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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Max Burns Hoax Exposed

From: Bluehare Dark Peak <bluehare24@hotmail.com>
Date: Sun, 20 Jun 1999 17:29:45 GMT
Fwd Date: Sun, 20 Jun 1999 15:06:50 -0400
Subject: Re: Max Burns Hoax Exposed

[Non-Subscriber? Post and 'as is' --ebk]

ATTENTION UFOLOGISTS
A MESSAGE FROM GENIUS LOKI FOLLOWS

We are a group of people, active in UFO hoaxing since the mid 80s, and going under the collective name of Genius Loki. Some reading this document may think hoaxing is unacceptable a waste of time which could be put to better use investigating "UFOs." Show us a UFO and we will happily investigate it!

We believe that if ufologists are unable to determine that a case is hoaxed or not then they should stick to watching sci-fi.. Stupidity within the subject of UFOlogy has reached new peaks of intensity during the last two years. The latest example is how the so-called Sheffield Incident/Howden Moors UFO Crash has been promoted by certain individuals.

This is not the place to go into the specifics of the case. Many will be familiar with it already and it has been widely featured on UFO Updates and UFO Magazine. Several websites have also featured the case in depth. From our point of view it had been satisfactorily solved.

But there are those who will not see reason and instead see saucers and conspiracy everywhere. A ufologist, Max Burns, had become unhealthily obsessed with the Sheffield Incident. He theorised that a UFO had been present that night and was responsible for shooting down a Tornado jet, flown by an Italian NATO crew from RAF Coningsby. Despite having no evidence for these allegations Burns further theorised that the crash had been covered up by the Government who had also initiated a "dirty tricks campaign" against Burns and others. To add idiocy to stupidity Burns also alleged that some British UFOlogists were undercover secret agents, acting as part of the cover-up.

As time went on it became clear that Burns was prepared to manipulate facts to promote his fanciful version of the Sheffield Incident. Evidence of this is abundant and can be found most recently on UFOUpdates where Dr Clark analysed Burns' recent BUFORA lecture.

According to Dr David Clark's investigation of the Howden Moors/Sheffield Incident there was no evidence to indicate either a Tornado had crashed or that a UFO had been involved. Nor did Dr Clark find evidence of a cover-up. As far as we could see,

Clark's investigation was comprehensive and exhaustive. The case was closed - but NOT apparently for Max Burns.

Since the case became public in 1997 we have been watching developments with interest and disbelief. As part of our hoaxing experiments we decided to see just how good a researcher Burns and his supporters were and devised a scenario which would test their investigative powers. It will be necessary to use Burns' emails more or less in full to demonstrate the depths of his credulity. Emails sent by Genius Loki personnel, besides the initial lure, have been paraphrased for brevity.

Initially we made ourselves thoroughly aware of the case by studying material originated by Burns and Clark and their supporters, and by observing email debate on a number of Internet sites. Burns was emailed from an anonymous source on 20 March 1999. The source claimed to be a member of a crack military/SAS team involved in part of the Howden Moors event. The email sent to Burns read:

"Dear Max Burns

My daughter, who has a keen interest in the matter of UFOs, has recently shown me several articles from UFO Magazine relating to the "Sheffield Incident."

As a result of reading the varying accounts of what happened I have tracked you down via the Internet and the material you have published there. Max, I must congratulate you on the thorough research you have done. But I think I may be able to add to it.

In March 1997 I was a member of, for want of a better phrase, a "special forces" unit. This unit was a regional based squad with close links to all the emergency services. At 2200 hours GMT we were called to a shout on the moors to the west of Sheffield. Our briefing, given en route in the chopper, was to secure and guard a crash site until a larger unit arrived from Hereford. My six man team landed at a location on a remote part of the moors where we were met by a senior police officer and a mountain rescue official. What had taken place was obvious - a military jet had crashed. There were pieces scattered around and a large piece of fuselage was lying part submerged in the peat bog. Several armed policemen were guarding the area and others were bringing in pieces of the plane from the surrounding moorland.

The pilot was still strapped into the cockpit but was clearly dead. Of the co-pilot there was no sign; presumably he had ejected. The police were picked up by a force chopper shortly after we arrived but the mountain rescue guy stayed with us. We secured the site and waited. It was clear something unusual had taken place that night because the moors to the E, SE and S of us were criss-crossed by people and vehicles until well past 0300 hours.

