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In another life I was a box of frogs

Picture: ALLAN OLLEY/Camera Press



DIFFERENT PLANET: Actress Shirley MacLaine believes she has lived multiple lives



THOUGH officially born in 1934, Shirley MacLaine isn't 74 – she's nearer to 7,400. This is because she has had "many, many lives, many, many births, and many, many deaths". To prove her point she tells us: "I have slept in the

sarcophagus of the Kings' Chamber of the Great Pyramid at Gizeh." We are also privy to facts concerning her "past life in Atlantis" (the origin apparently of her red-haired, white-skinned and "slightly-slanted blue-eyed" appearance). At one time or other Shirley also possessed "both male and female genitalia," though whether this was a help or a hindrance she doesn't say.

It's good to know that Shirley was as zany in former aeons as she is in our own – it spreads the embarrassment. She's always doing odd things. She has hung around with the Masai in East Africa "and birthed a few babies, who were named after me". Finally, after sitting on a mountaintop in Peru: "I left my body to witness the Earth below me."

"I have been a questioner all my life," she says in her latest effusion, with its horrible title, *Sage-ing While Age-ing*. Credulous would surely be a better word? There's barely a conspiracy theory or New Age health fad that Shirley doesn't want to fall for. She's convinced, for example, that our armies are in Iraq to steal and decipher the coneiform tablets that derive from "the seat of the most advanced ancient civilisation" that formerly existed there or thereabouts.

Furthermore, Shirley believes that the government of the United States has received visitors from outer space. Shirley has seen "a squadron of UFOs" buzzing the Capitol in Washington and is certain that President Eisenhower signed a treaty with extraterrestrial races, allowing them to "furnish us with advanced technology" in return for permission to abduct humans and perform experiments on them. How else have we acquired the skills to develop fibre optics, integrated circuit chips, night-vision equipment, particle beam devices and gravity-controlled flight? (How indeed?)

More than 3.5 million Americans, says Shirley, have had direct contact with the star visitors, leaving them with nightmares, severe stress,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

★★★★☆

Shirley MacLaine

Simon & Schuster, £14.99

gastrointestinal symptoms and psychosexual dysfunctions. Then again, ill health might not be due to interplanetary pokes and prods. It could be because you take sugar, "a legalised poison".

Shirley also suspects the pharmaceutical industry and medical profession of plotting to try to kill us to ensure profitability. Modern medicine is "the number one cause of death every year". Apart from taking Valium to sleep, Melatonin ("wonderful for the hair") and Prilosec and Nexium to alleviate acid reflux problems, Shirley won't pop a pill.

If there are husbands or children in Shirley's life, they don't merit a mention. Nor does her brother Warren Beatty. Her dog does though. "With a dog you learn intimacy with yourself and a deeper capacity for friendship." Friendship with other dogs or extraterrestrials she must mean because with humans: "I won't permit small talk, only telling the truth as I see it regardless."

You have to remind yourself that Shirley isn't only an unusual obsessive, she also used to be a marvellous actress. If you can get her off the subject of Atlantis and on to a topic equally as bizarre, that's to say Hollywood, her showbiz tales are first class.

We hear about Bob Fosse, who greeted her: "You with the legs that start at your eyeballs." Jerry Lewis's sulks are described, as are Frank Sinatra's dealings with the Mafia. Dean Martin used to slink away from parties, preferring to watch Kojak "than risk a serious conversation". It is touching to learn that since the deaths of his daughter and granddaughter, Richard Attenborough cannot listen to music, "otherwise he would break down and fall apart".

Shirley worked with Nicole Kidman, who would jet off to shoot commercials but on her return would speak "not a word about where she had been". Mystique has to be preserved.

ROGER LEWIS

Keep guessing to the end



THERE IS not a lot of intellectual kudos attached to reading Jodi Picoult but there is an awful lot of enjoyment to be had. She has shot to unbelievable success in a very short period of time, to the extent that her publishers now aim to get out three books every two years. This is number 14. It's easy for critics to sneer at this kind of commercial success but the fact is, it comes with a guarantee: you know you are going to get a roller-coaster ride of a plot.

Her novels have been described as one part romance, one part courtroom thriller, two parts social commentary" and the latest thriller, *Change of Heart*, is no exception. Picoult has an

FICTION

CHANGE OF HEART

★★★★☆

Jodi Picoult

Hodder, £16.99

uncanny knack of dreaming up moral dilemmas that you cannot ignore; you must know the resolution. How is this for an agonising choice: would you grant your enemy's dying wish to save your child's life?

June Nealon lost her first daughter, Elizabeth, when she was pregnant with her second, Claire. Elizabeth was killed in a shooting with her stepfather Kurt, a police officer. They both appeared to have been murdered in cold blood by Shay Bourne, a simple but seemingly

trustworthy odd-job-man who had been doing some work on their house. Bourne subsequently finds himself on death row.

Flash forward 11 years and Bourne is waiting for his sentence to be carried out. He has always claimed he was innocent but he pleaded guilty during his court case. He is now insisting that his dying wish according to his religious beliefs, which ought to be honoured under US law, is to donate his heart to Claire, who suffers from a rare disease and is unable to find a donor match.

To complicate matters, Shay Bourne has attracted a religious following of devotees who insist that he is able to perform miracles. A prisoner with Aids in the cell next to him appears to have made an amazing recovery. When a bird flies into another cell and almost dies, Bourne brings it back to life. The

prison priest is not sure what to make of all this: responsible for Bourne's spiritual well-being, Michael is having a crisis of conscience of his own. As a student he was on the jury which convicted Bourne but in his heart he has never been entirely convinced of the man's guilt.

True to form, Picoult keeps you guessing to the end in this morality tale. June changes her mind several times about whether she will accept Bourne's heart and it turns out that Claire had ideas of her own, too.

This is a challenging and clever read which asks for a big suspension of disbelief but if you can get over that, it turns into an edge-of-your-seat thriller, with some thought-provoking wrangling over religious belief and the perils of self-righteousness along the way.

VIV GROSZKOP

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Britain's X-files

From alien in a Hastings garden to flying scooter in Stevenage, the MoD reveals its list of sightings

By Andrew Levy

IF you have seen a large black square in the sky, a giant flying scooter or even an alien outside your kitchen window, you are not alone.

Such sightings are among those reported in good faith to the Ministry of Defence.

Details emerged after the MoD decided to publish witness reports of the unidentified objects seen in our skies - and occasionally in our gardens - following a large number of requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

The ministry's website shows that in 2006 alone there were 97 reported UFO sightings.

The alien peering through the kitchen window was spotted by a couple in Hastings.

Another witness reported hearing a massive bang above Stamford Hill, North London, before two large fireballs streaked away.

Sunderland had a silver pyramid which rotated at low speed.

And a 'mothership with two smaller orbs' flying above Bariaston in Staffordshire was spotted twice in five days.

In the previous year, 128 sightings included an orange ball of light with 'spiderish legs' and a 'black cigar-shaped object that looked like a disc side-on' and flew 'faster than a fighter jet'.

A log of unidentified flying objects has been kept by the MoD for decades, with some cases investigated for national security reasons.

Previously, it took 30 years for classified records of UFO sightings to be released, leaving enthusiasts with a cold trail to follow up.

But details of every sighting since 1998 were released just a

few months after this year's 60th anniversary of the alleged alien crash-landing in Roswell, New Mexico.

Robert Rosamond, chairman of the British UFO Research Association, said: 'These files give an exciting insight into unexplained phenomena - most interesting is anything that is structured or has an unusual shape.'

'Around 98 per cent of cases can be explained. The remaining two per cent keep us fascinated.'

Last year a former MoD chief warned Britain could be attacked by aliens at any time.

Nick Pope had just stepped down as head of the government department's UFO project and complained it had been 'virtually closed'.

'Highly credible' sightings were often dismissed, he added, and Britain was 'wide open to attack'.

Some of the sightings can arguably be explained by the descriptions given by witnesses, such as 'triangle shape that had lights on that looked similar to a helicopter'.

A large number also occur in November and on December 31 - when fireworks displays are held - and after pub closing hours.

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority said: 'Sometimes UFOs are weather balloons, military jets, optical illusions. But sometimes we just don't know what they are.'

However astronomer Sir Patrick Moore, veteran presenter of *The Sky At Night*, dismisses the chances of aliens visiting Earth.

'There is no intelligent life in our solar system, except possibly on Earth - and I am not so sure about that - so the chances of anyone see-

ing an alien craft are extremely slight,' he said.

'To anyone who thinks they have seen an alien craft I would say, "Have another look".'

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Jan 24, 4.20pm (no location given). Object moving across sky, looked to be on fire. Cigar-shaped and silver in colour.

Feb 10, 7.20pm (Marlborough, Wiltshire) Flashing ball, changing colour from red, orange, green and blue. Hovered for 30 mins.

Mar 19, 6.35pm (Newquay, Cornwall) Bright disc hanging in sky. Quivered rather than moved then vanished.

Apr 23, 10pm (West Kilbride, Ayrshire) Four golden spheres.

Apr 30 (Bariaston, Staffs) Mother ship and two smaller orbs moving around it. One white, one orange.

May 8, 1.11pm (St Tudwal's Islands, Gwynedd) Black square object hanging in sky.

May 16, 7.41pm (Hastings, Sussex) Two witnesses thought they saw an alien outside their kitchen window.

Jun 18, 6.45pm (Macclesfield, Cheshire) Spinning object with triangular part on each side. Grey metallic colour.

Jul 18, 4.15pm (Stevenage, Hertfordshire) Oblong shape described as looking a bit like a scooter.

Aug 5, 9.30pm (Enfield, North London) 13 orange orbs darting about in different directions before shooting straight up.

Sept 13, 9.45pm (Whitehaven, Cumbria) Triangular object with green, red and amber lights. Strange droning noise as it passed overhead.

Sept 22, 8pm (White Roding, Essex) Hundreds of glowing lights moving in rows of three in line formation.

Oct 31, 9.30pm (Hetton-Le-Hole, Tyne & Wear) Black triangular UFO with three lights on it.

Dec 30 (Hunstanton, Norfolk) Silver object with light underneath. Hovered in sky and made little noises. Dust came down.

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THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

(...and the 'open-minded' MoD is investigating every UFO sighting)

By Jason Groves
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

AFTER years gathering dust in Whitehall filing cabinets, Britain's own X-Files are being released to the public.

Secret files held by the Ministry of Defence on sightings of unidentified flying objects used to be destroyed after five years because of "insufficient public interest".

Not any more. The number of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act has been so huge that the Ministry has begun transferring its paper records to an electronic database that is gradually being released online.

They contain an astonishing record of the weird and wonderful objects spotted in the skies by the public over the past 25 years.

Forget Star Trek. Here are spaceships shaped like tadpoles, emitting strange lights and noises while they hover above slumbering towns - or occasionally come in to land on motorways in the small hours.

The MoD says it is "open-minded" about the possibility that alien life forms may be visiting earth.

A surprising number of people have ignored the risk of ridicule to report

objects shaped like aeroplanes, helicopters and balloons. Others are much harder to explain.

There is no real pattern to the reports. Some witnesses report classic flying saucers, others claim to have seen craft shaped like cigars, boomerangs, golf balls - even teddy bears. Most just see clusters of lights.

At times it is hard to tell what the

witnesses thought the strange craft might have been doing.

One observer in 1993 reported an object "like a puff of cloud" with a red light on it, flying above Wimbledon in south London in the general direction of Roehampton - the sort of route you would follow if you had just spent light years in space just to visit Earth.

