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(CARDIFF)

DOUBTS AT THE TOP

Britain's top intelligence chiefs were advised that a number of UFO sightings remained unexplained when they discussed the phenomena in the 1950s, the newly-released files reveal.

The issue was raised at an April 1957 meeting of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which prepares briefings on national security and defence for ministers and senior officials.

The committee was at first told all reports of strange sights in the skies had been "satisfactorily explained", either as mistakes in interpreting radar readings or as balloons and aircraft.

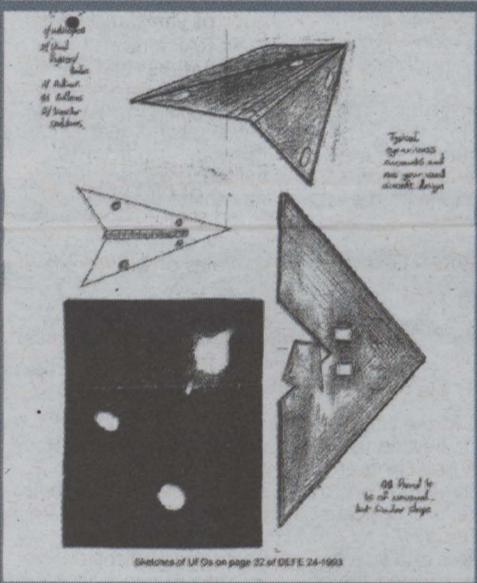
But a week later the Air Ministry prepared a memo which disclosed that some of the sightings were in fact still shrouded in mystery.

It said it received one UFO report a week on average, and that six out of the 16 sightings so far in 1957 were either unexplained or still under investigation.

One was accounted for by lack of evidence and another was thought to be a weather balloon.

The note stated: "The remaining four incidents still under investigation are all radar sightings. In each, unusual behaviour of the radar blips in terms of course, speed and heights were reported.

"Attempts are being made to trace the cause of these sightings to aircraft known to have been near, inexperienced operators or spurious echoes of unexplained origin."



■ Eyewitness sketches in National Archives show part of a possible alien invasion fleet and a space station with pulsating lights

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RELEASED FILES CAST LIGHT ON FAMOUS WELSH 'UFO' SIGHTING

NEWLY-RELEASED documents on UFOs have shed fresh light on the "Welsh Roswell" incident and suggest Britain's wartime leaders believed revealing the truth about another sighting would cause mass panic and undermine Christianity.

Locals heard a huge bang and saw a brilliant light in the sky over the Berwyn Mountains in North Wales on the evening of January 23, 1974.

Some have claimed the explosion was caused by an alien spaceship crash that was covered up by the authorities.

But the Ministry of Defence documents suggest the incident was caused by a combination of an earthquake and a meteor.

The details are recounted in declassified Ministry of Defence UFO files made available online by the National Archives.

A search and rescue team from RAF Valley on Anglesey was scrambled on the night in question to look for wreckage on the mountainside but found nothing.

MoD inquiries uncovered five other reports of UFOs seen over the UK at about 10pm on January 23, three in the Home Counties, one in Lincolnshire and one in Sussex.

The witnesses generally reported seeing a bright light in the north-west which seemed to fall towards the horizon.

An expert who carried out independent research into the Berwyn Mountains incident for the British Astronomical Society reported that a "fireball" was visible over most of the UK that night.

It descended from a height of about 120km to about 35km before disintegrating over Manchester, the expert found.

Then-junior RAF minister Brynmor John summed up the official position in a letter to MP Dafydd Elis Thomas in May 1974.

He wrote: "As suggested by the descriptions reported, it seems the phenomena could well have been caused by a meteor descending through the atmosphere burning up and finally disintegrating before it reached the ground. Such a hypothesis would also explain the absence of any signs of impact.

"It has also been suggested that at 8.32pm that evening there was an earth tremor in the Berwyn Mountains which produced a landslide with noises like detonations."

But the MoD's conclusions did not convince many of those who witnessed the incident first hand.

One wrote in a letter preserved in the files: "That 'something' came down in the Berwyn Mountains on that night I am certain ..."