You must understand that at that time we had no idea of the cause of this event. We were just there to do a job of work and we idly speculated about the stupidity of RAF pilots. At approx. 0330 hours two Chinook helicopters arrived from the Southwest, and several special forces troops disembarked, together with a drop of a small bulldozer. We exchanged information - i.e. that no one had been to the site to the site since we arrived, and we were taken out shortly afterwards. Our unit went to the Gulf area until July '97 and I heard no more about the matter. Indeed, I wouldn't have given this incident a second thought had it not been for my daughter's magazines. We were routinely sent out at all hours of the day and the night to perform the oddest tasks so this one was certainly not out of the ordinary. But my interest was stimulated and I began to realise that this was no ordinary plane crash. So I made inquiries with some of my contacts still in the service (I left in mid'97 following an 'accident' on the live ranges at Otterburn) and it seems that you are on the right lines.

What I have gleaned may only be a rumour but I was told that a Tornado did crash on the moors west of

Sheffield but that its crash had an unusual cause. Several Tornadoes had been scrambled that same night to intercept two "unknowns". One was followed out over the North Sea before giving its pursuers the slip. The second was chased over the Peak District. Orders were apparently given to open fire on the craft as it hovered but before the Tornadoes could engage a blue beam shot from the object (said to be "a small, black diamond-shaped unknown") and one of the planes just exploded in the sky and broke apart. The other was vectored to a safe distance but when it returned the "unknown" had gone.

As a result of this information I decided to satisfy my curiosity and took a trip out to the Peak District moors to see what remained. I reasoned that if it had been an "ordinary" crash there should still be evidence left around, just as there are with the many other aircraft wrecks in that area. The site is far more remote than I had thought and it took quite a while to reach it on foot. When I got there I was surprised to find there was no immediately visible trace of the crash, but after scouting around the outlying area I found several marks where parts of the aircraft had impacted and more significantly several split and scorched gritstone boulders. Although I could find not one piece of aircraft I suspect a few hours with a metal detector would come up with the goods. How much of this will be of use to you I don't know Max, you seem to be making a pretty good stab of getting to the truth of the matter, despite the actions of various undercover operatives who are in the pay of the Intelligence Services. If there is any way I can be of assistance please let me know but remember that I am still bound by the Official Secrets Act and cannot divulge anything which could reveal my true identity to you. There is an incredible amount of secrecy surrounding this incident and you should be very, very careful with your inquiries. If you are interested enough I would be pleased to meet you somewhere and take you up to the crash site (on certain conditions), but I have to be very careful."

This email took approximately fifteen minutes to create, with little or no forethought. The intention was to set the scene, cast the ground bait and see what happened. Within two days Burns replied:

"This email comes to you via my ghost email address, and if we are to have any more communication regarding this matter it would be best if you used this address for security reasons.

I thank you for coming forward with some of the finer details regarding the night of the 24th March 1997, As you are aware as I am, that there is an apparent extreme amount of secrecy involved in protecting the true facts about what had occurred between the time frame of 21.45 & 22.06 that night. It is obvious from your style of writing that you are from a military background.

As am I with members of my family serving in the Air Force and Army through three generations. I have come under attack as you are more than likely aware from under cover operatives regarding this case, and they have become quite hostile in there attempts to discredit my self. (Standard intelligence move) also my research into the incident with dirty tricks campaigns and muck raking all standard stuff. Obviously I wish to visit ground zero as soon as possible in the hope of obtaining

- 1.Wreckage for metallurgic testing to confirm that the wreckage if any recovered is of the same type of materials, as used in the Tornado F3 interceptor. Preferably with some paint on fragments to confirm paint colour and type as used in the above.
- 2.Scorched stones for a carbon date testing to confirm the approx. date of the scorching.
- 3.Soil samples for obvious reasons, as well as photographic evidence of the scene.

You have not given me any reason to doubt your sincerity in this matter, in-deed the detail's you supplied to myself in the initial correspondence. What I

personally consider from a very meticulous man and a keen observer with an eye to details. Call it caution, call it paranoia as a possible scenario, as I do not know you. This could be a ploy by intelligence to take me out to an old, World War two crash site. So that I may be discredited further down the line. However I usually go on my gut instincts I would be lying to you if I said that I did not have some reservations about your reasons and motivation for the offer of help in this matter. I do feel that you are on the level. I hope you are not offended, but I feel that you would more than likely have been offended if I had not asked you this question.