Another report from 2001 tells of a "bright green light" landing near the M1 at Kegworth, Leicestershire - perhaps stopping at nearby East Midlands Airport to fill up and grab a snack before the long journey home.

Other entries leave the sceptic wondering what happened next, like the report by a couple from Hastings, East Sussex, who "thought they saw an alien outside their kitchen window" in May last year.

Sceptics will also seize on the fact that a significant number of sightings occur in early November and the end of December, when big firework displays are not unknown. And a favourite time for them seems to be after the pubs have closed.

The MoD, which is committed to defend the country against any attack on its airspace, has held records on UFO sightings for decades. For many years every report was investigated and even today those that do not have an obvious explanation are examined and reported on.

A spokesman said: "The MoD examines reports solely to establish whether UK airspace may have been compromised by hostile or unauthorised military activity.

"If required, sighting reports are

examined with the assistance of air defence experts. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, there is no attempt to identify the nature of each sighting."

The MoD insists it holds no regular meetings on UFOs, nor does it conduct research. There are "no plans" for dealing with an alien invasion.

But in letters to UFO enthusiasts, the department admits that it is ready - in theory, at least - to repel raiders from outer space. One letter says: "Any threat to the UK would be handled in the light of the circumstances at the time and might involve the scrambling of aircraft. We have no record of the UK ever trying to bring down a UFO."

But the MoD is open-minded about the possibility of alien life, noting that "it is clear from reports there are many strange things to be seen in the sky". In another letter the ministry says: "The MoD does not have any expertise or role in respect of UFO or flying saucer matters or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial life forms, about which it remains totally open-minded.

"We believe that rational explanations could be found for most of the sightings if resources were devoted to so doing, but it is not the function of the MoD to provide this kind of aerial identification service. It would be an inappropriate use of defence resources if we were to do so."

UFO expert Stuart Miller said that although many phenomena had rational explanations, others

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did not.

Mr Miller, who runs the online news service uforeview.net, said: "There is no obvious pattern and no part of the UK is immune.

"Sceptics like to say that 'ufology' is dead and the sightings are drying up, but it isn't true. People are still seeing objects in the skies in very large numbers. There is tremendous interest in the question of whether there is life out there."

He added: "It would be reckless to say UFOs are extra-terrestrial craft. We just don't know. But whatever they are, they don't seem to want to harm us. There are no instances of aggression, so we shouldn't worry people."

Others are not sure there is anything out there at all. Astronomer Sir Patrick Moore, veteran presenter of BBC Television's *The Sky at Night*, said he was highly sceptical about UFO sightings.

He added: "There is no intelligent life in our solar system, except possibly on earth - and I am not so sure about that - so the chances of anyone seeing an alien craft are extremely slight.

"To anyone who thinks they have seen an alien craft I would say: 'Have another look'"

● The most recent UFO sighting was over Guernsey in April.

Captain Ray Bowyer was piloting a commercial flight from Southampton to Alderney when he noticed two bright objects.

Through binoculars he saw a large, brilliant yellow, cigar-shaped object with a similar one a little further away. They were said to be the size of a 737 airliner and were seen by several of Captain Bowyer's passengers and the pilot of a private plane.

What the secret MoD

files reveal

● May 16, 2006, Hastings, East Sussex, 7.41pm: Two witnesses thought they saw an alien outside their kitchen window.

● February 2, 2006, Wellingborough, Northants, 5.50pm: A V-shaped object was spotted which had bright lights and sounded like a swarm of bees.

● April 14, 2004, Howley, West Yorkshire, 8.27pm: An object that looked like a jellyfish was seen flying in the sky. It had two bright lights on the side.

● January 29, 2003, Wolverhampton, 6.15pm: Two triangular objects flying in perfect synchronisation. Low humming noise, not like a commercial airliner.

● September 1, 2002, Leicester, 5pm: One object that was golf ball sized. Then another three golf ball sized white objects seen moving in an L formation.

● December 31, 2001, Castle Donington, Leicestershire: A bright green light seen moving at very high speed. The object appeared to land near Kegworth over the M1.

● May 24, 2001, Forest Hill, London, 10.25pm: An alien craft near the witness's house. Disc with a beam of light coming from it. Electrical equipment was disturbed.

● January 31, 2001, South Clifton, Notts, 9.10pm: One object the size of a helicopter. Red and white stripes/lights with wings like a Phantom. Stationary, then darted around the wood.

● January 20, 2001, Convey Island, Essex, 1.15am: Seven-foot silver dome with a blue glow seen climbing vertically into the sky in stages.

● July 21, 2000, Neath, West

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For the first time, the MoD reveals number of unexplained 'alien' sightings.. 97 last year

THE REAL X FILES

OUT OF THIS WORLD EXCLUSIVE

By LORI CAMPBELL and SOPHIE BORLAND

THE truth is out there, so they say. But now it could be a lot closer to hand since Britain's real-life X-Files have been opened for the first time – spookily revealing details of HUNDREDS of UFO sightings.

Last year alone the Ministry of Defence logged nearly 100 eyewitness reports of strange unidentified flying objects whizzing through our skies – and they're all listed on the left.

The secret log – made public under the Freedom of Information Act – details UFO sightings that range from the laughable to the seriously baffling... flying saucers, orange fireballs streaking across the atmosphere, a spinning silver pyramid and even an alien.

Utter tosh, some might say.

But not the UFO experts, who are excited to finally have their hands on a log of sightings from as recently as last year.

Normally, it takes 30 years for classified records of UFO sightings to be released, by which time they have been long dismissed.

But now the experts can view files from 1998 to 2006 that give the date, time and location of the sightings as well as a short description.

Among the list of unexplained phenomena reported in the last 12 months was a "mothership with two smaller orbs" flying above Barlaston in Staffordshire, which was witnessed again five days later.

Then there was a weird oblong "shaped like a scooter" spotted in the sky above Stevenage, Beds. A huge "black square" was seen hanging from the clouds in St Tudwal's Islands, Wales, while a "spinning object with triangular fins" was recorded

Tuesday, 20 February 2007

We

NEWS

Robin Turner

robin.turner@wme.co.uk

Website lays out explanation for 'Welsh Roswell'

A CELEBRATED UFO incident in which aliens are said to have crash-landed into a remote Welsh mountain range in 1974 may finally have been debunked.

According to contributions on the internet encyclopedia Wikipedia, the Berwyn Mountains Incident – often referred to as the "Welsh Roswell" – was actually a combination of an earthquake, a meteor shower and poachers carrying lanterns. Supporters of the UFO theory last night hit back at the claims.

It all happened on the frosty night of January 23, 1974, near Llandrillo, high in Clwyd's Berwyn Mountains.

Just after 8.30pm, even the most solid farmhouses and country pubs began to shake as the earth rumbled with what appeared to be a fantastic impact.

As people looked out of their homes, the night sky was streaked with light. Peculiar "fairy lights" were also seen floating over the Berwyns. A nurse and her two daughters claimed to have seen an orange ball on the mountainside above Llandrillo while others claimed to have seen "non-human beings" being handled by military personnel.

But it was, says Wikipedia, a complex coincidence of a meteor shower widely observed over Wales and northern England, a small earthquake, plus the activity of poachers – which explained the fairy lights.

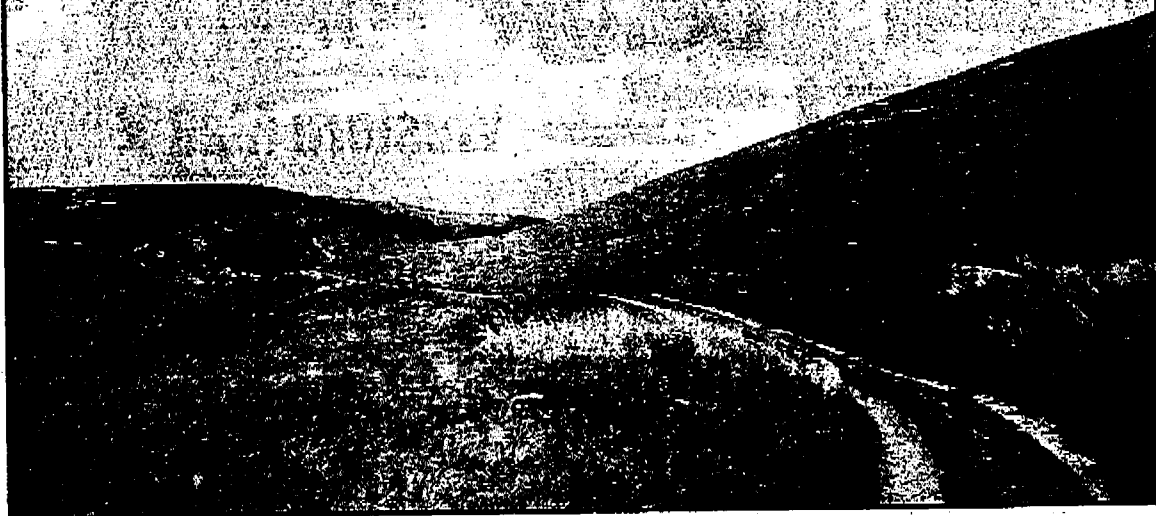
And the website says so-called "men in black", thought to have been Government agents in the area soon afterwards, were in fact civil servants from the British Geological Survey who happened to be wearing dark clothing.

Contributors to the online encyclopedia say it is now known that at 8.38pm on January 23, 1974, an earthquake measuring 3.5 on the Richter Scale was felt over a wide area of North Wales and as far afield as Liverpool.

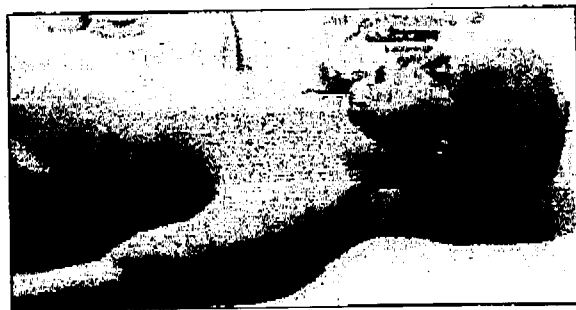
First reactions were that a plane had crashed, or a meteorite had impacted.

Wikipedia claims, "Further confusion was caused by lights

Spooky ... one of our UFO sightings goes missing



STRANGE HAPPENINGS The Berwyn Mountains incident was due to a mix of "a meteor shower, an earthquake and poacher activity"



ALIEN Pictures such as this "autopsy framegrab" added to the rumours that the US had recovered an alien in Roswell

seen on the Berwyn Mountains, which subsequently turned out to have belonged to poachers.

"Police were alerted and set up a search team. Within an hour about 10 officers were searching the Berwyn Mountains and they were joined later by an RAF mountain rescue team from Valley (Anglesey). Nothing was found, and all searches were called off at just

after 2pm the following day."

But Cefn Henry Williams, a Plaid Cymru councillor representing Llandrillo, believes something unusual happened that night.

He said, "In the early hours a close friend of mine said he went up the mountain to see if there had been some kind of crash. He was buzzed by army helicopters all screaming at him through loud

Wales' history of UFO sightings

Wales has had its fair share of UFO sightings over the years.

In the '70s an entire class of primary school children in Broadhaven, West Wales, claimed to have seen a UFO landing and aliens get out. The pictures they drew of what they had seen – a cigar-shaped object – appeared uncannily similar.

In 2006 however, James Carlson of New Mexico, a serviceman based at Brawdy, West Wales, in the '70s and '80s, told paranormal magazine

the *Fortean Times* in a letter that the Harder vertical take off jet used in the UK from 1969 might explain the cigar-shaped object sightings because it did not move like a conventional aircraft.

