VFON (Volunteer Flight Officers Network), and was pioneered by NICAP member Herb Roth. Hennessey want to do the

same in the UK, and in a letter¹⁹ dated 15 January 1968 to Freddie Underhill (a pilot involved in one of the sightings that Hennessey was following up, and who Hennessey considered as a suitable candidate for a proposed UK NICAP Sub-committee) he wrote:

"Recently I have taken up a new task, my aim is to establish a network whereby reports of UFOs made by airline pilots will be channelled to me. At present I am corresponding with BEA on this matter through a Captain Owens the manager of the Comet flight. If I am successful with BEA, I then hope to branch out to BUA, PAN AM, BOAC, Eagle, TWA, Lufthansa, etc. If you know anyone in BUA whom I should contact, please let me know."

Hennessey finally got his British sub-committee officially endorsed by NICAP in a letter from Gordon Lore dated 15 February 1968. Initially it was called 'NICAP European Unit #1', but this was later changed to 'NICAP European sub-committee number 1'. The inaugural members of the sub-committee were Julian Hennessey (Chairman), B.A.A Smye-Rumsby, Capt. Freddie Underhill, Bryan Winder and Prof. Jean Schlusberg. These would later be joined by John Myers, John Henderson, Geoff A. Jones and Sharon Lesure.

The meeting between the MOD and Hennessey took place at 15:00 on 21 February 1968 at Whitehall. Hennessey complained in a letter to Don Berliner that he was not allowed to record the interview, but he made notes about it immediately after-wards. He was accompanied by John Myers, and the MOD fielded Messrs. Ackhurst, Dickenson, and Cassell. Although the MOD addressed each of the points raised by Hennessey, Hennessey was dissatisfied with many of the responses.

"In the normal course of events UFO records would remain closed to public scrutiny until they became available under the usual rules at the end of 30 years. If, however, a major scientific organisation of high standing had strong reasons for obtaining access to our records then its application would be considered on its merits."

In a few letters, Hennessey had mentioned to Don Berliner that his wife sometimes complained about the amount of time which he spent on UFOs. In a letter dated 4 March 1968, Berliner ends his letter with the following comment: "Your comments about continental women didn't simplify my search for a spouse. I had always been under the impression that European women make ideal wives, and that American women are the bossy ones. It is things like this that keep me a bachelor."

Yet another potential source of information that Hennessey was attempting to cultivate was the newspapers. In a letter²⁰ dated 19 March 1968 inviting Sharon Lesure on to the subcommittee, he mentioned that he intended to send standard letters out to around eighty local newspaper publishers, asking for their co-operation.

By now, the MOD was becoming irritated by Hennessey. This is apparent in a letter²¹ to him dated 20 March 1968 from S4f in which in which the final paragraph reads: "I am sorry that I have been unable to reply earlier. But, I am sure you will understand that whilst we try to reply as quickly as possible to people who send in reports direct to the Ministry of Defence, we cannot justify spending a great deal of time and according a high priority to the provision of a general answering service on this subject."

In April 1968, Angus Brooks received the results of the MOD's "investigation" of his case. The letter²², dated 5 April 1968, suggested that Brooks had observed a 'vitreous floater' (Musca Volant, which they described as a dead cell floating in the fluid of his eyeball) was the stimulus, and to explain the long duration (22 minutes), the MOD suggested that he must have had a quick nap! During this unscheduled sleep, he also

dreamed some of the detail which couldn't be explained by the floater. This scenario is reminiscent of a plot from the blockbuster television series *Dallas* in which one of the cast dreamt the murder of the starring actor. Curiously, Brooks wasn't convinced by this explanation, and wrote a point-by-point rebuttal to the MOD.

The volume of letters that Hennessey generated was enough to draw comment from Berliner in a letter to Hennessey dated 6 May 1968, when he wrote "The U.S. postal service has thrown up a picket line outside the NICAP offices - thanks to one J.J.A.H. who dumped a record quantity of letters upon us today!!!"

Whilst enquiring with the Board of Trade in relation to a sighting on 17 November 1967 near Sydenham, Northern Ireland, Hennessey received a letter from them dated 6 May 1968 in which it was stated in paragraph 4: "You may be interested to know that air traffic service units have, since February, 1968, instructions to report details of UFOs to the Military Aeronautical Information Service at Uxbridge, and these details will be recorded."

As a result of this comment, Hennessey wrote to the MAIS requesting access to their records. They in turn forwarded his request on to S4f at the MOD, who replied to him on 17th June saying "Any reports received by MAIS Uxbridge are passed on to the Ministry of Defence. You are, of course, aware of our position on the release of or access to documents."

In August 1968, Hennessey sent a status report to NICAP Head Office. One notable item from this includes a listing of airlines which were co-operating with his Euronet project: Aer Lingus, Air Ferry Ltd., Britannia Airways Ltd, British European Airways, British Overseas Airways

Corporation, British United Airways, British United Air Ferries, British United Channel Airways, British Eagle International Airways, Cambrian Airways Ltd, Dan-Air Services Ltd, Invicta Airways Ltd and Skyways Continental Coach Air Services. Negotiations were also ongoing with Alitalia, Lufthansa, and Scandinavian Airlines System.

Hennessey wrote to Gordon Lore (Assistant Director at NICAP at the time) on 22 September 1968, to tender his resignation as Chairman of the European Sub-committee. This was due to the imminent birth of his daughter. He handed over the Chairmanship to John Myers, but remained a member of the sub-committee and director of the Euronet project. This was not to last for long - although there is no explanation as to the fate of Myers, there are letters from NICAP to Hennessey complaining that they have never heard from him. Eventually, Hennessey wrote on 30 March 1969 that he would resume the Chairmanship of the sub-committee. Very little appears to have been done during the Chairmanship of Myers. Indeed, even after Hennessey resumed the chair, there isn't much activity until a crisis developed at the NICAP Head Office in December 1969.

The problems within NICAP were essentially financial, but the manner in which some of the senior members of NICAP had been treated by the board seemed to Hennessey to be very unreasonable. In January 1970, he expressed privately²³ to Gordon Lore that he felt that his own resignation was now inevitable, but that he would continue to run the Euronet project outside NICAP. He went on to say: "Despite my own decisions, I have every respect for the work that NICAP has done and will continue to support it as a mere member too[sic] watch further developments. If it does go under, then the world



"Your comments about continental women didn't simplify my search for a spouse. I had always been under the impression that European women make ideal wives, and that American women are the bossy ones. It is things like this that keep me a bachelor."

will have lost its most respected UFO research group which would be a sad thing."

During the political upheaval at NICAP, Hennessey continued to serve as Chairman of the subcommittee, and it appears that it was 'business as usual' from his point of view while NICAP tried to salvage the organisation. His activity level appears to have increased in comparison to 1969, but was nowhere near the levels he sustained in 1967/68. *Horizon*, the BOAC corporate magazine had asked him to write a 3-part series about UFOs: The MOD had informed Sir Langford-Holt that since the closure of Blue Book in the US, they were in the process of reviewing their UFO-related policies: Euronet, while channels to the airlines concerned were open, was not producing any significant reports.

The next noteworthy item from the MOD was contained in a letter²⁴ from them to Sir John Langford-Holt dated 26 March 1970. This was in response to questions raised by Langford-Holt at Hennessey's suggestion. In it, they inform him that the review of their UFO policy has now been completed, and that effectively, there would be no change "...the Ministry of Defence has not operated a special unit for dealing with these reports. These are dealt with in the course of our normal operations and the extra effort necessary is quite small. Much of the information drawn upon in looking into UFO report, e.g. air traffic movements and satellite orbits, is collected for other purposes

and these functions would continue even if the Department no longer took an interest in reports of UFOs."

A far more important comment occurs later in the same letter: "The Ministry of Defence hold UFO records from 1962 onwards. These records will not be destroyed, but, I am afraid, we cannot make them available to outside bodies at this stage because of the effort that would be involved in editing reports to preserve the anonymity of the reporters or, alternatively, obtaining the reporters' permission to release the information. It would also be necessary to scrutinise all records before release to any organisation outside the public service to ensure that no classified information used in the course of investigating reports was inadvertently included.

"In the normal course of events UFO records would remain closed to public scrutiny until they became available under the usual rules at the end of 30 years. If, however, a major scientific organisation of high standing had strong reasons for obtaining access to our records then its application would be considered on its merits."

From this letter, it is clear that Hennessey's efforts both directly and via Sir Eric Bullus to secure access to UFO reports prior to 1959 had caused the MOD to alter its policy of destroying reports that were more than five years old. Without this change in policy, much of the documentation that is relied on for this article and other research activities would not be available.