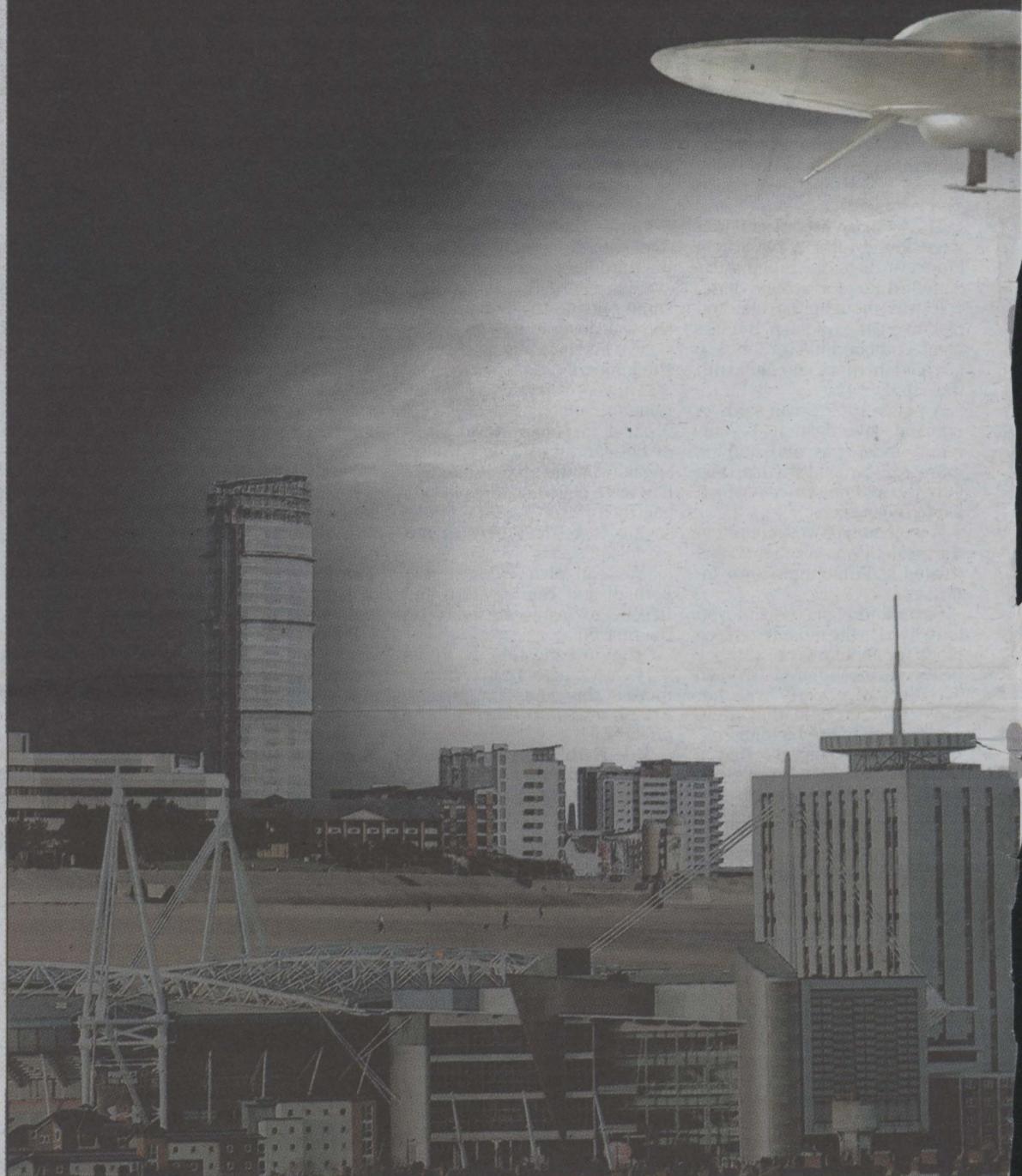
One witness, district nurse Pat Evans, who has since remained silent about the incident on January 23, 1974, after initially speaking out, reported seeing a UFO when she travelled to the spot where it was thought to have hit the mountain.

And ufologists dismissed the account offered in the official documents released through the National Archive as a cover-up.

UFO researcher Russ Kellett said he has spoken to a fisherman who said he saw flying saucers emerge from the Irish Sea before the incident on the Berwyn Mountains.

Mr Kellett, 47, from North Yorkshire, said: "There's no doubt whatsoever that it was more than just an earthquake.

She saw a big sitting on the



"I've got an affidavit from a group of men who were coming home from Bala when they found this flying saucer at the side of the road and the military came and took it away on a flat-back vehicle."

Journalist and UFO investigator Dr David Clarke, who is a sceptic on the subject, says the Berwyn Mountains incident is the most intriguing sighting in Wales and elements of it remain unexplained.

Dr Clarke, 42, who lectures at Sheffield Hallam University, said: "What we know is that on that particular night there was a nurse who heard the explosion and thought something had crashed into the hillside.

"She drove up on to Berwyn and she saw what she described as a big glowing object sitting on the moun-

tainside with a load of lights circling around underneath it. There's been various attempts to explain what she saw, but even sceptics can't fully explain what the nurse saw."

Two years ago Geraint Edwards of Llandderfel, Denbighshire, told a Channel Five documentary, how he stood in amazement as a flying saucer hovered for 10 minutes above the mountains.

He said at the time: "It was definitely a flying saucer. It was a pity I didn't have a camera because it was there for at least 10 minutes, just hovering. We were on the way to play darts when something caught our eye in the south-east.

"It looked like a rugger ball, but the ends were more pointy. When it took off, it just went like lightning.