In October 2005, the Ministry of Defence admitted they had investigated 28 UFO reports in Wales in the previous three years.

They included a giant black object seen over Rhyl, a flying disc with legs seen over the Rhondda and a flying disc seen over Newport.

speakers 'keep away – evacuate the area'. Now while I am not a follower of the crushed UFO theory there could have been some experimental jet which crashed and the military wanted no one near there."

Cardiff-based Lionel Fanthorpe, the broadcaster and cleric who is president of the British UFO Research Association

(Bufora), yesterday invoked the example of the celebrated Roswell incident – when the US Government is rumoured to have recovered an alien body from a downed UFO near the remote New Mexico town of Roswell – in support of the claims.

He said, "Purely from a statistical point of view a visit from some other civilisation is long overdue."

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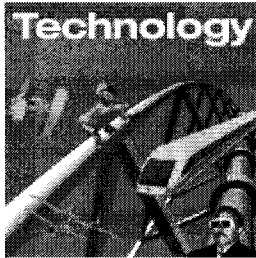
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Could we have hitched a ride on UFOs?

Newly released files may put one mystery to bed, but in doing so others are left unanswered

James Randerson
Thursday February 22, 2007
The Guardian

It is not the sort of discussion you imagine among the grey-suited ranks of Whitehall - defence analysts debating the existence of little green men and speculating about whether they have visited Earth.

But a set of newly released internal Ministry of Defence documents gives a fascinating insight into the military's interest in UFOs. They tell the story of the MoD's decision to investigate the threat they might pose and whether alien military technology could be used in the defence of the realm. They also reveal the conflicting attitudes within Whitehall to the subject and the lengths that officials went to in order to keep the project secret.

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The documents, many marked "Secret UK Eyes A", lay out the rationale for the three-year Project Condign report which

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analysed more than 10,000 possible UFO sightings collected over several decades - many from military personnel. The existence of the 460-page report was revealed last year following freedom of information requests by David Clarke, a lecturer in journalism at Sheffield Hallam University, and his colleague Gary Anthony. It was more FOI sleuthing on their part that turned up the current slew of papers.

The documents show that the internal lobbying effort for a UFO study began in 1993. In a briefing note from the secret UFO investigation branch of Defence Intelligence - called DI55 - an unnamed author wrote: "The national security implications are considerable. We have many reports of strange objects in the skies and we have never investigated them."

Paranoid response

"I also believe that it is important to appreciate that what is scientific 'fact' today may not be true tomorrow ... If reports are taken at face value then devices exist that do not use conventional reaction propulsion systems, they have a very wide range of speeds and are stealthy. I suggest that we could use this technology, if it exists."

And he speculates: "If the sightings are of devices not of the Earth then their purpose needs to be established as a matter of priority ... possibilities are: 1 Military reconnaissance. 2 Scientific. 3 Tourism."

According to a former MoD intelligence analyst who asked not be named, the MoD was paranoid in the late 1980s that the Soviet Union had developed technology that went beyond western knowledge of physics. "For many years we were very concerned that in some areas the Russians had a handle on physics that we hadn't at all. We just basically didn't know the basics they were working from," he said. "We did encourage our scientists not to think that we in the west knew everything there was to be known."

Material that was held back from the original FOI release of the Project Condign report, but which was published in October after an appeal, suggests that the MoD suspected that this scientific knowledge came from studying UFOs - or unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) as the MoD prefers to call them. "Russian, former Soviet republics and Chinese authorities have made a co-ordinated effort to understand the UAP topic. Several aircraft have been destroyed and at least four pilots have been killed 'chasing UFOs'."

One of Project Condign's conclusions was that UAP events could be put down to poorly understood phenomena called plasmas. The report says that the Russian military was doing research using plasmas as reflector antennas, aerodynamic drag reducers, stealth absorbers and using them to produce "saucer-shaped volumes".

The initial request in 1993 for an MoD research project into UFOs was shelved, but in a later memo dated June 19 1995 following a surge in UFO reports, the same unnamed wing commander at DI55 wrote: "Until we conduct some analysis of the files we will not have any idea what the many reports

represent. If at any stage in the future UAPs are shown to exist then there is the potential for severe embarrassment."

Clarke, whose book *Flying Saucerers: The Social History of Ufology* will be published in April, says: "They knew that because no detailed study of the subject had ever been carried out - and consequently they had no idea what UFOs were - they could not justify the claim they were of no threat."

Nick Pope, who worked on the MoD's public UFO desk until 1994 and features in the correspondence, adds: "This was always the big debate. How could you possibly fulfil the remit of looking at the issue properly to see if there was anything of defence significance, without carrying out research and investigation? I think it is one of these subjects where it is low probability, high consequence," he adds. "For the want of spending a little bit of money, the potential wins if there were anything of any defence significance here would be worth having."

But how much money did the MOD spend? One document refers to a £35,000 cost estimate, while in another from 1996, the head of Defence Intelligence (Scientific and Technical) estimated £80,000 for a year-long study. Project Condign when it was eventually begun took more than three years to complete. So does that mean a price tag of at least £240,000?

No, according to the MoD, although it would not release the true figure. "This assumption that the sum will tally up to £80,000 a year isn't supported and is inaccurate. It was funded from an existing contract within existing budgetary levels," it adds.

The project was given to a trusted defence contractor and although details of the contract have not been revealed, the documents suggest that it was handled so as not to expose Project Condign to scrutiny. In the initial 1993 correspondence on the subject, a memo from DI55 refers to the potential "political embarrassment" of the project becoming known. It goes on: "I believe that opening a new contract especially for this study and using competitive tendering would potentially expose the study to too wide an audience."

But Pope believes this was simply a practical measure. "Using an existing contract is always going to be easier than actually commissioning a new one," he says. "It wasn't an attempt to take it outside scrutiny. It was a quick fix."

Suspicious minds

The internal memos and briefing notes are peppered with hints of the considerable scepticism the DI55 wing commander encountered from superiors. In the original August 1993 brief he writes: "I am well aware that anyone who talks about UFOs is treated with a certain degree of suspicion. I am briefing on the topic because DI55 have a UFO responsibility, not because I talk to little green men every night!"

And in a later document he describes a briefing by DI55 on

the subject. "The scientists and engineers present treated to [sic] topic seriously while non scientists (or those without a physical science background) made the usual jokes about little green men and mass hallucination!"

When Project Condign was eventually completed in 2000 it concluded that there was no evidence that UAPs were of extra-terrestrial origin. But there was a limit to what the author could do, because he was not allowed to interview people who had witnessed UAP events or talk to experts.

"The nature of the security classification meant he was unable to discuss the study with scientists who might have been able to advise him on the credibility of the conclusions he reached," says Clarke. This explains Project Condign's baffling conclusion - that UAPs are real, but caused by strange plasmas, which are on the fringes of scientific understanding. "He ended up trying to explain one mystery by reference to another," says Pope.

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EARTH: WE'RE WIDE OPEN TO ALIEN ATTACK

UFO expert wants probes into sightings

THE Earth is wide open to an alien attack, a Government expert warned yesterday.

Former MoD chief Nick Pope said officials are not doing enough to probe UFO sightings leaving us vulnerable to an extra-terrestrial invasion.

Nick Pope, who ran the Ministry's UFO project from 1991 to 1994, said: "The consequences of getting this one wrong could be huge. Frankly we're wide open."

He said there has been a number of "highly credible" sightings and landings of strange metallic aircraft across the UK.

But don't panic, the scientist doesn't think we're on the verge of being over-run by Dr Who-style monsters.

Nick said: "There's no evidence of UFO hostile intent - but it cannot be ruled out in future."

He added: "There has got to be the potential for that and one is left with the uneasy feeling that if it turned out to be so, there is very little we could do about it."

"If you believe these things are extra-terrestrial craft then you

By LUCY THORNTON

cannot rule out that what is happening is some kind of covert reconnaissance."

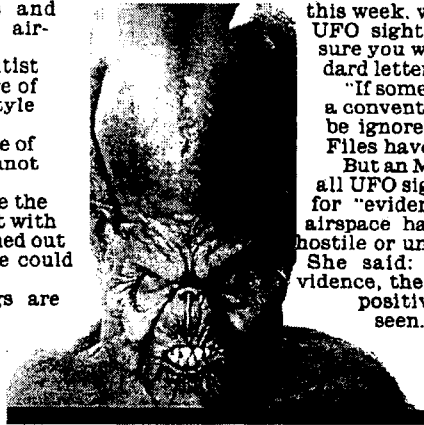
Reports of UFO sightings include a "vast, triangular-shaped craft" lying over RAF Cosford, West Mids, and RAF Shawbury, Shropshire, in 1993.

But Nick, who quit his job at the MoD's Directorate of Defence Security this week, warned: "If you reported a UFO sighting now, I'm absolutely sure you would just get back a standard letter telling you not to worry."

"If something doesn't behave like a conventional aircraft now, it will be ignored. That's because the X-Files have been closed down."

But an MoD spokeswoman insisted all UFO sightings were investigated for "evidence to suggest that UK airspace has been compromised by hostile or unauthorised air activity".

She said: "Unless there is such evidence, the MoD doesn't attempt to positively identify what was seen."



SCARY: Doctor Who alien

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The aliens are coming, warns ex-MoD chief

By Charlotte Gill

ALIEN invasion is usually the stuff of science fiction.

But when a former Ministry of Defence chief warns Britain could be attacked at any time, even the most sceptical could feel a real twinge of alarm.

In his time as head of the Ministry of Defence UFO project, Nick Pope was persuaded into believing that other lifeforms have visited Earth and, more specifically, Britain.

His concern now is that 'highly credible' sightings are simply dismissed.

He points out that the project he once ran is now 'virtually closed', leaving Britain 'wide open' to aliens.

Mr Pope, 41, decided to speak out about his concerns after resigning from the Directorate of Defence Security at the MoD this week. 'The consequences of getting this one wrong could be huge,' he said. 'If you reported a UFO sighting now, I am absolutely sure that you would just get back a standard letter telling you not to worry.'

'Frankly we are wide open - if something does not behave like a conventional aircraft now, it will be ignored. The X-Files have been closed down.'

Mr Pope, who was head of the MoD's UFO project between 1991 and 1994, admits that he was sceptical about UFOs when he started his job.

But access to classified files on the subject changed his mind.

And while Mr Pope says there is no evidence of hostile intent from aliens, he insists it cannot be ruled out. 'There has got to be the potential for that and one is left with the uneasy feeling that if it turned out to be so, there is very little we could do about it,' he said.

'If you believe these things are extra terrestrial craft then you cannot rule out that what is happening is some kind of covert reconnaissance.'

The Roswell Incident in 1947 - in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at an air force base in New Mexico - remains the most famous of countless alien 'sightings'.

However it was a 1993 report,

in which a 'vast, triangular-shaped craft' was seen flying over RAF bases in the West Midlands, that helped convince Mr Pope alien life forms exist.

'Most of the witnesses were police and military personnel,' he said.

'Hundreds of members of the public also had sightings over a period of several hours.' In another incident in 1980 at RAF bases in Suffolk, staff investigated a suspected plane crash after bright lights were reported in nearby woods. They found a kind of three-legged lunar landing module which then flew off. Indents left in the ground were found to emit ten times the normal radiation level.

Mr Pope, who spent 21 years at the MoD, is regarded as an authority on UFOs. He plans to concentrate on lecturing and writing on alien life.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence insisted that all UFO sightings were investigated for 'evidence to suggest that UK airspace has been compromised by hostile or unauthorised air activity'.