In 1954, there was a report of UFOs filmed from an aircraft on which a group of astronomers observing a total eclipse were present. Hennessey had obtained a copy of this film, and in the early part of 1970 was engaged in dialogue with Scandinavian scientists who had been involved with the case. This would lead to an article by Charles Bowen in *Flying Saucer Review* (FSR) Vol. 18 No.1 (1972) entitled 'Doubts about the Lifjell film'.

In August 1970, Hennessey received an invitation from Bryan Winder (who, as well as being a member of his Subcommittee, was also a director of and consultant to FSR) to a meeting in London with J. Allen Hynek on 28 August. Hennessey replied²⁵ to Winder on 6 August, including in his letter an itinerary for part of Hynek's visit. The itinerary included a visit to Angus Brookes (the witness to the strange object at Owermoigne on the 26 October 1967) on the 15/16 August, and a visit to Tony Pace (Director of Research for BUFORA at the time) in Stoke-on-Trent afterwards.

The main activities that Hennessey was spending time on towards the end of 1970 were investigation of a group calling itself 'NICAP-GB', being run by Derek Samson based in the Manchester area; the investigation of claimed credentials of UFO contactee Daniel Fry from 'The Free Protestant Episcopal Church' which had been prosecuted by the Board of Trade for some form of malpractice in 1954; and preparations for providing a stand on behalf of NICAP at

an exhibition organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts on the topic of 'Unlikely Photography'.

He was also contacting members of his subcommittee to find out if they were still able to commit their efforts to it, and restructuring the committee, as well as undertaking effort to establish support in Government for a scientific review of the MOD UFO records. He had enlisted the help of Julian Ridsdale MP, and past Secretary of State for Air, and Airey Neave MP amongst others.

In fact, these are the only significant activities up until 10 September 1971, when Hennessey wrote²⁶ to NICAP once again tendering his resignation, and dissolving the European Sub-committee, citing a lack of effective practical support from the other members of the Subcommittee. In the same letter, he expressed support for NICAP and advised that he would continue to submit material to them which he thought may be of interest.

Just a few days after his resignation, Hennessey received a letter from Group Captain (Retd) W.P. Whitworth in relation to a case from 1957 at West Freugh involving radar that Hennessey had been trying to follow-up. Whitworth had written to the MOD to ask their permission to discuss the case with Hennessey. This had caused a minor panic, since their earlier policy regarding destruction of documents after five years meant that they had no idea what Whitworth was going to discuss! Eventually they agreed to allow him to discuss it, much to the delight of Hennessey.

At some point in September 1971, Hynek was in the UK and joined Hennessey in a field investigation of a case which occurred on 16 August 1971 at Aldridge, Staffordshire. The case involved police officers and a photograph. They identified the primary

cause of the report as Mars, and the object in the photograph as a street lamp which the officer that took the photograph didn't notice was in the frame at the time. The details of this case were published in *Flying Saucer Review Case Histories Supplement 9*, pages 1-2, February 1972.

The next sequence of events is a little mystifying. Hennessey told me in a telephone conversation that he obtained a list of internal military telephone numbers from somewhere, and called the London Air Traffic Control Centre (Military) (LATCC). Because he knew the telephone number, they assumed that he was authorised to have access to the records, and set up an appointment for him to view them on 8 September 1971, which he attended. Hennessey said that he was nervous that they would discover that he wasn't authorised to see the records, and that LATCC had allocated a female officer to assist him! He copied a few documents related to cases that he was investigating and left, breathing a sigh of relief.

Pushing his luck, it seems that Hennessey wrote to the LATCC on 20 September, requesting access to their UFO records again. LATCC replied²⁷ on 25 October 1971, this time directing Hennessey to request access via S4f (Air).

On 22 December, the MOD wrote to him, mentioning "I know of your visit to the LATCC (military) on 8 September but I must confess that I am at a loss to know how on that visit you managed to see UFO reports received on 26/27 October 1971". I am also not clear as to how this came about, but it would not be surprising if Hennessey had been somewhat "economical with the truth" regarding how he came to obtain the sighting reports. On the other hand, the dates could just have been a typographical error.

There are a few more letters

up to May 1972, mainly relating to a sighting on 16 October 1971 in Oxfordshire which was explained by the MOD as an F-111 fighter aircraft dumping fuel. After that date, the next example of correspondence from him that has been found is about the same case, but nearly four years later (25 February 1976). There are a few more letters in Hennessey's files, the latest of which is dated 3 March 1977, most of them copies of correspondence between the MOD and Sir John Langford-Holt. Two items worth mentioning are:

A reply from the MOD to Sir John Langford-Holt dated 29/3/76 which included the following paragraph: "There is no inconsistency between Merlyn Rees' letter of 14 August 1967 and Lord Winterbottom's letter dated 26 March 1970. The decision to retain UFO records indefinitely was taken between these two dates. It was not necessary to go into that when Lord Winterbottom wrote to you in 1970."

The second item was a statistical summary of UFO reports relating to the period between January 1968 and December 1973, the last such summary produced according to the MOD at the time.

From Hennessey's personal files, it appears that his last active foray into ufology was an attempt together with J. Allen Hynek to persuade the MOD to allow the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) access to their files. The basis of this request was the MOD response dated 26 March 1970 referred to earlier in this article which included the statement:

"In the normal course of events UFO records would

remain closed to public scrutiny until they became available under the usual rules at the end of 30 years. If, however, a major scientific organisation of high standing had strong reasons for obtaining access to our records then its application would be considered on its merits."

The request was put forward by Sir John Langford-Holt, and was replied to in a letter²⁸ from the MOD dated 3 March 1977. Yet again, the answer was a disappointment. The Ministry declined to allow access to the files citing the workload which it would incur on the staff at the MOD.

On the 29 August 2003, Tracie Wayling (ufologyinuk list member) and I interviewed Hennessey at his home. He told us that he didn't consciously drop his involvement in ufology, but that he gradually found that growing family and employment commitments took precedence. He still retains a passive interest in the topic, and was delighted to see the internal MOD documents which related to him. Euronet appears to have petered out mainly due to a dearth of UFO sightings by pilots. NICAP unfortunately folded due to several factors, including financial strife. Hennessey has fond memories of J. Allen Hynek, Don Berliner, Sir Eric Bullus, Sir John Langford-Holt, and other people who he had the pleasure to work with over the years. He is still of the opinion that a small proportion of UFOs represent technology beyond current human capability. Amongst the sightings which he regards as the most convincing are those of Capt. Underhill, the McMinnville-Trent photo-

"With our very tight Defence budget there is very little to be said for incurring any expense which does not give some benefit at M.O.D. Of course it might save the cost of dealing with all this Hennessey correspondence."

graphic case, the Socorro-Zamora case, and the 1956 Lakenheath-Bentwaters Radar-visual case. He no longer believes as he used to be that the military are covering up positive knowledge about UFOs, and is inclined towards the view that they simply took no interest in UFOs from the scientific aspect, focusing very narrowly on the Air Defence implications.

The reader may remember that in the opening paragraph of this article, I wrote "we would not have anything like the volume of official documentation that we now enjoy, were it not for him." I trust that this has been borne out by this article - not only the fact that through his efforts, MOD policy regarding the routine destruction of UFO material every five years has been changed, but also the sheer volume of his own correspondence has contributed to the written record which is now available to us. Note that I have not attempted to itemise every letter that was sent to or from Hennessey, or every case that he played a part in - such an article would be sufficiently large to write as a book. The MoD were certainly impressed with his voluminous correspondence, the following unattributable comment is taken from a handwritten (and barely legible) note in the MoD files:

"...But with our very tight Defence budget (according to today's paper 50 Phantom have been chopped off the American contract) there is very little to be said for incurring any expense which does not give some benefit at MOD. Of course it might save the cost of dealing with all this Hennessey correspondence."

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO...

it wasn't the death of ufology that was bothering Peter Rogerson, but the apparent death of UFOs themselves. "Where have all the UFOs gone" he demanded in a long analysis of the contemporary UFO scene. Commenting that some researchers (such as Rogerson himself) claimed that UFO beliefs grew out of crisis, he asked why at a time of crisis (this was just after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the deepening of the Cold War freeze), UFO reports and interest seemed to be at an all-time low.



To try to answer this question he took us on a quick tour of the social history of ufology and popular perceptions of the subject in relation to the social climate of the times. In looking at the early days of the UFO/flying saucer story, Peter made the important analysis that, in Britain at any rate, belief in and attitudes to the UFO phenomenon seemed to be grounded in educational background and class - like so much in British, and particularly English, society.

He points out: "An analysis of some popular British writers ... shows that support for the 'flying saucer mythology' [as opposed, in Peter's analysis, to the 'UFO mythology'] tended to come from traditional, humanistic, 'classics men', who felt that their spiritual, intellectual and social positions were under threat from the rising generation of grammar-school and red-brick university trained scientists and technologists. Thus Arthur Constance, in his book *The Inexplicable Sky*, saw in the growth of technical education a surrender to the 'materialistic values' of communism.