Why are you helping me?

I do know that the co-pilot was recovered, by the police just after 23.00 on or around the viaduct at Ladybower reservoir. So I presume that the walk to ground zero is within a seventy five minutes walk from the viaduct's at Ladybower reservoir. Depending on the direction of flight of the tornado and how many seconds before the explosion which I presume is the first alleged by the authority's sonic boom at 21.52, as I have not been able at present to obtain the seismograph from that time frame.

Obviously because the readings on that particular seismograph would show a pattern that is not a compression wave caused by a true sonic boom.

I also know that the co-pilot only just escaped with his life due to the fact that he was soaking and stinking of aviation fuel, as reported by a member of the air force who works on jet engines.

Who was flagged down by the co-pilot while he was travelling back from walking in the Welsh hills While travelling in a mini towards Sheffield that night.

Some other questions that I would be interested in obtaining answers to are

- 1.The name of the senior police officer?
- 2.The name of the mountain rescue attendee? (probably Ted Burton)
- 3.Which unit of the armed police response team were present and where they are based?

4.The name of the deceased Pilot?

5.The name of the co-pilot?

I believe I am correct in my assertion that this was a N.A.T.O tornado jet?

Which was launched from RAF Conningsby. (Italian air crew)?

7. The registration number of the Tornado?

8.To what location the wreckage was transported for the obvious thorough post crash examination?

9. Was any part of the top soil removed or replaced?

I presume that as the Chinooks came from Hereford that they were loaded with S.A.S.

I know that you more than likely do not have all the answers that I require, but at least I have apprised you Of where I am coming from regarding this matter.

I can only assure you of my agreement to meet certain conditions regarding the protection of your true identity.As is the case of the radar operator from Linton on Ouse who tracked the unknown outside the city of Sheffield between the time frame of 21.55 to 22.05 the second sonic event occurred at 22.06 I presume that this was the unknown leaving the area. Due to the fact that the radar track of the object was lost at 22.05.

At the risk of being discredited by the supposed ufologists who are masquerading as researchers. The agenda of the above mentioned people to spread dis-information to confuse the issue, and to keep other Researcher's at each other's throats. (The usual tactics deployed) I even know who some of these people are as it has become apparent what there agenda is and why due to the way that they have had to behave.

In there joint efforts to discredit myself, almost exposing themselves. Due to the fact that I am so close on this. It does amuse myself that it must have been discussed at some level regarding my claims and allegations regarding this matter and they must be scratching heads as to how I managed to piece it all together?

Part of it was the way it all turned nasty when I started to claim that a tornado jet had crashed culminating in the death of a pilot during the interception of an unknown. I mulled it over and decided that this was basically correct especially after the behaviour of so called sceptics. When I made these claims. I have refused to supply the name of the radar operator at risk of being accused of being a liar etc. etc. etc.. I am available next weekend or at any date which is suitable to yourself please advise of what you need me to comply with I do have a secure line and can supply this number if you wish it?
What ever, your decision I thank you for contacting me I know the great personal risk you are taking. My word is my bond, confidentiality assured.
Respectfully, Max Burns."

Readers should observe that Burns clearly believes that the letter was sent by a military man -
'It is obvious from your style of writing that you are from a military background' -
purely on the strength of a few oblique Andy McNab-style cliches, conjured up whilst the email was being put together.
Although he has vague doubts as to the veracity of the author he makes no real attempt to ask meaningful questions which may have revealed or even hinted at a hoax. Many of the questions Burns was asking were ones to which he had already claimed to have answers to! We chose not to reply immediately, giving Burns time to do any checking of the story. His next post was somewhat surprising:

"Hi,
I wondered if you still wish to proceed as discussed in you previous post? Or perhaps you could supply me with the grid references and I could make my own way up there?
Or I could meet you in the LadyBower Inn on the Snake Pass at a time and date suitable to your self....? Please advice....if you do not wish to have any more correspondence? I will understand if that is the case...Max hanging on a string..."

