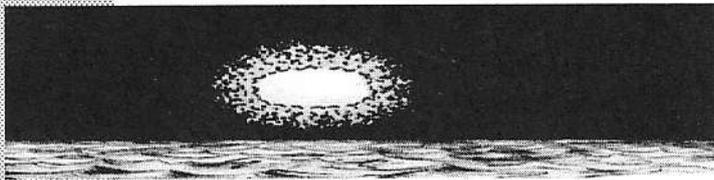


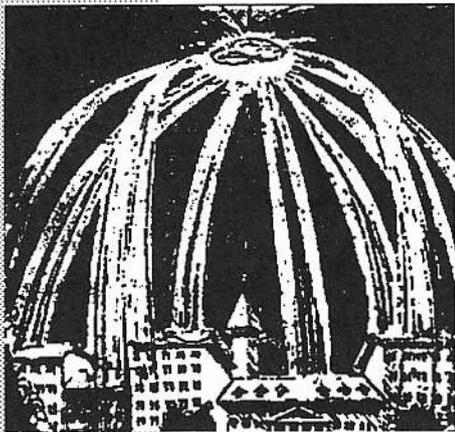
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UFOs: Examining THE EVIDENCE

The Proceedings of the
8th BUFORA International UFO
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Recent UFO Sightings in Africa - The Cultural Implications

Cynthia Hind

There is never really a totally quiet period with UFO sightings: what happens is that on average I have 6-8 reports per month in Zimbabwe, and perhaps even less in South Africa. Despite the discrepancy in population figures: 22 million in South Africa and 11 million in Zimbabwe, I feel there is a good reason for this.

Awareness! Or the lack of it. People have to be aware what the term UFO implies, although perhaps the letters are used too freely to indicate visitors from other planets, dimensions or time.

Here in Zimbabwe, I am lucky to have a very good friend on radio and she invites me regularly to tell the people about what's going on in the Space World. I write for magazines and, rather rarely, for the local papers (who are not supportive of UFOs): I also give public and private talks, not only in Harare, but in S. Africa and all over Zimbabwe. At one time, I did this entirely at my own expense, but now I find people are charging for the talks and make quite a bit of money, so I do ask for my petrol and accommodation. I have since then been flown to Lake Kariba where I spoke in the local Sports Club to 90 people out of a total population of 300; I've been to Chinyohi for a dinner talk, where all the waiters were dressed in green and had head-bands on with two bits of wire supporting huge eyeballs. The menu was a spaceman's gastronomic delight ! When I asked the waiters if they knew who they were supposed to be, they shook their heads and the eyeballs rattled and rolled. But they all listened to my talk and two came up afterwards to tell me of their magic experiences.

Most of the reports I receive are of unidentified lights in the sky and I'm sure if we UFO investigators were familiar with all the satellites launched, of the trails of the new, secret aircraft, we would easily be able to pinpoint their identities. But occasionally we get a real hum-

ding, as we did in Southern Africa quite recently in 1994.

On the 14th September of last year, at 21.04, I was sitting in my study in Harare, when I heard a loud explosion. My first thought was that someone had thrown a bomb into either the President's house, or they had tried to assassinate Mengistu, who has asylum in Zimbabwe and lives a few hundred metres from my front door. I ran outside, but all was quiet, and within a few minutes, I had piled into my car with some friends to scout the neighbourhood.

Nothing was happening, but when I returned home, the phone had already started to ring and never stopped until well after midnight. I later found that the explosion was a sonic boom. So you see, people were aware that I would be interested and were busy reporting to me, whereas only a few years before, where would they have gone?

The most fantastic pyrotechnic display had just taken place and was witnessed in S. Africa, in Botswana, the southern portion of Zambia, nearly all over Zimbabwe and finished off in Mozambique. Most of the reports had come from Lake Kariba, where there are dozens of boats on the lake, anchored at night, with a clear view of the night sky. It is a large lake, the biggest in the world until a few years ago, and stretches for 290 kilometres and is 30 kilometres wide at its widest point. The reports I received were from extremely reliable witnesses; the MD of one of the largest mining companies in Zimbabwe, two pilots, the man in charge of all radio communications on the lake, the owner of a well-known safari camp and a personal friend of mine who, with her husband, owns a large boat on the Lake. They all said, in varying degrees, that whatever it was, it flew in level flight and, at times, fairly slowly. It rose over the hills which edge the Lake in several places and changed course from North to South, to East to SW.