She added: 'Unless there is such evidence, the MoD doesn't attempt to positively identify what was seen.'



Alien visitor? The infamous Roswell Incident of 1947

Section 40

From: Section 40 Wg Cdr
Sent: 09 November 2006 15:25
To: Section 40
Subject: FW: FYI - PA piece

Section 40 I have received out of office receipts from both Simon and Hazel could I ask you to take a look at this

Regards

Section 40

Wg Cdr
D News (RAF)
Tel: Section 40
e-mail: Section 40

From: Section 40 Wg Cdr
Sent: 09 November 2006 15:23
To: Section 40
Cc: Section 40
Subject: FW: FYI - PA piece

Section 40 Nick Pope has finally broken ranks – are we happy that extant lines are sufficiently robust to counter his allegations

Regards

Section 40

Wg Cdr
D News (RAF)
Tel: Section 40
e-mail: Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 09 November 2006 15:19
To: Section 40 Wg Cdr
Subject: FYI - PA piece

EXPERT WARNS UK 'WIDE OPEN' TO ALIEN VISITORS

HHH DEFENCE UFOs

Topic DEFENCE

10/11/2006

Published 09 Nov 2006 - 15:00

By Aislinn Simpson, PA

Page 1: 15:00

Britain is "wide open" to alien visitors and a department meant to look into UFO sightings is virtually "closed down", a former Government expert warned today.

Despite a series of "highly credible" sightings and landings in UK territory of metallic aircraft projecting lightbeams and emitting humming sounds, there is no longer formal interviewing of witnesses or investigation into the sightings, he said.

Instead, those working for the Ministry of Defence UFO project spend their time releasing formerly classified documents in answer to Freedom of Information requests from the media or members of the public.

Nick Pope, who ran the Ministry of Defence UFO project from 1991 to 1994, said he decided to speak out about the failure to seriously address the issue for the first time since resigning from his MoD post at the Directorate of Defence Security this week.

"The consequences of getting this one wrong could be huge," he said.

"If you reported a UFO sighting now, I am absolutely sure that you would just get back a standard letter telling you not to worry. Frankly we are wide open - if something does not behave like a conventional aircraft now, it will be ignored.

"The X-Files have been closed down."

While there is no evidence of UFO hostile intent, he said, it cannot be ruled out.

"There has got to be the potential for that and one is left with the uneasy feeling that if it turned out to be so, there is very little we could do about it," he said.

"If you believe these things are extra terrestrial craft then you cannot rule out that what is happening is some kind of covert reconnaissance."

He said he was initially sceptical about UFOs, but access to classified files on the subject and investigation of a series of spectacular UFO sightings gradually changed his mind.

Among these he cited reports of a "vast, triangular-shaped craft" firing a narrow beam of light onto the ground and emitting a low-frequency humming sound that was spotted flying over RAF Cosford in the West Midlands and RAF Shawbury in Shropshire in 1993.

"Most of the witnesses were police and military personnel," he said.

"Hundreds of members of the public also had sightings over a period of several hours.

"A meteorological officer described how it moved at a very slow speed, around 30-40 miles per hour, then very suddenly accelerated beyond the horizon in seconds."

In another incident, at the Twin Bases of RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk in December 1980, RAF staff were sent to investigate a suspected plane crash after bright lights were reported emanating from nearby woods.

They found a kind of lunar landing module standing on three legs, decorated with strange hieroglyphic-type markings, which then flew off. The indents it left in the ground were examined the next morning with a Geiger Counter and emitted ten times the normal levels of radiation.

"These sort of incidents are why I got so frustrated," Mr Pope said. "In my time I would brief the more interesting sightings up the chain of command to people like the Chief of the Air Staff and would get the answer back that it was very interesting and I had clearly done a good job investigating it and that was it.

"Every one is a piece of a puzzle but no one takes it seriously.

"There needs to be more resources and people who are prepared to look past the philosophical issues, look at the reports and investigate them properly.

"Whether you believe these things are foreign air forces testing prototype aircraft or whether you believe they are something more exotic, with the speeds and movements they are capable of, it's technology we would very much like to get hold of."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence insisted that all UFO sightings were investigated for "evidence to suggest that UK airspace has been compromised by hostile or unauthorised air activity".

She said: "Unless there is such evidence, the MoD doesn't attempt to positively identify what was seen."

How the MoD tried to cover up its alien hunters



THE Ministry of Defence went to extraordinary lengths to cover up how much it investigated UFOs, according to documents released under the Freedom of Information Act. Files show that officials tried to expunge information from documents released to the Public Records Office under the "30-year rule" that would have revealed the MoD's interest.

In particular, the ministry wanted to cover up the operation of a secret unit dedicated to the subject within the Defence Intelligence Staff.

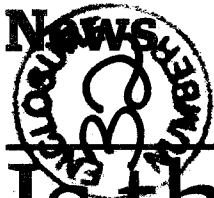
The files were made public following FOI requests by David Clarke, a lecturer in journalism at Sheffield Hallam University, and his colleague Andy Roberts. Dr

BY ROB SINGH

Clarke said: "They don't tell us anything about UFOs but they do show how desperate the MoD have been to conceal the interest of the intelligence services."

The files begin with a request, in 1976, from a UFO enthusiast for access to the MoD's records. A note from the UFO desk to the MoD's head of security shows that officials intended to refuse him access as the files were confidential and had "very little of value to a serious scientific investigator".

But the note continues: "This is not to say that the investigation is not taken seriously." Files also show that attempts to alter the public record went on well into the Nineties.



Is there anybody out there? How the men from the ministry hid the hunt for UFOs

MoD tried to cover-up secret investigation unit

10,000 eyewitness reports 'mostly due to weather'

James Randerson
Science correspondent

The Ministry of Defence went to extraordinary lengths to cover up its true involvement in investigating UFOs, according to secret documents revealed under the Freedom of Information Act.

The files show that officials attempted to expunge information from documents released to the Public Records Office under the "30-year rule" that would have revealed the extent of the MoD's interest in UFO sightings.

In particular, the ministry wanted to cover up the operation of a secret unit dedicated to UFO investigations within the Defence Intelligence Staff. UFO conspiracy theorists have likened the unit, called DI55, to a sort of "Men in Black" agency for defending the Earth against invasion but the released documents show this is far from the truth. One 1995 memo from DI55 to the MoD's public "UFO desk" said: "I have several books at home that describe our supposed role of 'defender of the Earth against the alien menace'... 'light years from the truth!'"

The files were made public following FOI requests by David Clarke, a lecturer in journalism at Sheffield Hallam University and his colleague Andy Roberts.

"These documents don't tell us anything about UFOs but they do show how desperate the MoD have been to conceal the interest which the intelligence services have in the subject," said Dr Clarke.

The trail begins with a request, in 1976, from a UFO enthusiast called Julian Hennessy for access to the MoD's records on UFO sightings. A note from the UFO desk to the MoD's head of security on March 23 shows that officials intended to refuse him access on the grounds that the files contain confidential information and "very little of value to a serious scientific investigator".

But the note continues: "This is not to say that the investigation is not taken seriously. The branches have their own methods - and [the public UFO desk] has no 'need to know' about them - but we are aware that DI55 for example sometimes makes extensive inquiries."

"It is undesirable that even a hint of this should become public and we are currently consulting the [Air Historical Branch] on ways of expurgating the official records against the time when they qualify for disclosure [at the Public Records Office]."

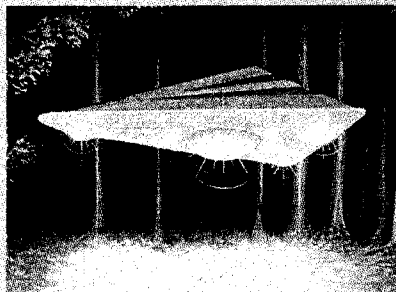
Hearing of the background to his fob off 30 years ago Mr Hennessy, who is a local magistrate, was not surprised. "Everything led me to believe there was a major



Skywatch
An infrared view of the Trifid nebula. Britain's investigation into UFOs has been clouded in secrecy
Photograph: Nasa/Reuters

August 10 1965 A man reported seeing a crimson ball fly out of the side of a hill in Warminster, Wiltshire. A fortnight later, another man photographed a UFO in the centre of Warminster. In 1994 it was claimed the photo was a hoax and the object was made from a cotton reel and a button.

Boxing Day 1980 A UFO reportedly crash landed in Rendlesham forest, Suffolk, near the Woodbridge US air force base. The incident was nicknamed Britain's Roswell in a reference to the famous UFO sighting in New Mexico in 1947. Witnesses said the craft (an artist's impression is pictured below) was covered in markings



similar to Egyptian hieroglyphs and aliens emerged from it. An airman later confessed the incident was a hoax.

November 28 1980 Policeman Alan Godfrey reported seeing a six-metre wide dome-like object hovering in the air in Todmorden, West Yorkshire. He returned to the site with colleagues and they found the area where the object had supposedly been hovering was dry even though the rest of the road was wet because of earlier rain.

Early 1990s A string of sightings by residents in north Scotland of a UFO regularly flying overhead at great speed. Documents released earlier this year suggested the aircraft was a spy plane called Aurora, designed by the Americans to take covert pictures of the Soviet Union.

May 2006 The MoD released details of Project Condign, a four-year secret study into possible explanations for UFOs. The report concluded that many sightings could be explained as by glowing "plasmas" of gas created by charges of electricity.

cover up going on," he said. "They didn't want to let the public know just how interested they were in these phenomena."

Attempts to alter the public record went on into the 90s. In a note dated April 28 1993 from DI55 to the public UFO desk the unnamed author argued the unit's involvement should be excised from records due to be released under the 30-year rule. But the cat was already out of the bag. A clerical error in 1983 had meant that the distribution list was incorrectly left on a publicly released UFO-related document, so UFO enthusiasts were already asking questions.

"Since then they have obviously been bombarded by people saying who is this DI55, what do they do, what is the extent of their involvement," said Dr Clarke.

Eventually, DI55 decided to allow its involvement to be made public. A note from DI55 to the public UFO desk on 5 July 1995 said: "I see no reason for continuing to deny that the [Defence Intelligence Service] has an interest in UFOs. However, if the association is formally made public then the MoD will no doubt be pressured to state what the intelligence role/interest is. This could lead to disbelief and embarrassment since few people are likely to believe the truth that lack of funds and higher priorities have prevented any study of the thousands of reports received."

At this point someone, presumably

from the public UFO desk, has scribbled "ouch!" in the margin.

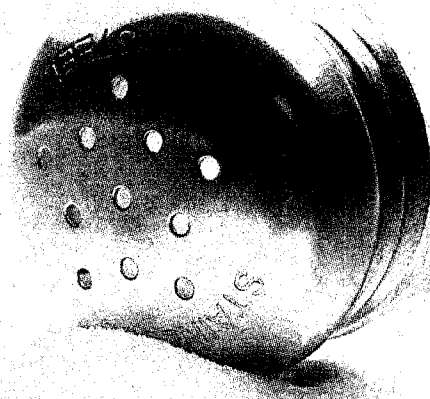
"The lengths they went to to remove any mention of the Defence Intelligence Staff's central role in investigating sightings suggests they had something to hide," said Dr Clarke. "But what they were hiding was not evidence of ET visits but embarrassment at the fact they were never allowed to spend public money on investigating the subject in any depth."