Gavin Gibbons, in *The Coming of the Spaceships*, saw the flying saucers as millenarian portents, which would land near Stafford and introduce a utopian society which would be "comparable with our village life, with a elder person of wisdom ruling with a benevolent rod of power ... minds would be cleansed of all evil, good would prevail and universal love predominate".

In contrast the American flying saucer/contactee myth at the time had little or no intellectual anti-scientific support (this did not emerge until the rise of the counter-cultural movement in the late 1960s and 1970s) and relied for its support on mystical and metaphysical subcultures, such as Guy Ballard's I AM cult.

This is an important and thought-provoking essay, and still relevant today. It helps explain, for instance, the attitudes of *soi-disant* 'intellectuals' like Colin Bennett and their disdain for 'ledger clerks' and 'tradesmen' who dare to involve themselves in such pursuits as UFO and Fortean research.

Elsewhere in this issue, Roger Sandell's summary of conspiracy theorising moves on to UFO conspiracies, nearly all of which seem to involve extreme right-wing or antisemitic ideas. He gives a classic quote from BUFORA founder John Cleary-Baker (someone who, as Peter Rogerson noted, was dismissive of the 'white-coated godlings of the laboratory', most of whom had been educated at grammar-schools): "... there are elements in the social phenomena of today which seem to point directly to outside alien influences, constructive and destructive, in our society. Youth in particular seems to be a target for all sorts of forces and influences, probably not all terrestrial in origin". Somehow the *Daily Mail* seems to have missed out on this!

Acknowledgements

The research behind the production of this article was very much a collaborative effort. All of those listed below have made valuable contributions, but I particularly want to thank Jan Aldrich of the Project 1947 team. At considerable personal expense he has provided copies of key material, mainly from NICAP sources. My appreciation also goes to the following (in alphabetical order): Gary Anthony, Dr. David Clarke, Richard Hall, Julian Hennessey, Dr. David Jacobs and Tracie Waying

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- ⁴ Hennessey's personal files
- ⁵ PRO, AIR20/11612
- ⁶ PRO, AIR20/11612
- ⁷ Hennessey's personal files
- ⁸ PRO, AIR2/18115
- ⁹ Sunday Express, 21st May 1967
- ¹⁰ Hennessey's personal files
- ¹¹ PRO, AIR2/18117
- ¹² PRO, DEFE31/119, direct quote from signal from the Foreign office to UKMIS
- ¹³ PRO, DEFE31/119
- ¹⁴ PRO, DEFE31/119
- ¹⁵ The intelligence department at the MOD which dealt with space technology, e.g. satellites & ICBMs
- ¹⁶ The department which managed the tracking of aircraft using ground-based radar
- ¹⁷ Hennessey's personal files
- ¹⁸ PRO, AIR2/18117
- ¹⁹ Hennessey's personal files
- ²⁰ Hennessey's personal files
- ²¹ Hennessey's personal files
- ²² Hennessey's personal files
- ²³ Hennessey's personal files
- ²⁴ Hennessey's personal files
- ²⁵ Hennessey's personal files
- ²⁶ Hennessey's personal files
- ²⁷ Hennessey's personal files
- ²⁸ Hennessey's personal files

Some of the correspondence referred to in the text is unreferenced. The reason for this is that I lost track of the actual source of some of the material provided to me, most of the affected material having originated from either Jan Aldrich or Dr. David Jacobs and which came originally from NICAP sources. I retain a copy of all of the correspondence referred to in this article. August, 2004 (Revised, May 2006) Joe McGonagle

Editorial, continued

examined the military implications of it, and that further research should be carried out into possible military application of plasmas.

Quite a few things can also be deduced from what Condign doesn't say. It is clear for instance that the famous 'UFO Desk' in Whitehall was very much out of the loop, and was not involved in compiling the report: indeed they didn't know about it until its release under the FOIA, giving the lie to any claim that this was "the British Government's UFO Project".

Ultimately, although extremely important, Condign is a flawed document. The range of its inquiries were constrained by operational considerations, much of the background literature used is of limited usefulness, and it falls into the trap of most overviews of the phenomena of promoting a one-size-fits-all explanation of what is likely to be a heterogeneous range of events.

Nevertheless it presents a challenge to ufologists, which is unlikely to be met by calls of 'government cover-up.' The science may be shaky, the understanding of the social background limited, but it's still an important document, and we're not going to get anything better for a long time to come.

See: www.uk-ufo.org/

Grovelling Apologies.

Firstly to David Sivier for omitting his name as the author of the article 'Strange Fruit' in *Magonia 91*, and also to Steve Dewey, John Ries and publisher Patrick Huyghe for giving the wrong publisher for their excellent *In Alien Heat*, reviewed last issue. The correct publisher is **Anomalist Books**. Also, sympathy to Dewey and Ries for receiving such a nasty, mean-minded review of their work from Jerome Clark in the latest issue of *International UFO Reporter*, which tells us more about Jerome Clark than it does about the book.

Making Hitler Magic

Unravelling the Spear of Destiny Hoax

Kevin McClure



While attacking the 'Nazi UFO' myth a few years ago, I found that many of the sources assuring us that the Nazis went to Mars, or the Antarctic, or used their 'foo fighters' to shoot down 200 Allied bombers in one (oddly unidentified) raid also had much to say about the 'Spear of Destiny'. This led me to concentrate on what is probably the greatest one-book occult hoax ever – Trevor Ravenscroft's highly successful, highly influential, *The Spear of Destiny* ('Spear' hereafter). Ravenscroft died in 1989, so I haven't been able to check this piece with him.

You'll probably have some idea of the story, because it's at the heart of most of the belief in Hitler and the Nazis being involved with the occult, and possessing supernatural powers. Pauwels and Bergier, in *The Morning of the Magicians*, did some of the groundwork, but it is Ravenscroft who has promoted Hitler as not just fascinated by the occult from his time in Vienna onwards, but hugely knowledgeable about it, and imbued with its power through

ritual and through his possession of the ultimate magical object. The object concerned is a tatty, much-repaired old spear, constructed from disparate bits, that Ravenscroft says cut short the life of Jesus on the cross. It didn't. The most accurate analysis of the 'Hofburg Spear' dates its very earliest component to the seventh century.

Ravenscroft's Hitler fantasy is complex, lengthy, and when analysed utterly implausible. It is a total fabrication, and even the background history he provides is, as recorded in Ken Anderson's *Hitler and the Occult* (Prometheus, 1995) wholly undependable.

Like many fantasists, Ravenscroft pretends that he has a source for his story, a source with a unique, personal knowledge of both Hitler and the occult who, for reasons never explained, told only Ravenscroft about what he knew. The name of the source is Walter Johannes Stein, an Austrian and a devoted follower of Dr Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical movement. He had a Ph.D

but was not, contrary to the impression Ravenscroft gave at times, a medical doctor. His thesis appears to have been predominantly mystical, as was most of his life's work. It is likely that Ravenscroft never met Stein, though he may have met his widow, and may also have believed that he had contacted Stein psychically himself, or through a medium.

Stein died in 1957, and the first edition of *Spear* appeared in 1972. In it, Ravenscroft claimed that

"In 1911 Stein had found a copy of *Parsifal* that had been annotated with occult insights by the young Hitler, tracked him down, and was impressed by his vast knowledge of the occult and his desire to own the Spear, which they went together to see.

As Hitler rose through the ranks of the right in Germany he was progressively initiated into magic, and the same day that the German army invaded Austria, he went to the Hofburg to take possession of the Spear, which somehow facilitated his power and his conquests

Stein left Germany in 1933 because Himmler was going to force him to join the 'SS Occult Bureau'.

Stein was a British intelligence agent who brought with him from Germany the plans for the German invasion of Britain (*in 1933?*), and advised Churchill on occult matters throughout the war.

And much more besides. But Stein never was, and never did, any of those things.

The Internet is of little use – the Ravenscroft version of Stein's life will take years to expunge – but Stein's *The Death of Merlin* (Floris Books, 1990) reprints the autobiography he published in his own magazine *The Present Age* in 1936. It covers his time in Vienna, but makes no mention of Hitler or the Spear. In *The Ninth Century and the Holy Grail* (originally published in 1928 but now Temple Lodge Press, 2001) Stein refers to the 'Holy Spear' or 'Lance' in its role in the Grail Legend. No mention of it in the 20th century, or of Hitler. And in the substantial *W J Stein – A Biography* (Temple Lodge Press, 1990), Johannes Tautz makes no reference to any of the key elements of Ravenscroft's account. *Spear* might be a biography of somebody else entirely. Actually, it pretty much is.