"I wrote it down in my diary. It

was 6.45pm on the Friday night.

"If we were coming back from the pub, people would be saying, 'they've had one or two [drinks]' but we were going to the pub."

The files also reveal former Prime Minister Winston Churchill allegedly ordered that an unexplained incident over the east coast of England should be kept secret for at least 50 years because it would provoke "mass panic".

The claim was made by a scientist who said his grandfather was one of Churchill's bodyguards.

Allegations of the cover-up emerged when the man, from Leicester, wrote to the Government in 1999 seeking to find out more about the incident.

He described how his grandfather, who served with the RAF in the war, was present when Churchill and US General Dwight Eisenhower discussed how to deal with the UFO encounter.

The man, who is not named in the files, said Churchill was reported to have exclaimed: "This event should

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glowing object mountainside . . .



WELSH UFO SIGHTINGS

Other Welsh UFO sightings detailed in the files include two triangular-shaped objects seen drifting west over Swansea in January 1983, and an oblong light in the sky near Penderyn, on November 26, 1996.

One of three witnesses to the Penderyn incident said they had completed the "greater part" of a private pilot's licence.

In a letter to the MoD the witness wrote that they and two others were driving south on the A4059 leading from Hirwaun to the Brecon Beacons when they spotted a "very bright set of lights".

"It was no small lights sighting. We all said immediately that what we were seeing was no helicopter as we estimated the size to be about 100ft across."

Reports also detail how David Mason, a then 32-year-old printer, described seeing a light "as bright as the sun and about half the size of the moon" hovering a mile away from his home in Cwmbran, on September 14, 1982.

The light was stationary for several minutes, during which time others were called to witness it.

It then travelled north at great speed before disappearing.

A police report on the Cwmbran incident was sent to the MoD, who said there were no "defence implications".

On September 30, 1982 four separate sightings were made of lights and objects in and around South Wales.

In October 1996 the MoD received a letter from Anglesey MP Ieuan Wyn Jones, about a UFO sighting made at RAF Valley on October 16, 1990.

An unidentified craft was apparently seen "buzzing" the tower at Valley.

The MoD replied by stating no such incident had occurred within the

memory of staff or been recorded in the air traffic log books.

"Certainly such an incident would have been notified to the senior air traffic control officer had it occurred.

"Military aircraft from a variety of RAF establishments regularly undertake low-flying training sorties over the North Wales area and it's likely that a routine military low-flying training sortie could account for the observation."

One former Heathrow Airport worker wrote to RAF Valley after seeing a string of lights in the sky near Penmachno, in North Wales, in 1999.

"As I glanced up I saw a sting of what I thought were stars. I could see that they were close to a single star and at first thought I was wrong thinking that they were moving.

"However after three or four seconds I realised that they were in fact moving as one.

"Having worked at Heathrow Airport for a number of years and being keen on RAF aircraft I find no explanation I can put to this."

Dr Alan Williams, the MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, wrote to the MoD after one of his constituents reported seeing "low-flying triangular craft" in Mid and West Wales on November 21, 1996.

The constituent suggested the craft displayed "intense lights at frequent intervals at very low heights".

The MoD suggested the UFO might have been military aircraft on low-flying exercises.

The documents show the West Wales Paranormal group suggested several other sightings occurred on the same evening, in Swansea, Aberystwyth, the Teifi Valley, Shrewsbury, Welshpool and Machynlleth.

be immediately classified since it would create mass panic amongst the general population and destroy one's belief in the church."

The incident allegedly involved an RAF reconnaissance plane returning from a mission in France or

Germany near the end of the war.

It was over or near the English coastline when it was suddenly intercepted by a strange metallic object which matched the aircraft's course and speed for a time before accelerating away.

■ A mock-up of the terrifying sight of a UFO flying over Wales
ARTWORK: Neil Cammies

100/1 BET THAT ALIENS WOULD LAND

Other incidents recorded in the 18 MoD files released today, which cover the years 1995 to 2003, include:

■ A man who went to RAF Stanmore in north London to warn military police he had dreamed that a bomb would explode in London in the "near future". About eight to nine weeks later, in May 1990, RAF Stanmore was targeted by a terrorist bombing.

■ A gambler who appealed for the Government's help

after Ladbrokes refused to pay out on his 100/1 bet that aliens would land on Earth before the end of the 20th century.

■ A memo revealing that RAF jets were scrambled to investigate unexpected objects picked up on radar 200 times a year during the Cold War – but that this fell to zero after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Nick Pope, a former MoD civil servant who worked on the official UFO files, said:

"Whatever you believe about UFOs, there's some fascinating material in these real life X-Files.

"Most of these sightings turned out to be misidentifications of things like aircraft lights or meteors, but a small proportion could not be explained."

■ The files can be accessed at www.nationalarchives/ufos and will be free to view for the first month.