'It is undesirable that even a hint of this should become public'

MoD note on UFO investigations

The full extent of DI55's involvement has subsequently been made clear by a report released to Dr Clarke in May and reported in the Guardian. That threw up a 500-page document which brought together everything the unit knew about UFOs, or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAPs) as the MoD prefers, including more than 10,000 sightings. It said the existence of UAPs was "indisputable", but blamed the most vexing sighting on airborne "plasmas" formed during "more than one set of weather and electrically charged conditions", or during meteor showers.

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UFO mystery holds up shuttle's return

NASA delayed the landing of the space shuttle Atlantis for 24 hours yesterday after a mystery object was seen floating off into space from its cargo bay.

The UFO was spotted as the six-man crew tested the shuttle's jets in preparation for their return to Earth.

Engineers at mission control in Houston were worried because they did not know what the object

BY SARAH GETTY

was. A fresh inspection of the shuttle using its robotic arm may take place to alleviate concerns.

Shuttle manager Wayne Hale said of the object: 'The question is: What is it? Is it something benign or is it something more critical we should pay attention to?'

'We want to make sure we are safe before committing to that

critical journey through the atmosphere.'

The US space agency thinks the object broke loose as the jets were being tested. It might send the craft back to the International Space Station for further checks.

Engineers are also trying to discover what caused a series of eight vibrations that were picked up by sensors in the shuttle's right wing.

They could have been related to

the flight systems check or be a result of the UFO hitting the shuttle as it left. Atlantis undocked from the space station on Sunday after the crew successfully installed a 34m solar panel.

Touchdown at Kennedy Space Center in Florida is now likely to be tomorrow morning.

A forecast predicting bad weather in the region has also delayed the return to Earth.



The Met. O X-Files

File 1/96/A: Spooky sightings in Shropshire

31 March 1993: RAF Shawbury. Just after midnight.

0115: MET OFFICE observer Wayne Elliott received a call from the MoD Police at RAF Cosford saying a family on the Shropshire/Staffordshire border had just had a close encounter with a craft of some sort. The family were very distressed, especially the children. The MoD Police were pursuing the case. Wayne said: "Shawbury seemed to get quite a few of these sorts of calls so I politely listened, agreed and disagreed in the right places, but didn't think too much of it at that time."

Another source confirmed that five members of a family from Rugeley, Staffordshire, saw a huge diamond-shaped object flying steadily over their heads. They estimated its altitude at less than 1000 ft, and its length at about 400 ft. They also reported a low humming noise, like the noise of bass notes you may 'feel' at a pop concert. Because it was flying so low they thought it was going to land in a field, but when they stopped at a gate to try to see it there was nothing there. Their experience was described as 'not pleasant'.

0130: "I was getting ready to do my next observation when the policeman called in again, himself now quite excited, saying that he and two colleagues had just seen the same thing only minutes earlier and that it was now heading my way. I went out to do the observation at twenty-five to two."

0135: Strangely enough, while he was outside something appeared, similar to what the policeman had described. A group of lights was moving erratically, and then became stationary to the north of the airfield, and below them was a beam of white light which appeared to be 'scanning' a nearby hill. This beam swept the countryside from left to right, as if looking for something in the fields and hedgerows. This sighting was not just a second's glimpse, Wayne watched for several minutes, long enough to attempt to estimate the size as that of a very large aircraft. He was just about to return to the office when the lights suddenly streaked across the airfield accompanied by a low humming noise, over his head at a fairly low-level and at several hundred miles per hour.

Wayne said: "I have worked at military fast-jet and helicopter airfields and didn't recognize the object as either of these kinds of aircraft. It was moving too quickly to be a

helicopter, which seemed to be the obvious answer. Its height I estimated to be around 1000 ft, and if it was a jet there would have been much more noise. Even a low-flying Hercules would have made our windows rattle. I called the Cosford chappy and, much to his delight, told him what I'd seen — 'end of story' I thought.

"A few days later, a guy called Nick Pope from Whitchall heard about the incident and contacted me asking for details. I didn't know there was a Government department in London whose job it was to monitor these things. Apparently there were over 30 sightings that night through the West Midlands, Welsh/English border area and the south-west."

Nick Pope, a civil servant, worked for the MoD's Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a, the section responsible for advising defence ministers and air force officers on policy and political matters regarding RAF operations. He was the 'UFO Desk Officer', responsible for collecting, documenting, and solving where possible, sightings of unexplained nature. Wayne's report is officially recorded here, but as yet there are still no explanations for what he and up to 40 other people saw that early morning in March 1993.

"This article is written at the possible expense of my future career and reputation. 'Don't do it!' advised my boss, as he choked with laughter on his fish-paste sandwiches when I told him the story," joked Wayne, now a forecaster at RAF Lymington.

"However, after a piece in the *Daily Mail* (then surely it must be true!), a feature on *Newsnight* and a request by the happily open-minded *Mercury* editorial team, I venture pen to paper. I'm wondering if Dana Scully from *The X-Files* will turn up and investigate. I suspect UFOs are more likely!" he said.

CW

The Enquiry Officer took a call from a researcher for the paranormal for a TV programme (not the X-Files). Her name — Lorraine Mistry



FLICKERS IN SKY, FIREBALLS AND FLYING SAUCERS: MoD LOGS REVEAL SPATE OF SIGHTINGS

UFOs are out there, say real X-Files

BY MARK PRIGG, Science Correspondent

BRITAIN'S secret X-files have revealed a flurry of UFO activity in the last two weeks, it was revealed today.

The Ministry of Defence logs, released under the Freedom of Information Act, include a sighting of "strange lights in the sky" two weeks ago in Whitstable. On the same night a "flying saucer" was spotted over Stoke on Trent, and also in Staffordshire and Cambridgeshire.

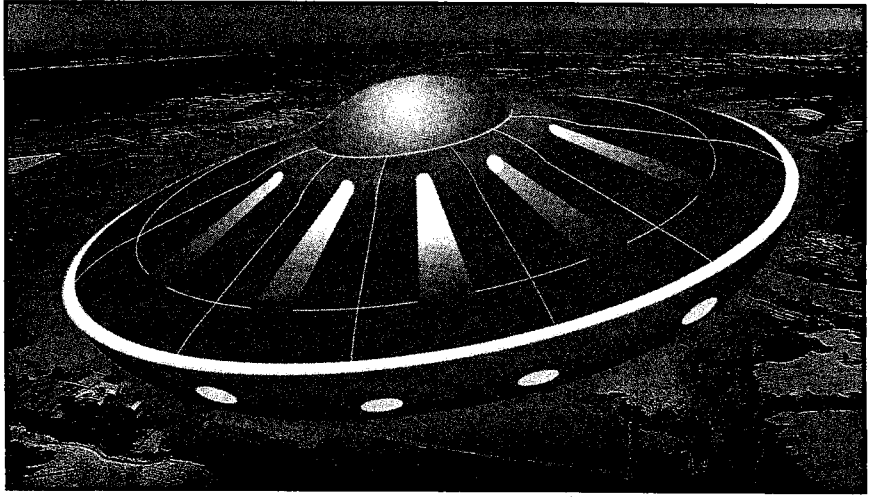
Other sightings give more detail. A report from Devizes in Wiltshire on 24 September last year records an object that "looked like a big ball of fire coming down from the sky with a tail and sparks coming off the end of it".

Another, from Somerset the week before, states: "The object looked like a great bright light and was really intense, like a ball of fire coming down from the sky, rapidly moving towards the ground."

Even MoD chiefs admit they are flummoxed by some sightings. A report from Surrey last May describes a UFO as having "grooves and windows" but no room for humans. The MoD inspector notes that the "witness had seen the object so clearly".

The files show that last year the MoD's UFO unit received 88 reports from military staff and members of the public worried about unexplained objects in our skies. The most common colours for a UFO are yellow, orange or black.

A Ministry of Defence document released with the files reveals that the MoD "remains totally open-minded" as to "the question of the existence or otherwise of extra-terrestrial lifeforms". The Ministry said the documents are a fraction of the thousands of records of alleged alien visits.



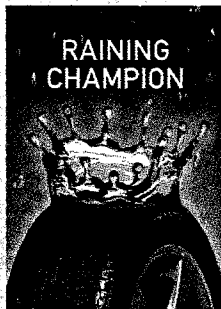
Close encounters: recent reported sightings of UFOs include four in a single night two weeks ago

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Now 'careless' killer drivers face prison

DRIVERS who cause fatal crashes while using mobile phones or eating at the wheel face up to five years in prison under government proposals unveiled today.

Ministers want tougher punishments for those convicted of causing death by careless driving — the present maximum penalty is a £2,500 fine.

Banned drivers who take to the wheel and kill also face five-year maximum jail terms. Uninjured drivers who kill may be treated in the

BY BEN LEAPMAN
Home Affairs Correspondent

same way. Maximum sentences for dangerous driving and aggravated vehicle taking may rise from two years to five.

Death by dangerous driving can already bring a 14-year jail term.

But other proposals would introduce community penalties for some lesser offences — including driving while disqualified — which at present attract prison sentences.

A nation of wine buffs

BRITONS are embracing wine culture as never before, with adult drinking on course to top a bottle a week within 20 years, writes Jonathan Prynn. Figures from wine exhibition organiser Vinexpo show consumption per head grew by almost a fifth to a record 24.8 litres — or 33 bottles per adult

between 1999 and 2003. It is forecast to rise a further 12 per cent by 2008 to reach 28 litres, or 37 bottles each, reaching a bottle a week within 20 years.

Underlying consumption is certain to be higher as the figures do not include the vast amounts of wine brought back by "booze-cruisers".

A £250,000 new 'you' in wax

WAX did it once, the Beckhams have done it twice and, when Terry Wogan had served his time, his was melted down for Ant and Dec. Now you too can have a waxwork made in your image by Madame Tussauds. The museum has teamed up with Harrods to offer the £250,000 "VIP gift", which takes three months to make.

Britain's

X-FILES

By Robin Yapp
Science Reporter

WHETHER you believe in UFOs or not, they are not the sort of witnesses you can easily dismiss as cranks.

An RAF lieutenant, a police superintendent and a British Airways pilot are among those whose close encounters are detailed in secret Ministry of Defence documents just released.

Britain's X-Files, as they are being referred to, have been published to comply with Freedom of Information laws which came into force on January 1.

Among thousands of sightings is the one reported by Flt Lt A M Wood and two non-commissioned officers at RAF Boulmer in Northumberland in July 1977.

They saw 'bright objects hanging over the sea' around three miles from the coast at a height of around 5,000ft.

'The objects separated,' says the report. 'Then one went west of the other. As it manoeuvred it changed shape to become body-shaped with projections like arms and legs.'

Men positioned at the RAF station were able to observe the objects for an hour and 40 minutes before they disappeared. The report describes Flt Lt Wood as 'sober and reliable' and shows that the objects were also picked up by military radar.

Earlier the same year, on April 8, a Superintendent Cooper, of West Yorkshire Police, reported seeing a UFO in the form of a 'bright, silver light' while on duty in a patrol car in Leislerdyke.

'At first I thought this was a bright star,' he says. 'It was low in the sky, a long distance away. Then I thought that this light was moving.' He continued to watch it as it moved over a series of rooftops before it 'suddenly vanished'.

Brilliant white, cigar-shaped

There were no supportive sightings.

In July 1976, the captain of a British Airways Tri-Star on a return flight from Portugal told air traffic controllers of 'four objects - two round brilliant white, two cigar-shaped' 18 miles north of Faro.

Fighter jets were scrambled from Lisbon as a precaution and shortly afterwards Tri-Star crew on two other flights in the same area reported similar sightings.

Not all reports are taken seriously by MoD officials.