Spear was first commissioned and published by Neville Spearman, the British publisher responsible for so much core 'alternative' writing. In his 'part-autobiography' *Catching Up with the Future*, Neville Armstrong describes Ravenscroft as "rather a foolish, twisted chap who had considerable esoteric knowledge wrongly used", and notes that the only time he took drugs was when Ravenscroft gave them to him. After receiving a £2,000 advance Ravenscroft disappeared, providing nothing in return. Eventually, Armstrong tracked him down and paid him weekly until the book – clearly

not yet written more than a decade after Stein's death - was finished. Armstrong sold the American rights alone for over \$50,000, a great deal of money 30 years ago. The wretched thing has been in print, and making money, ever since.

I found that the story wasn't even Ravenscroft's idea. It originated in an article by the well-known journalist Max Caulfield, published in the *Sunday Dispatch* in 1960, apparently using information from Stein's archives provided by his widow (presumably this was Yopi, his second wife, of whom his Anthroposophist friends do not seem to have approved). That article, too, is wildly inaccurate. In it, the

Spear really is the one used on Jesus Christ, an imaginary 'SS Colonel Conrad Buch, personal adviser to Adolf Hitler on occult matters' is heavily involved, and Streicher, Himmler and Goering perform 'blood lodge' rituals using Hitler's blood. But its headings are critical to Ravenscroft's later claims. Its title is 'The Spear of Destiny', and the sub-headings read, 'How Hitler lived by the weapon thrust into Christ', 'Revealed for the first time the incredible truth about Hitler's worship of the Devil', and 'This talisman, he thought, would bring to his aid all the Powers of Darkness.'

One persistent clue to the standard occult hoax is the appearance of gratuitous, imagined cruelty. Two examples will suffice here. First, Ravenscroft pretends that Stein told him about

'... the Jews or Communists

... sacrificial victims who were murdered ... as part of the ritual magic in which Dietrich Eckart opened the centres of Adolf Hitler to give him a vision of and a means of communication ... they were incredibly sadistic and ghastly.'

Eckart never opened Hitler's centres, and there is no evidence that any ritual sacrifice was made. Yet Ravenscroft creates an even worse, sickeningly violent fantasy. He claims that Stein discovered that Himmler, wanting to continue the Final Solution and rid Europe of Jews, copied a non-existent pseudo-homeopathic experiment he claimed was conducted by Rudolf Steiner

These victims were, he asserts in a cruel, fictional, aside, "kept inside by the prison foreman Arthur Dietzsche with a cat-of-nine-tails." The experiments were complicated, says Ravenscroft, because "the potentised ashes only achieved their maximum functional effect at particular times of year, for apparently such potencies were sensitive to extra-terrestrial influences in the manner that the phases of the moon affect plant germination and growth."

Then, says Ravenscroft, the potentised ashes of concentration-camp Jews were spread "across the length and breadth of the Reich". Of the exodus of surviving Jews from Europe he asks, "Was it the result of this diabolical form of pest control?" No, it wasn't, but the unremitting darkness of Ravenscroft's fantasies is underlined by this extraordinary passage.

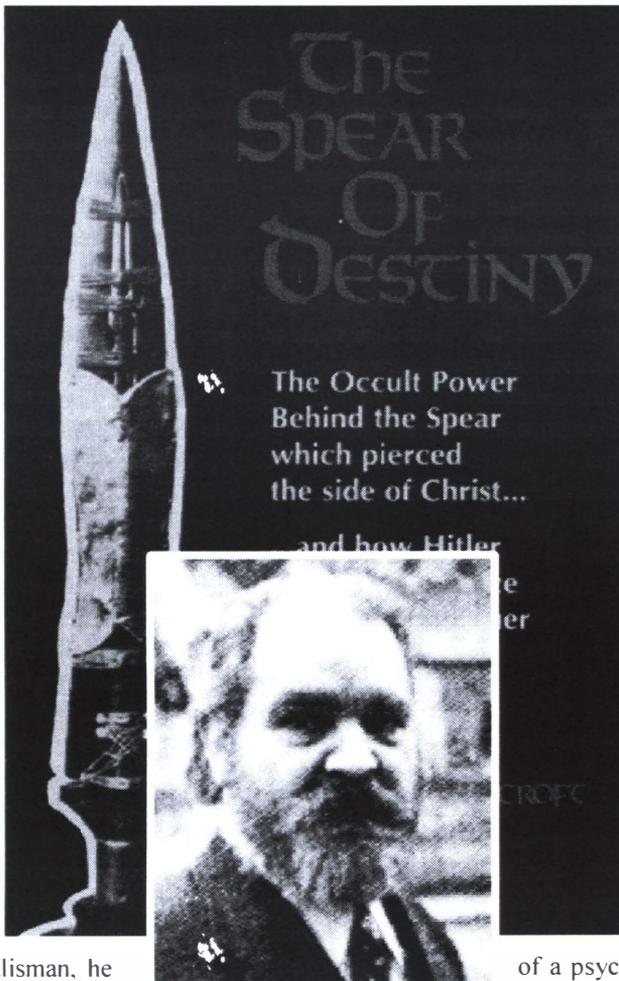
When, in 1980, Ravenscroft successfully sued the horror writer James Herbert for copyright infringement in his novel *The Spear* (the case reference is Ravenscroft v Herbert [1980] RPC 193), he explained that *The Spear of Destiny* had been researched 'using a combination of empirical techniques and use of a psychic medium', and was awarded substantial damages.

The 1973 UK edition of *Spear* says of Ravenscroft, "He was captured on a raid which attempted to assassinate Field Marshal Rommel in North Africa." And he told the court the same. But as the respected war author Michael

Asher explains in *Get Rommel* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), Ravenscroft was already a POW when the raid took place, having given himself up when an earlier reconnaissance went wrong.

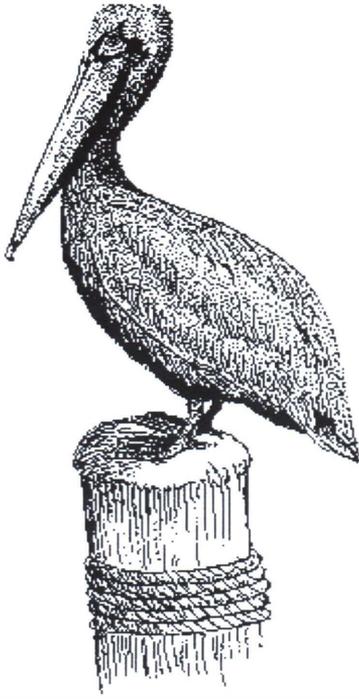
Recently there have been suggestions that Ravenscroft knew about the importance of Rosslyn Chapel years before the current theories became fashionable, and that his wife had for some unexplained reason had chained herself to the Apprentice Pillar. It's easy to forget how recent the Rosslyn story is, but even *Holy Blood Holy Grail* gives it only a brief mention. It will be interesting to see whether Ravenscroft becomes to the Grail/Templar/Mason writers what Stein supposedly was to Ravenscroft.

For anyone who might want to believe that Ravenscroft had the least idea what he was talking about, I'd like to finish by sharing with you his prophecy of the end times, vouchsafed to us at pages 143-144 of the relatively obscure follow-up to *Spear*, *The Cup of Destiny* (1981) 'At the end of this century the Order of the Knights Templar will re-emerge to change the whole existing social order. This will take place in the period immediately following the coming world catastrophies, which will commence in 1982 and continue in three terrible waves of destruction up to the year 2001 on an apocalyptic scale. During the struggle to rebuild the civilised world, the anti-Christ and the great dictator will attempt to seize world power. Their adversaries will be the reborn Templars and the souls they shall choose to join them in rebuilding a new world order in which the freedom of the individual spirit will find its true place. Throughout this period, that mighty spirit behind the figure of Parzival will be their heroic and beloved leader.



to drive rabbits off an estate in Silesia by distributing across it the 'potentised ashes' of rabbit testicles in solution.

Ravenscroft's develops his fiction, stating that Himmler ordered experiments in which the ashes of Jews were injected into other Jews.



THE PELICAN WRITES

El Pelicano es fuerte en sus apreciaciones, pero muy razonable.

The Pelican, in his campaign to Make Ufology History, has decided that the most urgent priority is to press on with his project to strip the ETH of every last vestige of respectability and credibility. In his searches of the Internet in this connection, the name of Michael Swords crops up here and there. Swords who was Professor of Natural Sciences at Western Michigan University, and is now retired, has written and lectured on UFOs and is chiefly noted for insisting that the ETH is a reasonable hypothesis. He tries to convey an impression of scientific objectivity, but he doesn't fool the sceptics, who recognise him as a True Believer in the ETH.