Hanging on a string.....! We could virtually smell his eagerness. There was no more doubt, Burns was clearly hooked. We sent Burns another email message on 27 April 1999:

"Dear Max Burns,
"Contact as promised. I will have some available time shortly and I am prepared to take you to the Tornado crash site. I will meet you on 16 May 1999. I will be out camping in the area for a few days preceding our meeting, to check things out.
I will meet you at the Kings Tree car park (GR167939). I will be there at exactly 13.00 hours, whatever the weather. I will need to identify you. I suggest that you carry a copy of that days London Times newspaper. For certainty of identification you should stand facing the reservoir, reading the paper. I will approach you and make first contact with the phrase "Lovely day for a hike, isnt it?" If I am not there at 13.00hrs this will indicate that my security has been compromised in some way or that I am in some other way uncertain about that site as a meeting point. Wait until 13.15hrs to be sure. If I have not arrived by that time I will meet you at: GR133969. This location is within two miles of the Tornado crash site. If this becomes necessary I will be there until 16.15hrs. Again for identification I suggest that when you arrive at the rocks you sit and look back down the valley, reading the London Times. I will then make contact as before. Once I have met you I will take you to the Tornado crash site. It may be useful for you to bring the following items:
Spade/s/Metal detector/Geiger counter/Camera/s/Video recorder/s/Voice recorder/s
and anything else you may need./I can show you the site and traces of impact
known to me. These areas are remote and dangerous.

Even at this time of year. I suggest you dress accordingly, bring waterproofs, plenty food and liquids etc.

If you wish you may bring one or two other people with you to validate your meeting and possibly to help in locating the crash site at other times. This will be my only contact.
Bluehare."

Max replied with a simple: "Thanks, I will be there."

Note again that there was no challenge, no attempt to verify, just a simple acceptance. In the weeks between this message and 16 May, Burns began to tell other ufologists he had new information which he would reveal soon. Clearly he was jumping the gun. Matthew Williams, admitted crop circle hoaxer, joined forces with Burns and began defending his position, also claiming new information about the case. None was forthcoming.

May 16th dawned bright and clear. A car containing Burns and two other 'truthseekers' sped towards the meeting place. They were ten minutes late in arriving at the Kings Tree car park (having failed to even do enough research even to realise it is closed to cars in the summer months, but eventually driving there anyway!). In true James Bond fashion Max stood overlooking the dam, reading a copy of that days London Times. Just picture it! Their car was plastered with alien and UFO stickers - hardly the best way for anyone to about meeting someone who could help them crack the greatest secret in the universe! Needless to say their contact failed to turn up at the resevoir. Burns and co. had clearly expected him though as they had not come prepared for a lengthy trek out to the moors in search of him at the default meeting location. We decided to give Burns and co. another try.

Another email was sent to Burns within hours of his return from the Peak District on the night of May 16. The email queried what had happened to him, pointing out he had been under constant observation and chiding him for arriving in a car decked out with UFO stickers. Burns replied:

"We were late arriving at the Kings Tree because the police landrover stopped us and held us there for nearly 15 minutes while the woman cop decided if she was going to let us past. Yes, I did not even consider the stickers on my friends car, sorry.....due to an ankle injury incurred by one of my group, who was not dressed correctly we had to abort and help him back to the vehicle. much to my disappointment. I do appreciate the risks you are taking, and urge you to consider another meet even if I have to come alone...or meet you somewhere else. Please reconsider, I can come alone, you are right the stickers on the car was careless considering what happened. I am committed to this investigation and the truth of the matter, I have put twenty seven months into this, at great expense to my reputation.
Max Burns."

The words 'amateur' and 'rank' spring to mind here.

Burns - obviously keen to curry favour- replied again on 20 May.

"Dear BH..
I have some suggestions which I would like to make, may I make them in a future post shortly? And If you wish I can show you some of the progress that I have made with regard to the situation.. e.g., flaws in the cover story that can be proved.
Please advice
MB.."

We had now learned that Burns was due to speak at a British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) meeting shortly and decided to see what happened following that. He was sent a short message telling him we would be pleased to meet him again on the moors. We also upped

the stakes a little by suggesting that we had now retrieved several pieces of metal from the alleged crash and would still be pleased to take him to the site. He was told he would be contacted again on June 19th with directions for a June 20th meet.

