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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: Max Burns

From: David Clarke <[dclarke14@compuserve.com](mailto:dclarke14@compuserve.com)>  
Date: Sat, 2 May 1998 20:07:50 -0400  
Fwd Date: Sat, 02 May 1998 21:33:49 -0400  
Subject: Re: Max Burns

From Dave Clarke, Sheffield, UK

Well everyone has now had the chance to read the long nonsensical rant by Max Burns - who is obviously "well rattled" (as they say round here) because his spurious claims have been questioned and shot down in proverbial flames.

I think we can see where Max is coming from by his first reference to myself, viz Dave Clarke "who has also supposedly been carrying out extensive research" into the Sheffield UFO crash incident.

Supposedly, eh?

So I just "supposedly" persuaded an MP to raise questions twice in the House of Parliament on the events and forced the MOD to admit they DID carry out a previously denied military exercise over the north of England on the night of this alleged crash?

This is REAL research work - not loony speculation about space aliens in triangles.

Readers of my previous UFO Updates postings on this case, with the sampling of my extensive research and investigation, might like to ponder on Max's use of the word "supposedly."

I must have been dreaming then over the last 12 months, when right from day one, and in my employment as a news reporter for the Sheffield Star I just "supposedly" wrote the first story ever to appear in print on the case (pg 1 The Star, March 25, 1997), I just supposedly penned a 25 page investigation report for BUFORA in June 1997, I just supposedly acted as consultant to the BBC1 Mysteries episode on the case (November 1997) just "supposedly" contacted, all the 20 plus witnesses and countless police, RAF, fire and mountain rescue personnel (presumably I've just made up all the three notebooks full of shorthand notes from these people??) Well first of all let's establish my credentials and why I feel I have the right to comment authoritatively on this case.

The facts are, whether Max, Miles or any of the other post-X-Files re-write UFO history brigade like it or not, I have been actively investigating UFO claims for more than half my adult life, more than 15 years.

I have written five books on the subject, the first of which was published in 1990 and entitled Phantoms of the Sky (Robert Hale, London), and is even today being cited as recommended reading by authors such as Peter Brookesmith and Paul Devereux.

In addition, I have contributed to many other books including Fortean Times 1947-87, BUFORA's Phenomenon and penned literally dozens of research and investigation articles on the subject, not just in newspapers but in journals ranging from Fortean Times to UFO Magazine, and interviewed literally hundreds, if not thousands of witnesses the length and breadth of the country as my extensive files of statements and taped transcripts testify.

Not only am I actively involved in research and investigation (to the extent that I graduate to PhD in tradition and folklore of the subject at Sheffield University this year), but I am paid to investigate and write about the subject too via my work capacity as a journalist, which has provided me with extensive contacts within the RAF, armed services, emergency services and House of Parliament.

As a testament to my experience, I was asked by BUFORA to become Press Officer for the association earlier this year and took up the offer. Hardly an offer that would be made to someone with no experience or credibility, as Max would have it.

Despite Max's naive claims to the contrary, being interested in UFOs does not mean you have to believe in Extraterrestrials piloting them. This is juvenile talk. Do you have to believe in God to write about religion? Come off it Max, who are you kidding?

I don't wish to bore readers of UFO UpDates with too much detail, but lets cut away the drivel and reduce this case to one of two possibilites.

First there is Max's claim - viz.that the event was caused when a 300plus foot Extraterrestrial triangular flying object was being chased across the Pennines by both (according to Max) a light plane and a squadron of RAF Tornados. Said slow-moving ET craft then shot down (or "vanished") one of the pursuing Tornados, which subsequently disappeared off the face of the earth or crashed into a reservoir near Sheffield. It's pilot and co-pilot were killed and recovered in secret by the X-File blue beret crash retrieval team. Despite the two pilots deaths, this earth shattering news never reached the national media or the families of the two unfortunate pilots.

Let's subject this claim to critical scrutiny. Who saw this UFO shoot down/capture/vanish this Tornado fighter? Answer: not one single witness.

Who saw the wreckage of this aircraft, or the bodies of these pilots being recovered? Answer: Not one single witness. Who is claiming this happened?

Answer: Max Burns and Miles Johnston. Not one of the original witnesses, any of the residents, the police, or anyone else have ever claimed any UFO involvement in this case before these two ET believers got themselves in a tizzy about it. Right from the word go, everyone knew the incident was caused by a low-flying aeroplane until the UFO buffs turned up on the scene.

The most Max can say in his defence is that he knows of three witnesses who saw flying triangular shaped objects in the sky that night. Max has only spoken to two of these witnesses, and one of those two is a personal friend of his. She saw the triangle at 9.30, half an hour before the supposed "crash" occured, at exactly the same time when we know two RAF Tornado strike aircraft were operating at 250ft on a low-flying exercise above Derbyshire. I say she saw an RAF aircraft, and I challenge anyone to prove otherwise.