He is not as well known as many other ETH proponents as, unlike them, he does not trade insults with those who disagree with him. He provides no testable hypotheses, only lots of dreamy speculation which reveals a somewhat unscientific tendency to take seriously unlikely UFO stories not backed up by any reliable evidence or testimony.

Before going any further with discussing Swords's ufological works it would be a good idea to look at one of the main weaknesses of the ETH. It is a weakness that is obvious in Swords's writings and it is simply that he never develops any version of the ETH which could be tested. In its present forms the ETH is unscientific because there is no objective way of testing it. It can simply be applied to any UFO report which does not have an obvious explanation. (In some cases believers even reject obvious, rational explanations, and refuse to take them seriously.)

On the UFO UpDates mailing list, Brad Sparks has often drawn attention to this problem. He complains that not only is there no testable theory, but that any attempt to develop one is attacked by the

ETH believers. For example:

"But first, let's review what I said and what the criteria for a true scientific hypothesis involves, as it relates to ufology, and how ufology consistently undermines and attacks theory development:

"1. Consistency of model. I have pointed out again and again in numerous postings over the years that those in ufology who start on a promising avenue of theory - or model-development always get shouted down because they allegedly failed to "consider the magic-like level of technology" the alleged aliens must have. Sometimes the UFOlogist struggling to develop a self-consistent model suddenly injects the "show-stopping magic-level technology" argument himself into his own reasoning - because he knows he is going to be criticized by someone using this bogus argument as a weapon - and he stops what he is doing, himself, on his own accord. And it always ends right there. Call it self-censorship in those cases, a reflexive response due to the hostile climate in ufology to anyone who tries to pursue an internally *consistent* model of what alien behavior might look like at say, a 22nd century technology level, who allegedly fails to consider 30th and 100th century technology (which would mean introducing *gross inconsistency* into the 22nd century model and a violation of Occam's Razor). Or anyone who tries to begin first with human behavioral models and then shuts down because he thinks (or someone attacks him for) failing to consider that "alien behavior" must and can only be so "alien" that we cannot understand it. So just drop whatever the hell you were doing and go into paralysis about any kind of modeling of ETH or alien behavior, period. This has happened so many times right here on UFO UpDates that I am surprised

that anyone would dispute it.

"2. Testable model. I hope this is not controversial. It's just science, you know. If it's untestable, it is non-scientific. If an ETH model does not yield any testable ideas then it really isn't science yet. It does not have to be some great elaborate deal, but it has to be something, preferably numerical, quantitative. For example, a Military Reconnaissance Model of ETH would predict certain things about ET behavior, such as use of stealth, patterns of observation, non-contact with human culture, etc. etc. But there would be specific quantitative estimates about the patterns to expect based on a specific given alien technology level (not confusingly mixing 22nd century levels with 30th century, etc.), distance traveled, use or non- use of bases on moon or planets or underwater, etc. Also patterns to expect *not* to see (e.g., if it is a military recon one would *not* expect landings on the White House lawn, at UN HQ, etc.).

3. Comparison against other competing *self-consistent* models. There needs to be at least an awareness of the existence of competing models both within ETH and outside ETH (such as inter-dimensional, inner earth, time travel, spiritual, paranormal/occult, etc.) and some kind of discussion so that ETH theory modelling is not done in a vacuum, but not with bringing in 'show-stoppers' either." [1]

It would indeed be difficult to produce a model which would make certain reasonable assumptions as to how ET visitors might behave and testing them against the reports. There is also the difficulty of deciding which reports might reasonably be considered possible manifestations of ET activity, as all but a small proportion are fairly easily explained and

it can be argued that the others remain unexplained because essential information is not available or unreliable. However, the main point is that most ETH believers don't want rational theories, as there is always the danger that they might provide the "wrong" answers. They really prefer the UFOs to be regarded as inherently mysterious with "show stopping magic-level technology" as Brad Sparks puts it.

Eliminating the "magic" technology would also rule out some reports of UFOs apparently defying Newton's laws by moving at high speed and stopping instantly or making right-angle turns at high speed. These would probably have to be attributed to observational error or misperception. There might be disturbingly few reports left on which to test the theory and, like some of the "classics", these might fail to stand up to critical examination and be classed as IFOs rather than UFOs.

The best approach, from the point of view of the ETH true believers (and these include those "serious ufologists" who say they merely regard the ETH as a rational hypothesis) is to point to compilations of "good" UFO reports and say that while no single report is really convincing, when looked at en masse they make a pretty good case for the ETH - and they have words to describe anyone who disagrees, some of them very rude.

However, to give it a bit of credibility this style of "scientific" ufology requires someone with an aura of academic respectability. Michael Swords is one such person and his work is often referred to on UFO UpDates by Jerome Clark whenever the set of SF comic-strip wild imaginings known as the ETH comes under attack, which in The Pelican's opinion should be as often as possible.

Swords's writings are almost entirely speculative and he tries to give the impression of being scientifically respectable, although to the careful reader he can be seen to lean towards the irrational. A good example is an article in which he criticises the Condon Committee for its attitude to close encounter (CE-IV or abduction) reports. (2)

He thinks the Condon team should have investigated the Betty and Barney Hill case, although people who have investigated it have got bogged down in endless arguments about how to interpret the story and most sensible people would surely agree that they were wise to avoid getting involved and wasting their limited resources on it. A case which they did investigate was the Herbert Schirmer encounter report of 3 December 1967. Swords quotes from some of the original documents on the case concerning opinions about Schirmer's mental state and objects to it being "seen as a psychological case from the beginning". In view of the details of the report, the fact that there were no other witnesses, and the lack of any physical evidence to support the story, this is hardly surprising. The published conclusion (Case 42 in the Condon Report) was:

Evaluation of psychological assessment tests, the lack of any evidence, and interviews with the patrolman, left project staff with no confidence that the trooper's reported UFO experience was physically real.

The Pelican wonders what other conclusion Swords thinks they should have reached. Swords continues his article with an account of a night-time encounter by a woman in Texas, who wrote a detailed letter to the Colorado Project about it. Swords prints the woman's report and remarks at the end of it:

The lady then offered

herself for hypnosis and research, but the project ignored her. Condon filed the letter under the category "psychological". Conceivably it was. One thing we do know: The project and Ed Condon couldn't be bothered. And another thing is at least half-true: This is an old and sickly lady asking for some help, but nothing was done. This inaction was a type of sin of omission that reflects badly on Colorado.

It should be noted, however, that the woman, writing in 1968, claimed to have had her extraordinary experience 35 years earlier! She had been moved to write her story after reading John Fuller's *Interrupted Journey*, about the Hills' encounter. She claimed to have suffered from nervousness and nightmares since. Now what should the Condon team have done about it? They surely couldn't have been expected to waste time on such an old report, and it was surely no part of their duties to provide free psychotherapy to anyone who blamed the UFOs or aliens for their troubles.

Swords goes on to discuss a couple of similar cases, but he objects to the project's conclusions that their causes were psychological. What should they have concluded? He doesn't say, but he concludes by contrasting their approach to such reports with that of Budd Hopkins! Need the Pelican say more?

1. www.virtuallystrange.net/ufu/updates/2004/jul/m26-010.shtml

2. Michael D. Swords. "Too close for Condon: close encounters of the 4th kind". *International UFO Reporter*. Fall 2003 (also available on the CUFOS web site)



Don't forget, there's more to Magonia than this magazine.

Check out our archive website at www.magonia.demon.co.uk, with a great collection of articles from Magonia and its forerunners over thirty years. Then there's Magonia Extra at magonia.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk. Here you'll find an archive of Magonia's very earliest incarnation, the Merseyside UFO Group Bulletin, along with notes and news, a file of the Pelican's musings, book reviews, a photo gallery and a detailed report of the historical 'Alborough Platform' case.

And there's more. The complete Magonia Supplement, back to issue one, is archived at www.users.waitrose.com/~magonia

And if you just can't get enough of Magonia and you're around London way, why not come along to one of our regular monthly readers' get together at the Railway pub in Putney (just opposite the station, 15 minutes from Waterloo). They're usually the first Sunday of each month, from about 7.30pm 'till late (check the Magonia Extra website in case of last-minute changes). The Railway is a Wetherspoon's pub, so there's reasonably priced drinks, and food is served all evening. Look for the table with the weird magazines strewn across it - and of course the Pelican is there!





BOOK REVIEWS

All reviews by Peter Rogerson, except where stated

Philip Hoare. *England's lost Eden: adventures in a Victorian utopia*. Harper Perennial, 2006. £8.99

Today the place to encounter the magical is the West Country, from Warminster to Glastonbury, and down to the coast of Cornwall. In the mid and late Victorian period, the New Forest became a similar focus for the mysterious and the outre. Philip Hoare chronicles the worlds of the supernatural which linked the working class cultists who followed a certain Mary Ann Girling, to the upper class aesthetes and spiritualists in the circle around John Ruskin.