I phoned the Night Editor of THE HERALD in Harare and he said

Cynthia Hind

Born in a remote part of NW Cape Province of South Africa. Educated at Good Hope Seminary, Cape Town, to Senior Matriculation. Registered at Cape Town University for a BA degree in English and Psychology but left before completion to join the South African Air Force. Married Norman Hind and settled in the UK. Two children, Michael and Lindsay. Lived in Southport, Merseyside in the late fifties, the family returned to Africa and settled in Harare, Zimbabwe, where I became a Director of Grillbyo, a family company manufacturing furniture, and from 1979 to 1994 a Director of Edisan Products. In 1978 I resigned from the family business and became fully involved in freelance writing and particularly in investigating and reporting on the UFO phenomenon in Africa.

Since then I have attended International Conferences and presented papers on that aspect of ufology in Australia, Britain, the USA, Europe, Brazil and Argentina, as well as in South Africa and locally. Coordinator for MUFON on the African Continent. Contributor in Southern Africa to FOAFTALE (folklorist publication) and FORTEAN TIMES.

I joined Soroptimist International in 1975 and was president of Soroptimist International of Zimbabwe from 1984-86. Together with D. Powell, I founded the Harare Writers Club. I have been on radio and television in a number of countries and continue to write on a wide variety of subjects.

Published Work in Ufology:

UFOs-AFRICAN ENCOUNTERS (Gemini, 1982)
UFOs OVER AFRICA (provisional title, in preparation)

UFO AFRINEWS, a magazine, first published in 1988 (Gemini) and biannually ever since.
Chapters on UFOs in Africa contributed to PHENOMENON and UFOs 1947-87 (edited by J. Spencer and H. Evans) and to THE UFO STORY 1990, by T. Good, as well as a chapter on AFRICAN UFOs in collaboration with J. Spencer, in UFOs-THE DEFINITIVE CASEBOOK.



immediately that the lights had been identified by a local astronomer as being a "spectacular meteor shower." This was verified by Ewan Nesbitt, a geologist on leave in Zimbabwe. I accepted what I was told as I too had suspected that this is what it might have been; but this was before the reports started coming in. From all that I was told, I could no longer accept that this was a meteor shower, but of course, I did not have the expertise that the other had, so I really didn't gainsay what I was told.

A week later, Prof. Ewan Nesbitt had flown to London and conferred with the Royal Observatory at Greenwich and had been informed that a Russian satellite, launched on 26th August 1994, had ejected its nose-cone on 14th September and this is what had been seen over Southern Africa. Apparently, they had known of this coming occurrence and expected it. What I cannot understand is why they did not notify the governments of the countries involved, as the falling debris could quite easily have struck some of our remoter villages. I heard later that pieces of the nose-cone had fallen in Karoi, NW of Harare, and in the Chokwe River in Mozambique.

BUT, meteorite or nose-cone, there were still many conflicting reports.

How can a nose-cone, obviously unmanned, rise over the hills and then change direction?

And what about the following reports?

The sky was completely lit with what appeared to be a long sausage-shape of brilliant light with numerous flashing lights around it and was moving across the sky from left to right (in a southerly direction), very slowly. It seemed to be merely skimming the roofs of the houses in the distance.

Jo Hensman of Harare said, "I saw the lights at 20.50 hours right over Ruzulukulu Bay on Lake Kariba. At

first, I thought it was a small plane coming towards me. I was on the shore and decided to go back to the boat. The family were on shore having a barbecue. I had a very powerful torch which belonged to my husband and was quite complicated and not very easy to switch off. The torch was alight at this stage. I thought I could see a huge plane on fire and that it was going to crash. There was no sound, and our guide said it was a meteorite. As it came closer, I became afraid as I felt the torch was attracting whatever it was. I could not switch it off in my nervousness, so I hid it behind my back, and then the light veered off and went in another direction. It was flying low over Kariba at tree-top level, but it lifted over the hills and then changed direction."

Cecil Alexander, of Hatfield, Harare, who has worked in Civil Aviation for the past five years, said he saw the light at approximately 20.45. He viewed what he thought was a 'craft' of sorts for about 5 minutes. At first, he thought it was a Jumbo 747. It appeared to have two engines on the wings; the left engine emitting a continuous flame, while on the other side, wing sparks were spitting out. He thought there was an exhaust pipe at the back of the object, also emitting sparks. He felt the object was in some sort of trouble and was de-canting fuel before landing, although there was no aircraft sound. He watched it moving towards Harare Airport at an altitude slightly above tree-top level.