So that's all we have to back Max's claims. Three sightings of triangular shaped objects, none of them at the time of the alleged "crash", and all three of them were more than likely misidentified aircraft.

Secondly, these are the conclusions I have reached, and I challenge any rational, sane human being to claim there is more evidence for Max's ET triangle than there is for what follows:

Despite what Max and his supporters claim, the event which sparked this whole "crash" mystery occurred around 10.06 pm when a group of witnesses, including a police special constable, saw what they described as a low-flying aircraft pass overhead and

appear to crash into the moors west of Sheffield, followed by a loud bang and flash. The bang coincided with the second of two sonic booms recorded by the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh, the first being at 9.52 pm, 14 minutes previously.

Subsequently, emergency services from four counties (2 helicopters, 141 mountain rescue personnel, 100 plus police, fire and dog handlers, etc) scoured 40-50 square miles of moors, but found no trace of any crash, and called the operation off 15 hours later, about 2pm the next day.

Although the RAF denied at the time they were exercising, the BGS confirmed officially that the sonic booms "could only have been caused by a military aircraft reaching supersonic speed possibly while performing a mid-air turn."

Exactly a year later, I enlisted my MP Helen Jackson to question the MOD in Parliament about the cause of the event. Mrs Jackson tabled 7 questions about the event, and asked a further question one week later. In reply Labour Under Secretary for Defence John Spellar admitted that a number of military aircraft were taking part in a low-flying night exercise over the Peak District on the evening of March 24, 1997, in preparation for possible outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf.

Aircraft, including two GR1 Tornado bomber from RAF Marham in Norfolk were involved in low-flying training exercises during this exercise as low as 250ft in altitude, just minutes before the "sightings" and explosions reported by members of the public in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire.

After the MOD made these admission I gained direct access to the RAF's Press Office in Whitehall and asked the current incumbent Alan Patterson directly if these aircraft had been scrambled to intercept a triangular shaped UFO as per Max Burns' claims.

The answer was an unequivocal denial - no this was just a pre-planned and pre-booked training exercise. No aircraft were lost, there were no accidents, no pilots died.

If this denial is a lie, it can and will be challenged in Parliament and would no doubt lead to the fall of Britain's elected Government if and when the bereaved families of the two Tornado pilots who were "vanished" begin to ask where their husbands and fathers have been for the past year.

That's basically it. The Sheffield "crash" was, as they say in Full Monty Land, "summat and nowt".

Max Burns and Miles Johnston can rant and rave all they like about this case, but all it comes over as is just sour grapes. They have not done any kind of investigation worth its salt, they have started off with a belief system and made up the evidence to fit it as they have gone along, ignored all the evidence and eyewitness testimony that doesn't fit their theory, and set their target on me for daring to put an alternative point of view to the unsubstantiated claims they have been peddling.

Max's naive statement "Why does it have to be something else? Why can't what witnesses say they saw be exactly what they say they saw?" exactly sums up the case. Why should we believe every wild and outrageous claim that people make? If someone came into my newspaper office claiming they saw a pink elephant floating past would I have to accept that was literally what they had seen? And if I wrote a story claiming "Sheffield Man Saw Pink Elephant - There's No Doubt About it Because he says so", I wouldn't be holding down a job very long.

Our function in Ufology, as Andy Roberts rightly points out, should be to rigorously question every wild and uncorroborated claim, and not be afraid to question witnesses and evidence to reach the TRUTH.

Anything else is just succumbing to irrational belief.

I rest my case.

But two final brief points:

1. Max in his rant claims the copy of the CID log on the Sheffield incident I sent him was fabricated by myself for some bizarre reason. The fact is that it was given to me in Hammerton

Road Police Station by Detective Inspector Christine Wallace on the afternoon of 29 March 1997, and in fact contains her own handwriting in the margin. Perhaps Max might like address his claims to Det Insp Wallace?

2. Max and Miles claim that I have "innacurately reported" details of his charge for an alleged offence and pending trial in private correspondence.

Not so. All the details I have reported are accurate and straight from the charge sheet held by Sheffield Magistrates Court. Any "legal action" which might be likely in respect of this would be directed against both Max and Miles for discussing details of the prosecution and defence evidence in public before it is heard before a jury - it is what is known in English law as "prejudice". It is not against the law to report that someone has appeared in court charged with an alleged offence, as reports of this kind appear every day in thousands of local and national newspapers.

. It is against the law, as Max and Miles have done, to claim that person was "set up" etc etc as they have done to all and sundry via the Internet before the trial is held. This kind of claim is surely prejudicial and unfair on the other two defendants in the case who have not had the opportunity to put their defence before the trial later this year.

If Max did not want his legal situation airing in public, he should not have raised it in the first place and used it to claim he was being "harrassed" by the authorities due to his involvement in the Sheffield incident. He can't have it both ways.

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