Mary Ann Girling was daughter of a stonemason, who at some period in her life, accounts differ but probably around her mid thirties, had a vision in which her bedroom filled with light and Jesus Christ appeared to her. Just as today's hypnopompic visions inspire tales of alien contact and abduction, then they inspired tales of divine encounters. Like modern contactees she went on the form a cult. Her followers renounced sex, work and possessions and engaged in ecstatic whirling and wild dances which gave rise to rumours that they had been hypnotised.

As with many of today's 'new religious movements' Ms. Girling's movement caused dissensions in families, and as in the great 'deprogramming' movement in 20th century America, families used pretty forcible tactics to 'liberate' their members. As with later movements one gets the impression that a number of the converts were young people, particularly young women, who saw in it an escape route of sorts from a world of oppressive family life and domestic drudgery. Older people joined as a escape from poverty or the anomie of their atomised lives.

If the Girlingites represented working class rebellion from class and gender moulds,

then the New Forest also held its attractions for a variety of well connected dissidents such as the radical libertarian MP Auberon Herbert (who put up the Girlingites in his barn when they were evicted from their house), William Cowper, Lord Mount-Temple and his wife Georgina, or Judge Andrew Peterson who built a giant tower in his garden to

better commune with the spirits. Spiritualists saw this eccentric cult as containing echoes of their own beliefs. Associated with this circle was John Ruskin, in headlong revolt against the modern world, while out in the background were the likes of Daniel Home the medium, and the founders of the SPR, Myers and Gurney. This was surely a milieu in which the hippie ufologists described by Andy Roberts in *Magonia* would have flourished.

Ultimately the Girlingites failed, because Mother Mary Ann forecast she wouldn't die, and towards the end proclaimed herself the Second Coming of Christ. This was a bad move because she did and she wasn't and her by then reduced sect faded away, its last member dying in 1941. Perceptive *Magonia* readers will detect some similarities between Mary Ann and Ruth Norman, another immortal who wasn't.

Diana G Tumminia. *When Prophecy Never Fails: myth and reality in a flying saucer group*. Oxford University Press, 2005. £19.99

The flying saucer group concerned is the Unarius Academy of Science a ufo based new religious movement founded by Ernest and Ruth Norman in the 1950s. Diana Tumminia was a participant observer of this group from 1988-2002, during which time

its charismatic leader Ruth 'Uriel' Norman died and a projected millennial flying saucer landing took place.

Ms. Tumminia records the day to day activities of this group, and her own reactions to it, including her struggles to maintain her professional distance. Unarius is by far the campest religion ever founded, the true spiritual

home of Liberace and Elton John, though both may appear dull and dowdy in comparison with Uriel and her disciples. There is a photograph of the author meeting a bedridden Uriel, in which Ms. Tumminia looks for all the world like Steph out of *Absolutely Fabulous* stranded in world of Edinas and Patsies. Even sociologists have to make public statements like 'I am not one of you, I am just here to study you.'

The author tries to present the strange beliefs of Unarius with a straight face, and to make them intelligible to the outsider. Yet the whole thing is just so kitsch, like a pantomime parody of a new age movement that she can't hope to succeed. The thought never occurs that perhaps Uriel and her disciples never intended the whole thing to be taken with a completely straight face, that it was always a play reality, in which people could escape from their troubled lives into a fantasy world of outrageous costumes and exiting past lives. Of course the problem with play realities is that sometimes the actors mistake the play for real life.

Louis Theroux. *The Call of the Weird: travels in American Subcultures*. Macmillan, 2005. £17.99.

This book raises interesting questions as to the purposes of freak shows. The people in this book and the TV series it



is based upon are not freaks in the sense of being physically different from the rest of society, but social or ideological freaks, whose life styles or beliefs would be regarded as highly strange or deviant by the majority of society. Such displays can exist to confirm the onlooker in their own normalcy, reassuring us that we are not like these people; they are a voyeuristic but safe journey into the marginal realms.

The journey is made safer for the British audience, because these are strangers in a strange land, and they shows help to confirm British prejudices about American wackiness. A tour of the brothels of Nevada, militias in Idaho, neo-Nazi camp sites or the Californian porn industry has a cachet and distance which makes the proceedings much less challenging than a say a study of skinhead football hooligans or massage parlours and street prostitution in Birmingham.

The first chapter deals with the wildest fringes of ufology, the realm where the fanatic, the unbalanced and the huckster fade into one another. Here we meet among others the one-time British teenage abductee Jason Andrews and his mother. Jason is now 21, claiming to be an alien in human form, capable of being in more than one place and a time and flogging some kind of energy. Those with long memories may recall Matthew Manning at this point.

In the final chapter we encounter an all American mom who is raising her all American daughters to be Nazis. Just think for a moment, isn't this, well, child abuse? Imagine doing a TV programme on a mother raising her pre-teen daughters to be prostitutes, could you actually show it. Is there something less shocking about raising your children to be Nazis than prostitutes, and if so why?

Merrily Harpur. *Mystery Big Cats. Heart of Albion, 2006. £16.95*

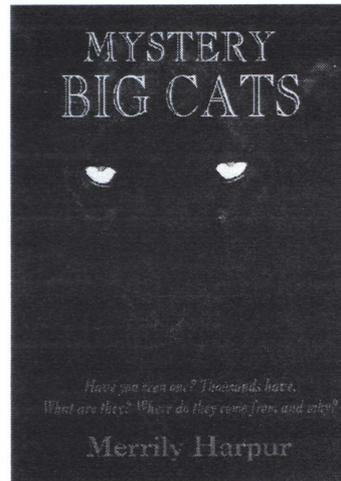
This is the first in depth look at British mystery cats for years, and in it Merrily Harpur examines a wide variety of narratives of mystery cats and examines the various theories which have been suggested to explain them. In doing so she points out the many problems and improbabilities associated with such popular explanations as that they are the result of animals being let loose after the passage of the Dangerous and Wild Animals Act, or that they are escapees from circuses. Real escapes she notes tend to be recaptured pretty quickly, as they are really ill-adapted to life in the wild. There are just too many reports, and too many of them are of rare black leopards (panthers), yet there are none of 'ordinary' spotted leopards. Equally the chances that such a large animal could be some relic* natural home population, hanging on from the ice age must be pretty remote also, how could they have escaped generations and generations of hunters and then naturalists. This must surely be true, if there were real big cats out there in past centuries then hunting them would have become a royal sport!

Nor do these animals behave like real big cats, for example they never actual kill people, and where the bodies, the road kill, the clear and unambiguous photographs? There are just too many different kinds of cat, and cases where more than one kind are seen together, and they have some very strange properties.

Harpur's researches take her areas of folklore, mythology and occultism far removed from paws and pelts crypto-zoology. She notes the animals appear in liminal places such as roads, railway embankments, hollows in the ground, and a surprising number seem associated with

golf links (a kind of liminal zone between the totally domestic and the totally wild).

She is drawn to her brother Patrick's theories of the daemonic realm, derived from the Neo-Platonists. Of course daemons is just a posh word for boggarts, djinns, elemental, ultraterrestrials, fairies etc, and it can be argued that the Neo-Platonist interpretations are little more than attempts to assimilate existing folk beliefs into their philosophy. The boggarts, by what ever name one calls them, are liminal entities which stride across the realms of matter and spirit, habitat and wilderness, real and imaginary etc.



Harpur's folkloric studies take her into the folklore of the cat, itself a boggarty, liminal creature: partly a creature of hearth and home and partly a creature of the outer wilderness. Cats are notorious hunters which bring home their prey - as happened to a friend of mine when her cat presented her with a disembowelled, still living bird - where they become messengers bringing the wilderness in all its implacable otherness into the warm domestic environment.

Mystery cats symbolise the continuing wildness of nature, even in a largely urbanised and tamed place such as Britain, they give hints of the something dark and dangerous round the corner. These stories seem to contain hints of ambiguity of perception, and

Harpur considers this, but tends to reject the possibility of misperception. Yet her ideas and those of mis- (or perhaps re-) perception are not as far apart as she might think. The boggarts, daemons and djinns are the bastardised petty gods and supernaturals, they are images by which that which is beyond all images, concepts and language can be imagined. The very domesticity of some of these nature spirits points to the absence of any clear boundaries between the wild and the domestic. The mistake that an occultist interpretation of this tradition makes is to assume that the boggarts are some extra spooky ingredient to the world. Rather we should see them as metaphors for the total numinosity of everything. The mistake that anomalists of various kinds make is to assume that there is anything which is truly ordinary.