Burn's BUFORA lecture came and went. Apparently feeling was so strong within BUFORA about Burns that several key members had resigned when he was given a platform to speak. This did not deter the die-hard extraterrestrial believers who run BUFORA. We sat through his lecture but no new information was brought forward. Burns did mention at the end of his lecture that he had some new material which he hoped he could verify soon, and it was clear it was his military contact he was referring to. Not once did he hint that he was suspicious about the source of this information, or suggest that he suspected a hoax. The BUFORA lecture was poorly attended and the audience gave him a hard time, unable to accept his unsubstantiated claims.

Subsequently, Burns was emailed and told we would contact him again on June 19. The final phase of the hoax had been initiated. Burns had bit. And on 19th June he was sent these instructions:

"Max Burns

Contact as promised. We can finish this tomorrow. After the problems last time we must get it right. This is what will happen if you wish to proceed.

Sunday June 20th

11.am Be at the public telephone box in the layby beside the Ladybower reservoir (before the viaduct) grid ref 196864.

The 'phone will ring. Answer it. Do not speak other than to acknowledge your presence or to answer any questions I ask. Have a pen and paper to write down instructions.

If, for some reason, the 'phone box is not working, someone is using it or I am unable to call at that time:

11.30am Be at the public telephone box on Ashopton Road, Bamford (opposite the signpost marked 'Bamford Moor') grid ref 202849.

Follow instructions as for above.

Act on instructions given and we should have met by mid-afternoon. Bring all you need. As I said before I do not mind one other person being with you. But please be careful with the car - it gives you away and with any luck you will be travelling back with some interesting materials. Please confirm receipt of, and intention to act on, this message, immediately.
Bluehare."

A return receipt arrived on the evening of June 19 via Derby UFOlogist Omar Fowler, who clearly shares Max's strange belief system, and wanted to be in on the action.

On June 20th (curiously near the summer solstice, which requires a sacrificial victim!) Burns was telephoned at the default phone box. He answered and wrote down instructions based on the following script read to him by an actor:

"Is that Max Burns?

Ok, hi, nice to speak to you at last.

Right, listen very carefully, I want to be on the phone as briefly as possible, for obvious reasons.

The sack is buried. But not in the ground. It's in a stream. I don't want to be at the location when you pull it out, for obvious reasons. You must pull the sack out of the water and raise it above your head. I'll have you under observation from the Grinah Stones.

As soon as I see you've got the sack ok I will come down to meet you, then take you back up to the site and we can discuss all this and what to do about it in detail. I have some ideas.

It's in a stream at the head of the Derwent Valley.

Listen carefully and follow these instructions. Are you ready?

Go to the Kings Tree car park where you were before and follow the path up the valley bottom for about three and a half miles.

When you get to a point below the Shepherd's Meeting Stones and the Grinah Stones, the path becomes indistinct. Make sure you are following the stream at this point. On the left bank there is a clear and obvious land slip where the rocks and earth are exposed. This is approximately Grid Ref:143976.

The sack is in the stream at this point. It's a blue, plastic, farmer's sack - pretty obvious when you are in the right place. Do you understand?
Ok. I'll see you later."

Two hours later Burns appeared in the Upper Derwent Valley, wearing a luminous yellow top, and accompanied by an unknown man. Burns had taken the message seriously and come fully equipped with - unbelievably - a metal detector! Burns studied the landscape carefully, checking for the correct location. The sack - there was a sack - was bright, almost luminous blue was in about two feet of water and contained 20 kilos of scrap metal. Despite frequent recourse to his notes and maps Burns and his friend failed to locate the sack which could have contained the Ultimate Secret. During his search Burns failed to make even rudimentary attempts to check if it was being watched. After a while the sight of two sad believers floundering in rain and mud grew boring and so we withdrew.

The hoax was complete.

Please remember this hoax was not perpetrated by the 'Intelligence Services', it was not perpetrated by the Freemasons, or indeed any of the other bogeymen which Burns and his ilk believe are involved in misleading British ufologists. It was done by ufologists, for ufologists to demonstrate the ease with which it can be done. At no time did Burns or any of his friends make any concerted attempt to check out this improbable story. What this hoax has demonstrated is the embarrassing ineptitude of UFO believers and in particular the credulity of some extremists who are driven purely by the will to believe - no matter how ludicrous the subject matter or scenario they fed.

Caveat Lector!

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