Sightings near Derby in 1977 were discounted because witnesses had been 'imbibing at the local hostelry'.

There is also a new perspective on one of the most widely

discussed of all UFO incidents - the sighting reported by American airmen in a foggy Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk on Boxing Day 1980.

They reported an electronic wailing which they at first feared was a crashing plane or helicopter. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt recorded what his men had seen as being 'metallic in appearance and triangular in shape' and illuminating the entire forest with a white light.

Witnesses said animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy and USAF security patrolman Larry Warren described feeling nauseous as he saw three 'aeronaut entities' 3ft tall and resembling 'kids in snowsuits'.

Such was the excitement among UFO enthusiasts that the incident became known as 'Britain's Roswell' - in reference to the famous incident in New Mexico in 1947 when a flying saucer is said to have crash-landed in the desert.

But what documents just released by Suffolk Police

reveal is that two years ago Kevin Conde, an airman at RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk, claimed he had faked the Rendlesham Forest incident as a practical joke on a friend.

He said he had turned a battered American police car into a spacecraft by sticking red and green lenses on it and driving around in circles in fog with a PA loudspeaker going and lights flashing.

Files on the Suffolk Police website reveal further details

'Sent troops to investigate'

of what went on that night. They show that the airbase contacted the police command desk to report: 'We have a sighting of some unusual lights in the sky, have sent some unarmed troops to investigate, we are terming it as a UFO at present.'

The following day a second report from officers at the

scene states: 'We have found a place where a craft of some sort seems to have landed.'

But UFO spotters will be disappointed to learn that it adds: 'There were three marks in the area which did not follow a set pattern. The impressions made by the marks were of no depth and could have been made by an animal.'

An MoD report sent from RAF Cosford on July 14, 1976, reported that a 66-year-old woman from Wolverhampton claimed to have seen a 'white, bar-shaped' object in the sky.

It added that she was married to a retired RAF pilot and he 'did not observe anything from his seated position'.

A man from Rotherham reported four sightings to his local radar station on August 7 and 8, 1976. But the MoD raises a metaphorical eyebrow with the comment: 'He evidently runs a UFO sightings club and has been logging UFOs for three years.'



Revealed, UFO sightings kept secret for decades by Ministry of Defence

For four years NICK POPE worked for the Government's secret UFO unit. Only now can he reveal the astonishing truth about ...

THE THREE RAF Tornado aircraft were on a routine flight from the UK to Germany, travelling at 600mph. At that speed, their pilots are trained to expect the unexpected.

But something happened that day that nothing in their years of experience could have prepared them for.

Out of nowhere, a mysterious craft emerged on their wing tips and overtook the jets. The object was massive and covered with blue and white lights.

For a brief moment, the craft flew ahead of the Tornados, before accelerating away into the distance at an unimaginable speed.

The shocked pilots contacted air traffic controllers. What in God's name was that?

The control centre was unable to help. Nothing had showed up on its radar. Officially, at least, the craft had never existed.

It sounds like a plot from TV's *The X Files*, but it isn't. It really happened. The incident occurred on November 5, 1990, and on the following day the military authorities sent a signal to the Ministry of Defence, classifying the incident as a UFO sighting.

Extraordinary? Yes. But an isolated incident? Absolutely not. The truth is that the MoD has thousands of such UFO reports on file. And as of last week, we know a little more about a handful of them.

The UK's Freedom Of Information Act came fully into force at the beginning of the month, giving unprecedented access to official documents. To mark the Act's new statutory right to know, the UK's National Archives have just released more than 50,000 files. And as the Mail reported, these included many of the MoD's UFO files.

And yet they represent just the tip of the iceberg. The reason I'm so certain is simple — I helped compile them.

From 1991 to 1994, I worked in Secretariat (Air Staff) 2A at the Ministry of Defence. There, it was my duty to assess reported UFO sightings, of which we received 200 to 300 a year.

When I started, I was sceptical about the paranormal. But by the time I left the department, my mind had been opened to the possibility that the universe is a very much stranger place than conventional science might suggest. I believed I had clear evidence that craft of unknown origin were demonstrating a technology far in advance of our own.

I made it my business to do everything I could to find rational explanations of reported sightings. Was there military activity in the area? Was there an astronomical event such as a shooting star, perhaps, or space debris re-entering the earth's atmosphere?

Flocks of birds, especially when seen in an odd light, can have a strange appearance and the oddest illusions can be caused by

The pilot ducked as the silver object flashed by

certain cloud formations. And yet, and yet...

My investigations showed that while most UFOs could be explained in terms of misidentifications of ordinary objects and phenomena, I was intrigued by a small number that apparently defied rational explanation.

Structured craft of unknown origin were, so it seemed, routinely penetrating our airspace and performing impossible manoeuvres.

I was particularly intrigued by cases where the witnesses were trained observers, such as pilots or police officers, or where sightings were corroborated by photographic or radar evidence.

Over the years, there have been many such cases, and several incidents where RAF aircraft have tried — unsuccessfully — to intercept UFOs tracked on radar. Some encounters, it seems, have been a little too close for comfort.

On January 6, 1995, a British

Airways 737 on its descent to Manchester airport came close to colliding with a UFO. The pilot and first officer both saw the craft and instinctively ducked as the triangular-shaped silver object flashed past them. The Civil Aviation Authority had no option other than to classify the risk of collision as 'unassessable'. Or was it simply that the only possible explanation was too startling to contemplate?

Historically, the authorities have not always been so reluctant to acknowledge the possibility of the unknown. The MoD first became involved in the search for the truth about UFOs in 1950, when the Chief Scientific Adviser (the great radar pioneer Sir Henry Tizard) ruled that UFO sightings should not be dismissed.

He asked that a small group be set up to look into the matter and a study was duly carried out in great secrecy by scientific and technical intelligence specialists.

Several high-profile figures also spoke of their belief that UFOs might be extra-terrestrial. These included Earl Mountbatten of Burma, former World War II air chief Lord Dowding and a royal equerry, Sir Peter Horsley, who retired as Deputy Commander-in-Chief at Headquarters Strike Command.

Several MPs and peers have tabled questions in Parliament. The House of Lords even held a debate on the subject in 1979. But still, the files remained closed.

So do the newly released documents shed any real light on the matter?

They are a mixed bag. Much of

the material is mundane, detailing nothing more interesting than a vague light in the sky.

Still buried in the MOD archives are far less-easily dismissed encounters.

For example, in the early hours of March 31, 1993, a UFO flew over two military bases in the Midlands. At RAF Cosford, it was seen by a guard patrol and an official report was sent to the MoD. At RAF Shawbury, it was seen by the Meteorological Office, who described it as a vast, slow-moving triangular-shaped craft flying at about 200ft.

The craft was making a low frequency humming sound and firing a narrow beam of light down at a field just beyond the perimeter fence. The light beam swept to and fro as if it were trying to locate something.

The light was suddenly switched off and the craft shot off at high speed, giving rise to G-forces that would surely have killed any human occupants.

I launched a full investigation, but we never got any satisfactory answers. My official findings for the MoD read: 'Type of craft, unknown. Origin of craft, unknown. Motive of occupants, unknown.'

It seemed a horribly inconclusive assessment. But it was by no means an isolated case.

Three years before the Cosford and Shawbury incident, the Belgian Air Force had scrambled F-16 fighters to intercept a UFO they were tracking on radar. The pilots soon picked up the object on their own airborne radar, but every time they achieved a 'lock-

on' to track it through the skies, the craft managed to elude them.

Unlike the understandable scepticism of the British high command, the Belgian Air Force was quite convinced of the reality of the UFO encounter and its possible implications. 'Their prime observation was: "Thank goodness they weren't hostile."

Then, of course, there is perhaps the UK's most famous UFO case — the so-called Rendlesham Forest incident.

Over the Christmas period in 1980, witnesses spotted a series

It was humming and fired a thin beam of light

of mysterious lights near the twin United States Air Force bases at Bentwaters and Woodbridge in Suffolk, a sighting which has been the subject of fierce debate between sceptics and believers.

It was, so it seemed, inexplicable. But then, two years ago, a former U.S. security policeman came forward to say the 'UFO' had, in fact, been part of an elaborate practical joke. He claimed he had driven an old U.S. police car into the forest, switched on the emergency lights and made sinister noises through the loudspeaker to spook his colleagues.

Mystery solved? Not quite. Some disturbing facts remain: witnesses continue to insist that what they saw darting through

the sky that night was like nothing else on earth. U.S. Air Force Sergeant John Burroughs says: 'The stuff we saw cannot be taken for a police car. No way.'

Furthermore, a document from the MoD's Defence Intelligence Staff states unequivocally that a radiation reading taken from the site 'seems significantly higher than the average background' and adds that they 'do not know of any serious explanation for the phenomenon described'.

One of the best authorities on the Rendlesham Forest incident, Georgina Bruni, once managed to quiz former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on the case and on the UFO phenomenon generally.

Raising the issue with her at a charity function on May 21, 1997, she elicited the following cryptic response: 'UFOs? You must get your facts right... and you can't tell the people.'

What could she have meant?

Conspiracy theorists love this sort of thing, and are unlikely to be satisfied by any release of papers from the archives that don't support their own beliefs.

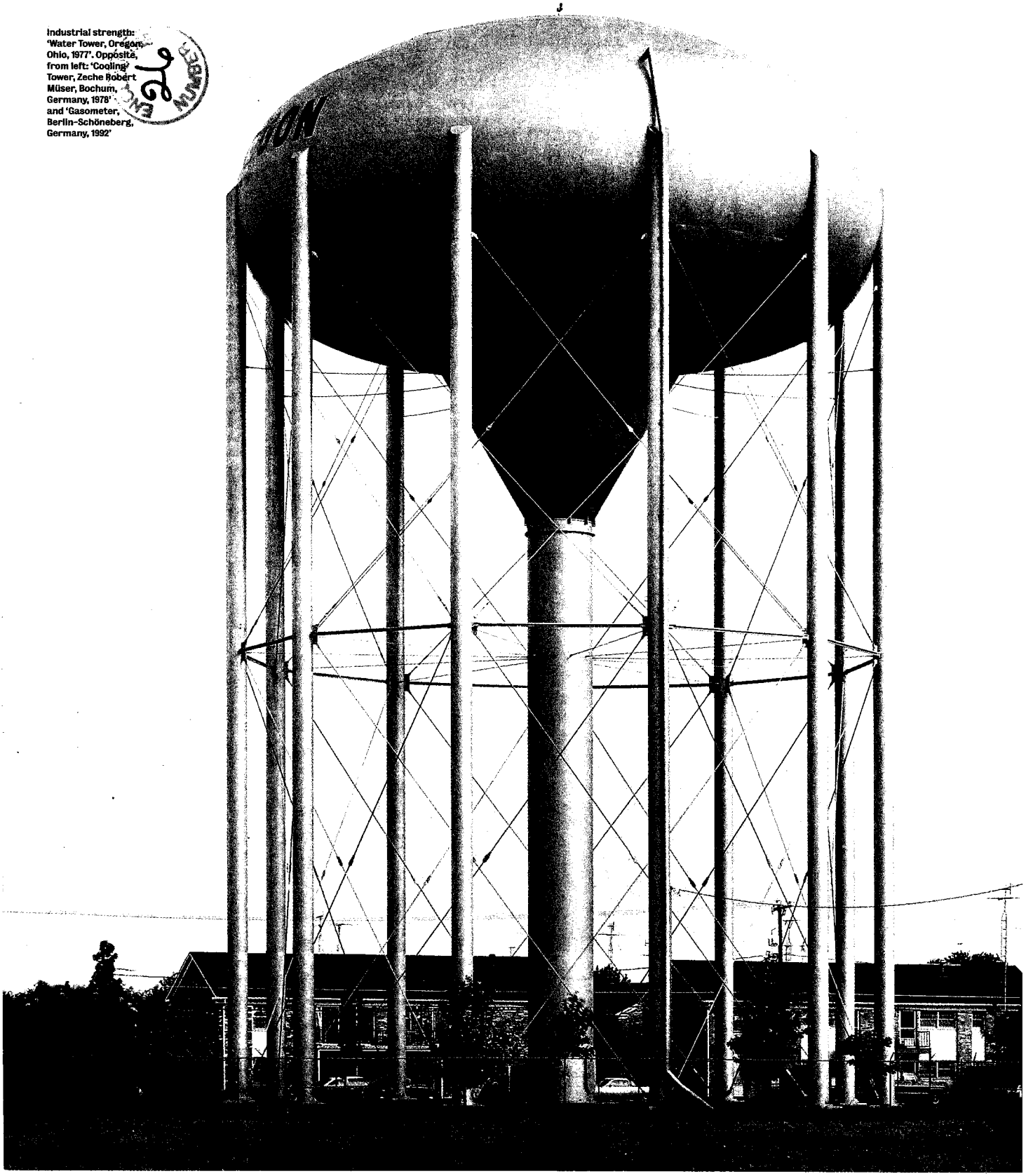
And I do know that in those MoD files that are still closed lie stories that, even to this day, defy rational explanation.