There are stories in this book which might give a hint at what is going on: witnesses see a black plastic bag, a brown paper bag or a log or a boulder which on second look becomes a big cat. These are images of the ordinary becoming the extraordinary. What could be more symbolic of the ordinary, secular, profane, and artificial than a black plastic bag? But this bag, like a deserted old house, is going to the wild. Perhaps in that setting there is dropping of the of the guard and a momentary apprehension of what a truly awesome terrible and wholly other thing a black plastic bag really is. an experience which evokes "massive shock and awe". Such an emotion is quite inconsistent with our idea of a black plastic bag, and indeed if plastic bags routinely evoked feelings of shock and awe we could never deal with them on a day to day basis, therefore the image is replaced by something much more appropriate to the feelings evoked.

Merrily Harpur notes that

mystery cats tend, despite their superficial differences, to exhibit some common patterns. one of these is a pitch black cat with a white bib. Breaking from reading this book to make lunch, what should I see on my lawn, but a (domestic) cat, black as night with a nose as white as snow, sitting on my lawn, its back turned to me. It turned and gave a knowing look, then resumed its contemplation.

Nick Redfern. *On the Trail of the Saucer Spies: UFOs and government surveillance.* Anomalist Books, 2006. £9.95

Ufologists used to love to think that they were so important that the governments of the world spent vast sums of their taxpayers money spying on them. Nick Redfern here claims that to an extent they were right, some were being spied on, but not for the reason the ufologists thought, but because some were suspected of using ufology as a cover for more sinister activities.

Of course as ufologists, like aircraft spotters spent a fair proportion of their time looking for odd things in the sky, then it was reasonable that there was some kind of low level surveillance of their activities, in case among the things they spotted were things best kept secret. And when ufologists start breaking into secret military bases they can't be surprised if they come to the attention of the security forces.

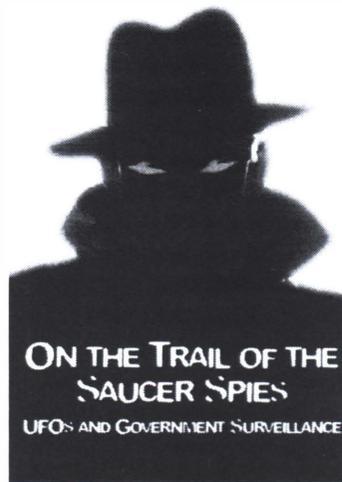
While some of the stories, particularly those from across the Atlantic are old hat there is something new from Britain. However that something new is also something deeply suspect, the claims of a anonymous (of course) person in the special branch or whatever that he was involved in countering extreme right wing infiltration into ufology. Too bad for Sandman's credibility is that his fantasy centres around the semi-

mysterious APEN, an alleged super secret UFO organisation which messed with the heads of ufologists in the mid 1970s. The problem is that there is no great secret as to who actually was behind APEN, it was a Cambridge

University student who had dreams of taking over British ufology. Curiously Sandman's scenario is exactly that propagated by said student, that a number of really obscure ufologists in the north of England were actually members of a British Movement secret cell. The student also claimed to be an anti-Nazi activist who had infiltrated the said British Movement (a extreme neo-Nazi group then centred around the Wirral). Well that was certainly a way of getting hold of Nazi marching music and other nonsense to put in letters. The student's allegations of super secret neo-Nazi activity involving more and more ufologists, allegedly orchestrated by a French aristocrat of prodigious wealth and equally prodigious perversity, seem to be a precursor to some of the more outlandish conspiracy theories of modern times. That 'Sandman' is parroting this stuff leads me to the thought maybe Sandman is the former student himself. Of course you might argue that Cambridge University students may indeed be working for the security services, infiltrating all sorts of organisations and political parties, perhaps even eventually becoming their leaders, but I could not possibly comment.

Even more curiously, I note that Sandman never refers to the serious actual attempts by the extreme right to infiltrate

NICK REDFERN



ufology. Redfern gives passing mention to a conspiracy conference in the early 1990s, and to the belief of the organiser that she was being monitored by the Special Branch and secret services. I certainly

hope she was, for this conerence was indeed organised by the extreme right to give a platform and an entry into the X-Files culture for anti-Semites and Neo-Nazis like Eustace Mullins. The extreme right also infiltrated the misnamed 'Witness Support Group.' This group was not, as the title might suggest, an organisation for actual UFO witnesses, but was a kind of freelance therapy group for people with serious mental health problems, some of whom were potentially violent. A ready made audience of disaffected and seriously disturbed individuals very useful for the far right.

And if we are going on about the far right connections of ufology, then what about BUFORA's one time President Patrick Wall, often regarded as the most racist and reactionary of all post-War Tory MPs. Wall was associated with a shadowy 'anti communist' movement, the World Anti Communist League, said to be financed by Saudi Arabia and Taiwan (then under the dictatorship of Chaing Kai Shek), and involved in channelling funds to all sorts of extreme right organisations, and used to channel money for the CIA to help set up the Provisional IRA.

With friends like that, who needs to do any infiltrating?

Richard Freeman. *Dragons: More than a Myth?* CFZ Press, 2005. £14.99.

One of the disputes which ripples through both the Fortean and folklore communities is whether beliefs in anomalies and strange things are handed through cultural transmission or through actual experiences, whether objective or subjective. You might think that stories of dragons are pretty good examples of the former. OK, perhaps some dragon stories are based on the finding of fossilised animals of various kinds, but there are no actual real cases of 'encounters with dragons'.

Richard Freeman begs to disagree here. Now to be sure most of the encounters recounted here are not of your actual treasure guarding fire breathing, maiden eating dragons, just tales of all sorts of large reptiles, amphibians or things which could be taken for them. Like many such books this one tries to convince by quantity rather than quality, and story after story gets recounted. If these stories were presented in a clear catalogue-like format they might be followable, but when presented in endless blocks of text the brain soon wearies.

On the cover this book claims to be "the first scientific investigation into dragons since 1884". Well if that is supposed to mean that it is the first 'scientific' treatment of the various water monsters which make up the bulk of the contents, then it is clearly not true. Further, despite the author having a background and university degree in zoology parts of this book are anything but scientific, and we have accounts of the author's magickal experiments to produce the tulpa of a giant spider and much other occult speculation. Thus we are treated to the strange ideas of the wannabe exorcist Donald Ormand, who long time Fortean will remember once tried to exorcist Loch Ness.

Though, as such books go,

this is by no means a totally uncritical work, it does have some odd lapses. For example we see our old friend the Brentford Griffin, an advertising spoof dreamed up by comic author and one-time Magonia collaborator Robert Rankin, presented po-faced as a cryptozoological encounter. How many other tales recounted here have similarly dodgy origins one wonders?

Nick Harding. *Secret Societies*. Pocket Essentials, 2005. £9.99

Giles Morgan. *The Holy Grail*. Pocket Essentials, 2005. £9.99

These two books in the Pocket Essentials series offer something of a contrast. Nick Harding's book on secret societies is mainly an A-Z, with entries ranging from a few pages to just a few lines. The listing is rather random, and while some of the societies mentioned are really well known such as the Freemasons, to say others were obscure would be quite an understatement. Has anyone heard of 'The Decided Ones of Jupiter the Thunderer' or the 'Order of the Peacock Angel'. Sadly the sinister Soroptimists don't get even a mention.

Giles Morgan's book on the Holy Grail is a more substantial study, tracing the legend's path through the centuries of Arthurian legend, to its modern manifestation as the metaphor for the grand prize or the universal panacea. The only significant omission seems to be John Michell's identification of the Holy Grail with flying saucers, in his 1967 classic *The Flying Saucer Vision*.

Magonia is always happy to receive books for review on any of the topics covered in the magazine. Please send them to the editorial address shown on page 2.

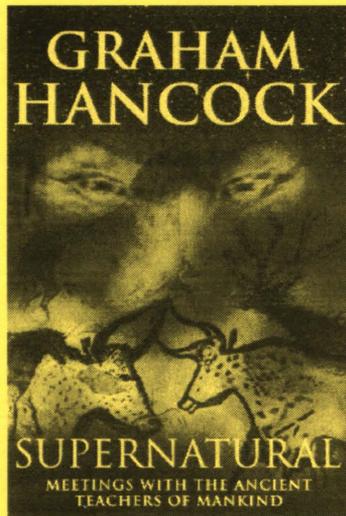
Graham Hancock. *Supernatural: meetings with the ancient teachers of mankind*. Century, 2005. £20

Do alien abductions have anything to do with the evolution of modern human consciousness? This is one of the questions raised by this sometimes fascinating book. Hancock starts off with an impassioned defence of the theories of David Lewis-Williams that prehistoric art was produced during trance like states, and that the images therein depicted were those 'seen' in these states. Hancock then compares these images with hallucinations he himself has encountered under the influence of mind altering substances such as ayahuasca. These images include the geometrical eptopic imagery, along with images of snakes, jaguars and human-animal hybrids, as well as things that look for all the world like Grays.