Grant Nel, of Bulawayo, thought it was a plane in trouble. There was no sound and it was flying very slowly (two people reported they were able to walk along underneath and observe). It seemed to be on fire.

Mukurawo Jonasi had an interesting theory. He had read about the collisions on Jupiter sometime before and suggested that these lights was rubble scattered from this collision; scientist must bear this in mind.

So I want to say this is harmless rubble that came from the collision that occurred in August and these (stones) did not fall on our planet Earth. I think they fell in the sea so we could not discover them.

There is no doubt, however, that the majority of the 100 plus reports I personally received were descriptive of the ejected nose-cone. Many dozens of drawings were done and most of these were typical of the crashing nose-cone.

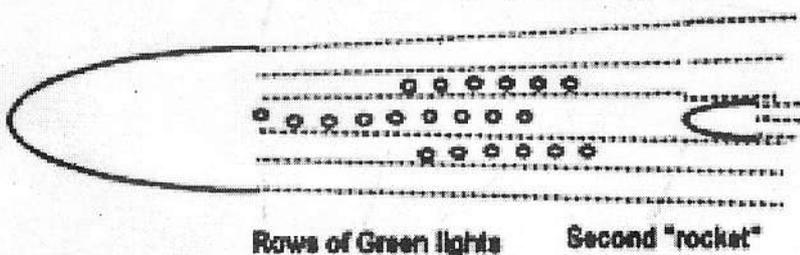
But what of the other reports? Misidentification, poor observation, highly imaginative people? In some cases, yes, but not in all. So was there 'someone else' watching together with us Earthlings?

It is my theory that UFOs and their occupants, whoever and whatever they are, are extremely curious. When something occurs which catches their attention and it is not a natural phenomenon, they want to see or know what is going on; viz, their monitoring of new scientific development, the testing of new weapons and hovering over highly secretive military bases. One of the most significant of all cases of their curiosity appeared in the MUFON JOURNAL of January 1989 (No. 249). I am not going into detail here, but I have copies of the original report and will hand them to those who are particularly interested.

The final analysis of the happenings on Wednesday, 14th September 1994 still remain slightly shrouded in mystery, but the final report has not yet been completed, and perhaps it will present a totally different picture when it is.

As a follow-up to this exciting event, on Friday, 16th September, an even more momentous UFO event occurred in Zimbabwe! I had a phone call from Tim Leach, who is BBC correspondent for this portion of Africa. It was just after 14.00 on that day and he asked me if I knew that an object had landed at 10.15 that morning at Ariel Primary School in Ruwa, about 20 km from the capital, Harare? I did not know about this but he asked me if I would like to go along with him after the weekend to film the incident and talk to the children, 62 of whom had witnessed the event; I readily agreed. In the meantime, I contacted a veterinarian friend of mine who lives in close proximity to

Fiery Tail emitting Sparks



the school and she gave me the name of the parents involved, plus their phone numbers.

One of the names was that of Alyson Kirkman, a physiotherapist, who has a daughter at Ariel school, and who was on voluntary Tuck-shop duty on 16th September. She confirmed that something had landed on that day but said she had seen nothing. She said "Luke Nel, one of the older boys (aged 12) rushed into the Tuck-shop to tell me that he had seen a small man in a silver suit, with a band around his head, running around the playground." Alyson was very sceptical of his report, but she could see the children were very excited. Some reported seeing a 'whitish' object about 100 metres from where they were, which had landed in the grounds near the school. They said the object was "glowing". Alyson felt she was not prepared to leave the Tuck-shop with all the loose money and sweets and cakes, etc. with all the children around. Besides, why should she go and look for something which she felt did not exist? She added that the children had told her they could hear a 'whirr-whirr' sound as the craft landed. Then it rose and came closer (2 landings?). Some of the children were hysterical with fright, especially one little girl. When it came down again, it appeared to change to a golden colour. Some said the object looked like a bowl.

When I spoke to Fifi Kirkman (aged 10). Alyson's daughter, she told me that she saw this 'silvery-white' light coming down behind the trees. After a while, there was a 'whirring' noise and the object landed on the ground. Fifi also said that some of the children said they saw little men in black suits, with greenish colour skin (I did not hear this from anyone else!) and big, funny eyes. She did not see the little men, but some of her friends did.