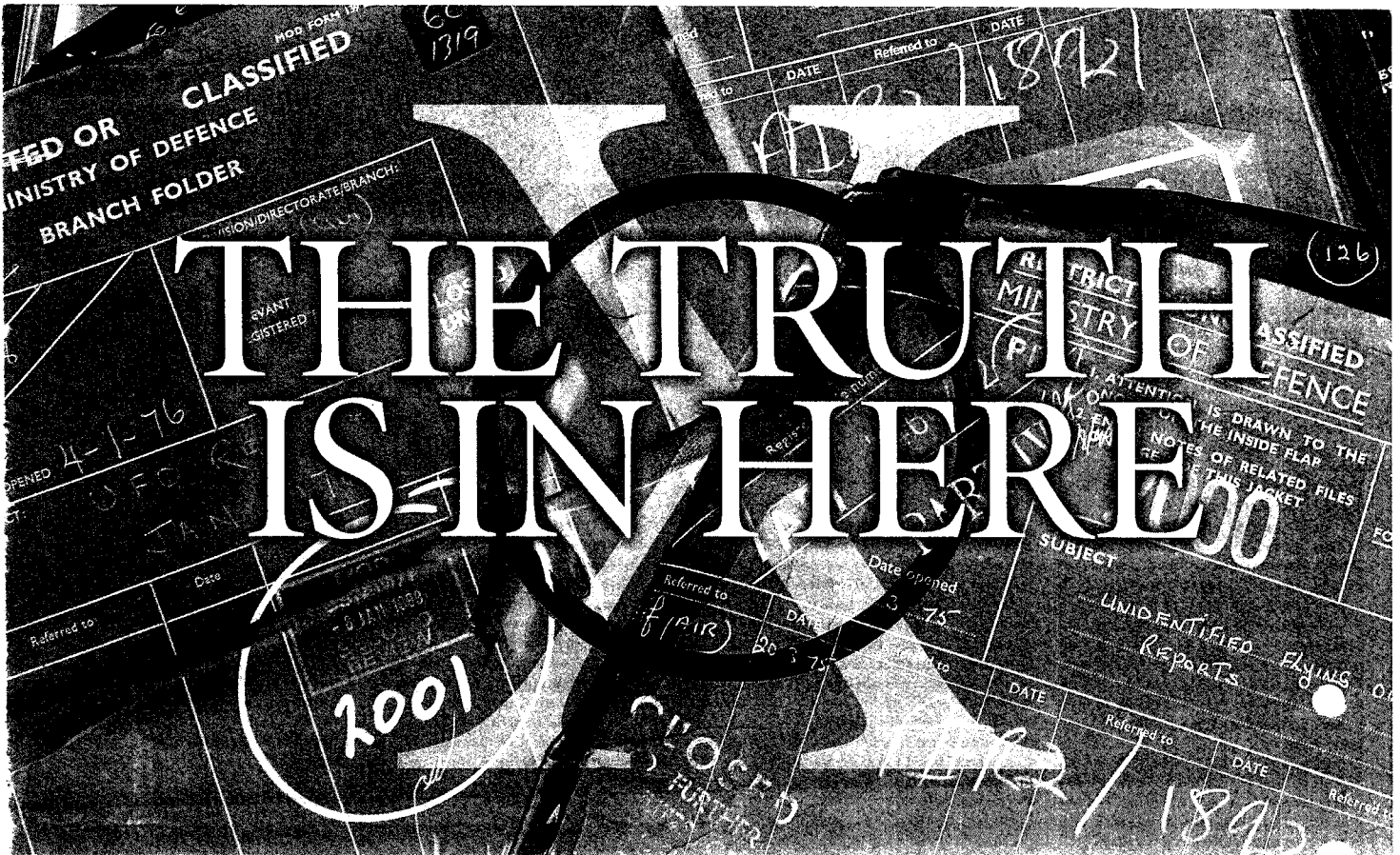
As I surveyed these files during my tour of duty on the UK's UFO project, I was put in mind of *The X Files* soundtrack 'The truth is out there'. The truth wasn't out there, it was in there — in the MoD's real X Files.

And it's still there today, just waiting to be discovered.



Industrial strength:
'Water Tower, Oregon,
Ohio, 1977'. Opposite,
from left: 'Cooling'
Tower, Zeche Robert
Müser, Bochum,
Germany, 1978'
and 'Gasometer,
Berlin-Schöneberg,
Germany, 1992'





They've been locked away for years. Now the Freedom of Information Act has allowed access to a mountain of remarkable documents detailing UFO sightings across Britain. From the ambassador who spotted a pear-shaped object trailing golden sparks, to the engineer who saw an 'aerial circus' above next door's bungalow, we present extracts from our very own X-Files

Photographs by Graham Trott

Unidentified flying objects are still regarded as an American phenomenon. Stephen Spielberg's films *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *ET* are born out of a culture deeply rooted in stories such as Roswell in 1947, when an alien spaceship is supposed to have crashed and its occupants captured by the US military.

In Britain we remain more sceptical about such things. The truth may well be out there but we want to see some pretty compelling evidence first before we can say we are truly not alone.

To date the most credible UFO sighting in this country concerns a strange incident that took place in Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, during Christmas 1980. Military personnel at the twin US Air Force bases at Brentwaters and Woodbridge reported hearing a loud whirring sound and then seeing bright orange lights that illuminated the centre of the forest. But we wouldn't even know about this if it hadn't been for an American citizen who made a request under US freedom of information laws.

On 1 January this year our own Freedom of Information Act came into force and some of the

first documents to be disclosed concerned home-grown sightings from the mid-1970s, previously kept secret by the Ministry of Defence's special UFO department, known as S4E.

These have been described as our very own X-Files; they detail thousands of observations of unidentified flying objects made by housewives, British Airways pilots and senior police officers.

Among the most noteworthy reports is one registered by an RAF pilot and two NCOs at RAF Boulmer in Northumberland. In July 1977 Flt Lt A M Wood reported "bright objects hanging over the sea". The file adds that the officer said the closest object was "luminous, round and four to five times larger than a Whirlwind helicopter". The UFOs were reported to be three miles out to sea at a height of about 5,000ft.

The officer, whose report is supported by Cpl Torrington and Sgt Graham, said: "The objects separated. Then one went west of the other, as it manoeuvred it changed shape to become body-shaped with projections like arms and legs." The men who were positioned at the look-out post at the RAF station were able to observe the strange objects for an hour and 40 minutes.

At the same time a radar station detected the objects in exactly the same position as the men had observed them.

The MoD report describes Flt Lt Wood as "reliable and sober". It adds: "Two contacts were noted on radar, both T84 and T85, at RAF Boulmer. They were also seen on the Staxton Wold radar picture which is relayed to West Drayton... On seeing the objects on radar the duty controller checked with the SRO at RAF West Drayton as to whether he could see the objects on radar supplied from RAF Staxton Wold."

Not all of the reports sent to the MoD

'The objects separated. Then one went west of the other, as it manoeuvred it changed shape to become body-shaped with projections like arms and legs'

are quite so credible. Many have an apologetic tone, perhaps conveying the observer's own sense of incredulity about what they believe they have seen.

In turn, officials working at the Ministry of Defence's UFO department courteously answer all enquiries with a standard letter reminding the author of the report that most unidentified flying objects can be explained as weather balloons, falling satellites or unusual meteorological phenomena.

For those that can't, the MoD adds a paragraph setting out the Government's agnostic position on visitors from outer-space: "The MoD does not have any expertise or role in respect of UFO/flying saucer matters or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extra-terrestrial lifeforms, about which it remains totally open-minded."

Occasionally the UFO office can be more expansive still in its responses, as you will see on the following pages, where we present an intriguing selection of letters retrieved from the National Archives. Prepare for a journey into the unknown... →

AERIAL CIRCUS

Dear Mr Appleby: I enclose for your interest, details of an extraordinary sighting by myself and my wife on Friday night, 31 January [1975].

I shall be interested to learn if you have received any other reports that correspond with my own experiences.

Date and Time: 31 January from 22.20 to 22.25 approximately.

Place: 6 Richmond Road, Caversham Heights, Reading, Berkshire.

Weather: Clear moonless night, stars only visible. No ground wind, temperature falling but no frost.

Observers: (i) Mr Alan Edwin Lott, C. Eng., FTEE, FIERE, Civil Servant, AWRE, MOD (PE), Age 52.

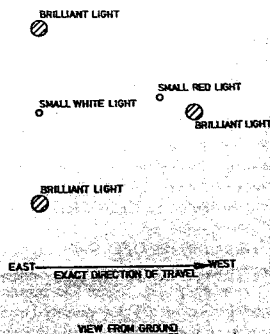
(ii) Mrs Clarice Doreen Lott, Housewife, Age 50. **Details of observation:** After spending a quiet evening at home I left the house at 22.20 approximately with my dog for a short walk. The dog stopped just outside the front gate and I casually looked around the firmament. I was surprised to see very bright lights in the sky to the east beyond the bungalow next door (No. 4) and on studying them for perhaps 10 or 15 seconds realised that I was watching something extraordinary.

I immediately returned to the house and told my wife to come outside and whilst she put on a coat I obtained a pair of 8x40 binoculars. I suppose that about half-a-minute elapsed between entering the house and coming out again.

Looking for the lights I discovered that they were moving slowly in a straight line almost exactly East to West and were now directly above my house.

It was clear to the naked eye that there were three extremely bright lights of an orange/yellow colour arranged as a large equilateral triangle. There were two other very small lights, one red and one white. See Fig. 1 [pictured below]. All of the lights were steady with no flashing.

UFO.