It is perhaps this which leads him to search through the literature of alien abductions, where, surprise, surprise, he finds parallels. He then discovers Jacques Vallee's *Passport to Magonia* and then enters the worlds of fairyland where he encounters the same imagery. Of course long time Magonia readers will have encountered all of this many years before.

Hancock cannot envisage how it is that people all over the world tend to have them same sort of hallucinations and is clearly taken with the idea that these mind altering techniques give access to some kind of independent 'other world.' However he remains completely confused as to what this 'other world' might

be, and his ideas soon become self contradictory. At times he sees this as a quasi-physical place whose inhabitants can interbreed with humans, in another as a realm of disembodied intelligences, which manifest in certain culturally specific forms. Of course the latter speculation gets him no further forward, all he does is replace the



difficult to answer question as to why human hallucinations such take certain stereotypical forms, with the impossible to answer question as to why 'disembodied intelligences' should manifest in certain stereotypical ways.

Despite his often irritating ranting about 'western materialism' Hancock is himself clearly trapped very much in the 'cult of the fact' and tends to take everything at face value. Thus shamans talk of 'marrying' their spirit guides and 'having children with them'. This is clearly a metaphor which seeks to use everyday human concepts to express notions of profound intimacy, but Hancock uses this along with tales of changlings and alien abduction breeding to build up the idea of an evolving programme of interbreeding. Exactly how humans could 'interbreed' in a literal sense with 'spirits' is not gone into of course.

So we have the changlings being transformed into hybrids, and Hancock argues that as humans are no longer taken for many years and babies aren't disappeared for good, and hybrids aren't found in your average council estate then obviously the breeding programme is developing. Of course this is nonsense. Ideas

of babies being taken and of changlings arose in societies where there was a problem of unwanted surplus children, with no adequate means of contraception or abortion. In these circumstances children may be simply abandoned in the hopes someone else will find them and care for them, in which case the idea that they were 'taken' by the 'others' to be loved and cherished by them would have been very comforting. Alternatively by consciously or otherwise other children would simply have been denied basic physical and psychological care. That these fretful undernourished unloved babies are not really 'my loved and wanted child' but something 'alien' foisted on you from outside makes perfect psychological sense. Equally ideas of adults being taken and perhaps returning after many years or never ever really get back to the way it was, cover a range of problems such as mental illness, family breakdown or emigration in search of work, as well as at times containing subtler messages.

Perhaps realising that these ideas are rather incoherent, Hancock tries another tack. Perhaps there are messages encoded in DNA by aliens who are out to teach us something. Life evolved too fast for it to be natural, maybe aliens seeded Earth. Problem with that sort of argument is that it leads to endless regress, if aliens seeded the earth then who seeded the alien's world, another lot of aliens?, in which case who seeded their world. If life arose naturally somewhere in the first place, why not here on earth.

Behind much of Hancock's writing is a profound distrust of human culture and of independent human imagination. Maybe the cave paintings, or some of them, were produced in altered states of consciousness, but this not certain. After all what might

future archaeologists make of the work of Picasso or Dali.

He underplays the role of culture in producing the contents of hallucinations (is it surprising that someone taking a plant they know comes from South America with an evocative name might experience images of 'snakes' and 'jaguars', or that taking a scientifically refined version of DMT might produce computer age imagery of being fed information by electronic intelligences. Shamanism, fairylore and modern abduction lore are cultural products. The latter is of course a collaborative project whose script is essentially written by the abduction finders. Modern abductees like ancient initiates are part of a cultural tradition in which they are taught what to expect in altered states (in the case of abductees hypnotic states in which they are given guidance by therapists and abduction finders).

Their may be 'ancient wisdom' in these traditions, but translating them into literalist, pseudo-scientific concepts is unlikely to allow access to it.

Colm A Kelleher and George Knapp. *Hunt for the Skinwalker: science confronts the unexplained at a remote ranch in Utah.* Paraview Pocket Books, 2005 \$14.00

The story of this book can be summarised very briefly: a new family takes over a spooky old farm in the middle of nowhere, where they claim that all sorts of Fortean and Paranormal events have taken place. You know, giant invulnerable wolves, cattle mutes, invisible aliens like out of *Predator*, UFOs, orbs, teleported cattle, polts, dogs fried by mysterious rays, the odd bigfoot or two, and anything else you could imagine. All that seems to me missing is a Lake Monster in the cattle. They sell the farm to a group of 'scientists' (all but the author anonymous, what a surprise!) from a

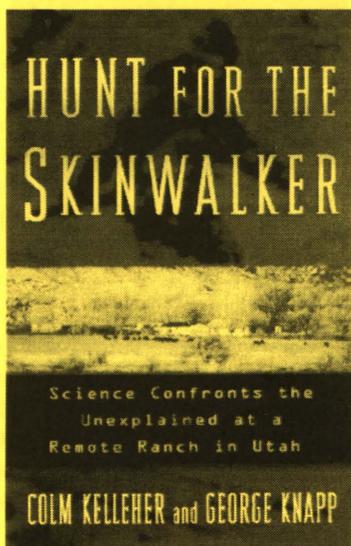
shadowy organisation called the National Institute of Discovery Science, which when this investigation concludes vanished into thin air.

Kelleher is clearly well qualified to investigate such goings on, as he has a PhD in microbiology, obviously just what you need to hunt boggarts on a remote farm. His previous claim to fame is as the author of a book claiming there is a secret epidemic of BSE in the US, hidden as Alzheimer's disease. Some people may consider this to be scaremonger but I couldn't possibly comment.

The investigation has many of the features which seem classical in these cases, a closed group of people, active discouragement of independent critical investigation, the presence of a charismatic individual (the former farm owner kept on as farm manager) around which the strange events seem to cluster, and the investigators own over confidence in their own critical ability.

Despite this, and a number of odd personal experiences, the investigators have to concede that they have not actually been able to amass actual evidence of anything. Though photographs of alleged anomalous lights are supposed to have been taken, none are reproduced, there are no photographs or illustrations at all in this book. In fact no evidence of any kind is presented, nothing even in the witnesses own words. Much of the book seems to be written in a novelistic fashion as if with an eye on the film rights.

Despite this, it seems unlikely that this is a simple hoax by Kelleher and Knapp. Hoaxers would surely have come up with some more positive evidence, and cut down on the wilder tales. A hoax by the anonymous owner-manager is one possibility. Rather more likely is that this represents a dramatic overselling of a variety of spooky stories which have become attached to this property. Stories of remote properties which



become foci of all sorts of strange experiences are not uncommon. British readers with long memories reading this book will recall the Ripperstone Farm affair, Warminster, even Borley Rectory. Though K and K rehearse a

number of explanations, mostly of a science fictional or paranormal nature, but only consider rather dramatic forms of psychosocial explanation involving actual mental illness, rather than the much more likely ones of the effects of expectancy, sensory restriction, suggestion, etc. on perfectly normal if rather superstitious people. Careful readers will note how investigation teams are kept to low numbers, how the ex-owner-manager calls many of the shots, how little actual real hard evidence accumulates. This is a haunted house/ seance room on a rather larger scale

It is sometimes said that psycho social theories cannot be tested, yet a scenario I like this is eminently testable. Select at random a rather run down property in the middle of nowhere, create a script full of spooky tales for it, get a

good actor or actors to act the role of the witness(es) and invite investigators in. Eliminate obvious sceptics from the team, keep the numbers low, disturb sleep patterns, make sure that one of your stooges is always on hand to suggest various things and make sure your team is rather dependent on the stooge and thus will take to his/ her lead. Stand back and see what happens.

That's not to say that in real life such cases depend on actual intent to deceive, left to itself suggestion etc. can do the trick perfectly well. Only with a lot of critical research will anyone be able to work out exactly what went on here.

David S Katz. *The Occult Tradition from the Renaissance to the Present Day.* Jonathon Cape, 2005. £17.99.

One of the distinguishing features of Christian fundamentalism is its resolute hostility towards anything vaguely considered occult. Professor Katz will therefore cause some controversy by suggesting that the routes of current American fundamentalism, every bit as much as the New Age movement it opposes, lie within the Western occult tradition. In particular he sees this fundamentalism as being in a tradition based on esoteric readings of the Bible, and the search for signs and clues as to the date of the apocalypse.

This is probably the most original suggestion in this book, which gives a whistle-stop history of occultisms, and which like most whistle-stop histories tends to rather lack dramatic new insights, being content to produce a workmanlike overview. This is not a bad overview and novices in this field will find much of interest, but many Magonia readers might find much of this is ground they have covered already.