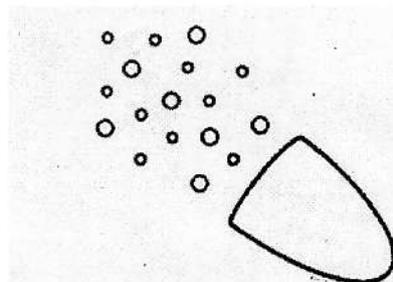
Tertia Nel (aged 10) saw more than one object, golden in colour, with little lights switching on and off. From where she was standing, it was about the size of her little finger, perhaps a little bigger. It looked like a pencil in the sky with a shiny light at the back, and then suddenly, it just vanished. When she saw it, it was quite high above the trees.

Barry Downing (aged 11) said he saw three silvery objects with flashing red lights flying over the school. He told me, "First I saw a crowd at the bottom

end of the playground, then I saw the object myself. It had flashing lights around the rim. then a bright light flashed and the objects disappeared and re-appeared almost immediately, somewhere else. This happened three times. Then, what looked like a little black ball came down and landed near two gum trees. This was about the size of my thumb-nail held at arm's length. Some of the children saw a little man appear on top of the object, dressed in black, with a long, skinny, scrawny neck and eyes like 'rugby balls'.

Then the little man disappeared and re-appeared again. When all this was happening, a very strong wind came past us."

Fungai Mavengere told me that he saw two little men who climbed down from the 'craft' and ran around the grounds in front of the children, as



though 'confused.' One of the little girls said that she thought the little men moved 'in slow motion.' When I spoke to Colin Mackie on the Friday, I suggested we have the children go back in the classrooms and draw what they had seen. The pictures, which are very similar, seem to concentrate more on the eyes; huge, black and slanting upwards. It is interesting to note that the children could see the features so clearly. Gunter estimated that it was at least 200 metres away from them, or perhaps even a little more. But John Spencer told me on the phone that he had a recent case in the UK where details were observed from more than ½km away.

There were many reports from the children, varying in detail as to what they had seen, but with a similar overall impression. However, this is shown on the video tape which I am going to show presently and would merely be repetitive if I gave you all the information here.

Ariel School, although not isolated, is on a large stretch of ground, bordering on small-scale farms and with big areas of bush. The playground has been cleared with

patches of grass as being in the midst of a drought; the lawns cannot be maintained. The adjacent bush is thick and overgrown and forbidden to the young children (aged 5-12 years) because of snakes, spiders and small animals. Also, the fact that once into this area, one is soon lost to sight.

Tim Leach, Colin Mackie (Headmaster of the School), Gunter Hofer (a young technician who helps me with investigations), my son Michael and I, trailed into the bush. This was fairly sparse at first, but then the bush grew thicker and the School and the children were lost to our sight within a matter of moments. We were accompanied by Guy Gibbons and Fungai Mavengere, two of the more articulate children. They pointed out that the objects had come into land - 3 or 4 of them - along the electricity pylons which led to the school and had landed between the 3rd and 4th pylon. Gunter Hofer tried the Geiger Counter and metal detector in that area, but nothing of particular interest showed up. There were some short, sharp stalks embedded in the ground, left over from a recent cutting of the reeds in that area, but I could find nothing flattened or disturbed.

Guy Gibbons told us that he had gone with the Headmaster, Colin Mackie, shortly after the event, and there had been three distinct burn marks on the ground. But despite our searching carefully that whole area, the burn marks seemed to have disappeared. Fungai told me that he thought the objects had not actually rested on the ground, but had hovered. I also think that there was some difficulty in pinpointing the spot (which they should have marked on the Friday), but Gunter did take soil samples from where they felt the craft had landed, and some control samples, and I have details of the analysis of these, with some inexplicable results. Both Fungai and Guy pointed out the numerous ant-holes in the alleged landing area, none of which appeared to have any ants around.

Guy told me that they had found a lot of dead ants in the area (I never actually saw any), but there did not seem to be any insects in that part of the bush, which to say the least, is most strange. Colin Mackie thought they weren't coming out of the ground due to the lack of water and the excessive heat (it was about 38°C that day), but not being an

entomologist, I have no idea of the significance if this should be so.

The two boys, and subsequently some of the other children, mentioned a very bright, shining light which emanated from the top of the rise in that particular bush area. It was almost like the sun reflecting off glass. Fungai said at first he thought it was the sun shining onto the windows of a house, but then he realised there were no houses up on the rise; nor even near there.

When Tim Leach eventually sent the video tape to the BBC for their news service, there were one or two problems. One of these was that when the BBC received the film, they wanted to know what the bright light coming from the rise could be? They asked Tim to re-film that portion, taking the video at the same time of day, to see if the light would re-appear. Tim went out and re-filmed that portion of the video and there was no light!

After the visitation to the bush, we went back to the staffroom to film the children, and Tim asked me to ask the necessary questions. We had a cross-section of the children there, and each one told their story; some of which will be on the video I am going to show. Not all had seen the little men, and some were more articulate than others.

Guy Gibbons told us that when he first heard the children shouting, he went to see what was happening. He saw this round object on the ground with several smaller nearby (none of the children were absolutely sure how many there were; some said 3, some said 4).

Some of the children had seen legs on the ground, whereas others did not, but as the playground is uneven in many parts, it is quite logical that some of the children had a greater depth view of the object than others.

Guy Gibbons said that as he watched the object, he saw a little man get out of the craft and some running across the terrain. The man was about the size of a Standard Six child (approx. 1 metre). He had long, straight, black hair and a tight-fitting black suit. Later, one of the little girls said that the suit was shiny, like a wet-suit.

Guy demonstrated how large and slanting the eyes were. He also said

he had a tiny slit of a mouth and that he could see nostrils. As he was watching what was going on, two of the smaller children (6-7 years old) came past him, crying, so he went to them and asked them why they were crying. They said, "We're afraid as the little man will come and eat us!"

Ariel School is a private school and that means it is expensive, but the school is made up of black, coloured, Asian and white children. There are about 250 children at the school and it appears well maintained and the children are of a high IQ level.

When Guy mentioned about "being eaten," I knew immediately that the children he referred to must be black children, as in African tradition, mothers often warn naughty or crying children, "Be good, or else the Tokolosh will come and eat you," something which has long since exited from Western Society. I can just imagine the look of horror on a psychologist's face if people in Britain threatened their children in a similar manner.

Guy said to me, "Listening to them, I also became afraid!"

Some of the Standard Four's (10-year olds) had a discussion earlier that week in one of their general discussion classes about UFOs. This worried me as I felt they might have been influenced by this (and some perhaps were!), but the little ones and the older children had not been involved, and, in fact, they were the really articulate ones and the best observers. What also surprised me was the analytical manner in which the children reported their sightings. None were gushy; they were all thoughtful and deliberated as to what they had actually seen.

My impression is that the children, and I spoke to many of the 62 witnesses, were telling the truth, although there might have been some embroidery from the more imaginative ones; but on the whole, their evidence was straightforward and convincing.

I also gained the impression that a lot more could or would have been said but for the presence of the teachers and the Headmaster at all times. Mackie himself told me, "I don't really believe in UFOs, but the children are not lying. They would not lie to me." Mackie, I believe, is a strict

disciplinarian and the children handle him with deference and respect.

I plan to see more of the children on their own when I return to Zimbabwe and obtain a more comprehensive story.

Zara Vernon, one of the teachers at Ariel School, reported that one of her colleagues, a black teacher, had a nephew who was driving home on Saturday 17th Sept. It was about 20.00 hours and he left the school in the school-truck and drove along one of the back roads. All of a sudden, he could see people coming towards him on the road. He said they looked like 'dead' people. He couldn't explain who or what they were, but he tried to avoid them and swerved sharply to the left. But there were more of the 'dead' people there, so he swerved further and hit something. His head jerked forward and he was struck on the forehead. He does not know how long he was unconscious, but when he came to, he ditched the truck and ran hurriedly back to the school. He had quite a large cut on his head.

On the Friday morning, before the children saw anything, Mrs. Ailsa Stevens, who lives not far from the school - in fact, overlooking it - got up early to go to the bathroom. She said, "When I wake, I often stand for a while and look outside; perhaps at the dawn or night sky. On this occasion, I saw this glow over the chicken-run. At first, I didn't have my glasses, so I went to fetch them. The glow had a very definite shape to it: a very big, orange 'thing' just above the chicken-run. I went to call my husband to come and see, but by the time we got back to the window it had gone.

Dr. John Mack, who flew in from America to see and talk to the children, interviewed them for 2 or 3 days, and came up with some startling evidence which he himself will soon reveal. My interviews were certainly not done at his highly professional level (he is a child psychiatrist), but I am not an inexperienced interviewer and certainly did the best I could, with, of course, the assistance of my team.

To my mind, this is one of the world's best UFO cases for 1994.

Cynthia Hind,
P.O. Box MP49,
Mount Pleasant,
Harare,
Zimbabwe, 7.