608116 23 Wednesday
Dear Sir,
on Monday 12th of January on my way to school and while waiting for the bus I saw a bright light in the sky. It stayed there for only few seconds as I don't know how long it had been there before I looked up. Anyhow the light died down and an object went fairly quickly off to the distance over Caversham (a local shopping centre) way. eg
Small movement

before the light died down the whole light was in the shape of a Starfish after a little while again I glanced into the sky and I then saw a light white light again. This time the object was in the shape of a circle like two headlights the same thing happened as last time, the light died down and then the object again went over Caversham way eg
also in the afternoon (I don't recall times) two other people saw these things in the sky and gave the same description almost as if they saw these on January 12th last I saw them about 7.30pm on a different date

when I got to school I told my teacher Dr Brown who deals with Biology and science. I also told some of my friends about it and some of the bus drivers who frequently see it.
Christine Church age 12

There were no beams of light as with search-lights, just the steady brilliant glare.

My wife continued to watch and I then trained my binoculars on the display. I was unable to see anything through the binoculars additional to that seen by the naked eye. I was most surprised at this, I had expected to see the dark outline of an aircraft with perhaps fuselage lights and perhaps efflux from a jet engine.

The separation of the lights suggested a very large body flying very low but the UFO was travelling so slowly that it could not have been any conventional aircraft. The sighting from start to finish lasted about five minutes whereas the aircraft we see here are usually out of sight in about 15 seconds.

We watched the whole apparition steadily float into the distance and vanish silently behind houses and trees further down Richmond Road. I looked at my watch and it was 22.25.

The dog took no interest but sat waiting to be taken for his walk.

Comment: As a casual amateur astronomer I can categorically state that this was not any form of "heavenly body" or satellite.

Also having lived at the above address for 18 years I am fully conversant with all types of aircraft that infest the airspace at Caversham and their appearance and sound.

I am quite unable to account in any way for this "aerial circus". It was quite unlike anything I have seen.

A.E. Lott
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment
Aldermaston, Reading, 3 February 1975

FRIGHTENING EVENT

Dear Sir: I am writing to you to report a rather strange happening which occurred on Friday, 31 October 1975.

Before going into detail I would like to say that I have written a letter to you before concerning the same subject. This was back in July (28th) 1975, but although it seemed a strange happening I accepted your explanation and thought no more of it.

However since then I sometimes take a quick "glance" through my binoculars on a fine clear evening just to see if anything strange is around.

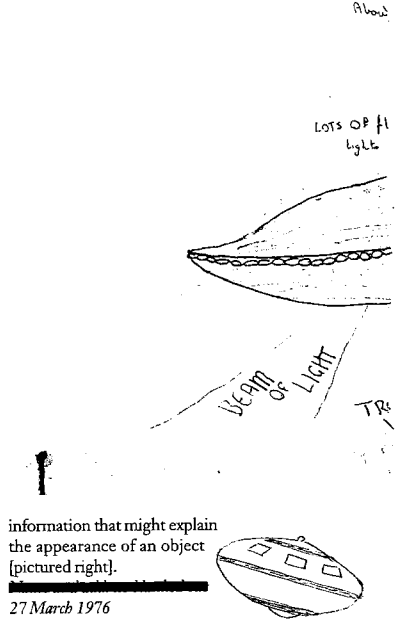
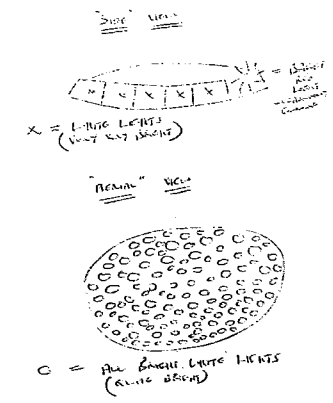
On Friday, I was glancing at the night sky when I suddenly noticed a bright red light. It moved so erratically and so fast that there was no way in which it could be classed as an aeroplane.

Then quite suddenly the red light seemed to turn in flight as if to reveal its top. As this was in progress it changed to a mass of white lights.

Now it is hard to explain what this resembles but if you can imagine an aerial view of one of those fairground merry-go-rounds with masses of light bulbs, glowing then this would be very much a likeness to what I saw.

I enclose a few rough sketches (pictured below). I hope you will reply to this letter. I am sensible married man. I am no space mad "crank" or any other sort of fool. I would just like to know what on earth this frightening event could be.

Essex, 3 November 1975



information that might explain the appearance of an object [pictured right].

27 March 1976

DIPLOMATIC INCIDENT LOOSE MINUTE UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

1. Attached is a copy of a letter, passed to us by the National Air Traffic Services, from the Air Attache in Berne enclosing a UFO report made by the British Ambassador to Switzerland and a news cutting.

2. Although the report indicates a doubt as to whether the incident occurred on 14th or 15th of October, the report made by the Ambassador to RAF Manston, which was passed on to us, referred to the incident as being on the 14th October. The news cutting refers to a sighting on 15th October by a Mr Frear, who did not make a report to S4F.

3. Although we do not normally undertake to advise observers of the possible identity of the object seen, we will in this case have to respond to the Ambassador's specific request to the Air Attache to obtain comments. I should be very grateful therefore if you could suggest a possible explanation of this phenomena.

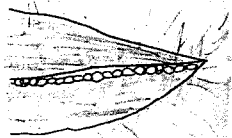
Miss S.J. Jamieson
MOD, Whitehall, 22 November 1977

SIGHTING OF AN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT (UFO)

At 6.45pm on the evening of either October 14th or 15th - I regret that I cannot be more precise about the date - I was driving from my house along Wassall Lane near the village of Rolvenden Layne in Kent when through my car windscreen I sighted to the north of me, an object in the sky, at an inclination of some 18 or 20ft above the horizon, travelling fast from south to north and shaped somewhat like a flattened avocado pear. The blunt and leading end

How long

shiny all round



ES



'If you can imagine one of those fairground merry-go-rounds with masses of light bulbs glowing, then this would be very much a likeness to what I saw'

Saucer Inspiration: a sketch supplied by an anonymous UFO observer, above; and a Kent schoolgirl's close encounter, top left

Mystery light 'a UFO' claim

Police were alerted when people saw "an intense white light" speeding through the skies.

The light was spotted at about 9.15 last night by Mr Peter Hughes, caretaker of Mons Hill School, Dudley.

seemed to be rimmed horizontally by some sort of phosphor or bronze metal which shone quite distinctly. The general body of the object was emitting a pronounced bluish light and from the tapering end there was a stream of golden sparks. The whole sighting took only a matter of one or one-and-a-half seconds but my impression of what I had seen was so vivid that when a few minutes later I entered the "Ewe and Lamb" public house in Rolvenden Layne (for a well-deserved pint of bitter after a hard day's work in the garden), I immediately announced to the landlord, Mr Joe Hoad, that I had just seen my first UFO.

I did nothing further about this until I saw the attached report in the *Kent Courier* of 28 October [pictured below left].

My interlocutor was polite enough but took care to say that I should not necessarily expect to hear anything further from the RAF. I can well understand why RAF Duty Officers say this to people who call in with reports of sightings of UFOs eg because the report is a hoax or because the person making it is an unreliable witness or dotty or drunk. However I was certainly not drunk at 6.45 in the evening nor am I dotty nor an unreliable witness. I should therefore be grateful if you can follow this strange story up a bit and see whether we can extract any comment from the competent authorities.

A K Rothnie
British Embassy, Berne, 8 November 1977

IT WAS SWIFT, IT WAS LARGE

A report, 29 November 1976 early hours of Monday am (between Sunday night and Monday am) about 3am.

It was barely light.

I woke in bed, facing the window (in front bedroom of house) and saw what I thought was the moon and thought - what a bright moon - then realised I had never seen the moon in this part of the sky before.

It was a quarter moon, then I saw it was moving.

It moved nearer, overhead in Guildford Town direction. Coming from the right of the cathedral site. It wasn't all that high in the sky.

I heard a "high drone" as it neared. It was swift, it was large. It was round in body structure and very brightly lit underneath.

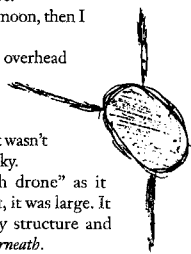
I tried to absorb as much as possible before it passed from my view to the back of the houses.

The "underneath" from my view point looked like this [pictured above]. I could discern long thin legs from the body structure.

It was very large. It was no plane. As it passed overhead, there was a flurry of air or cloud around it.

Next Day, I phoned the police, in case it had been reported to them. But no one had seen anything.

I did see it.
Mrs JH Cleghorn
Guildford, Surrey, 9 December 1976



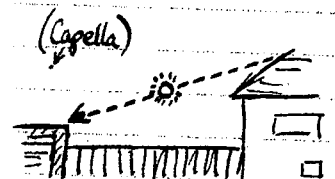
Dear Mrs Cleghorn: I am writing to thank you for your letter of the 9th December and the detailed account of the unidentified flying object which you saw during the night of the 28th and early morning of the 29th November.

As I explained we cannot undertake to pursue our research beyond our defence interests.

You may, however, wish to know that over the past number of years sightings are considered to originate in the main, from aircraft or the lights of aircraft being seen under unusual conditions, balloons and various meteorological phenomenon as well as astronomical sightings, space satellites and space "junk".

I am sorry that I cannot assist you any further with any account on what you actually saw.

J McBlane
MOD Main Building, London, 23 December 1976



BRIGHTER THAN THE MOON

Dear Sir: I am sending to you the particulars of a UFO that I saw in this region last night. I wonder if identification could be made.

I and my friend are amateur "star gazers" and have never before seen anything like this. It most certainly was not an aircraft, weather balloon, planet or star.

Date: October 12th 1977
Time: 20.50BST
Duration: approx one second
Description: spherical, brilliant white, very

much more brighter than full moon on good night (about 10x). No noise heard.

Position: Observed from forecourt of 3, Hampden Rise (350ft above mean sea level)

Position of UFO: Moved from behind house (No.2) and descended to disappear behind single-storey garage.

Range: No idea of distance.

Speed: Unbeknown but extremely fast.

Conditions: Perfect visibility, just a little cloud very low in west.

Notification: No authorities previously notified.

I was sighting on Capella, preparatory to finding the planet Jupiter when suddenly a large, intensely white object flashed across my field of view, as in the diagram [pictured below left].

It completely blotted all stars in the neighbourhood, and though it was gone in one second, it could not have been a trick of the imagination, as my eyes were stationary and the streetlamps are yellow. Meteors are ruled out because a disc was visible.

I would be grateful if you could inform me of your identification, if possible.

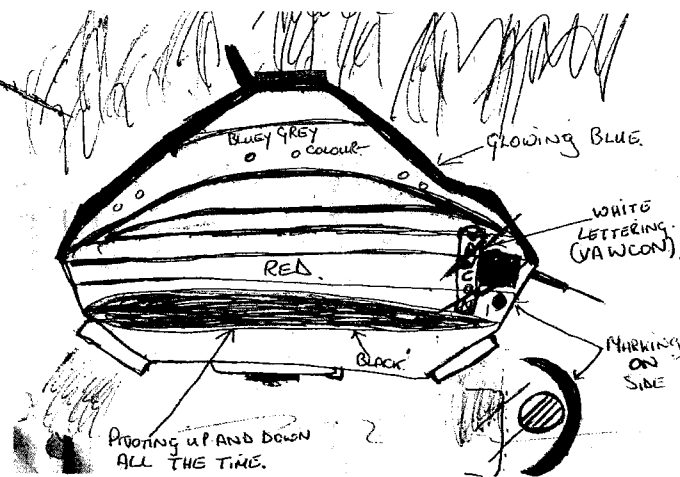
Mark Porter (age 15 1/2)
Royston, Herts, 13 October 1977

I, Peter Melling of 3 Hampden Rise do hereby confirm that my friend Mark was truly astounded at what he saw, and could find no terrestrial or astronomical explanation for this unusual observation
Peter Melling (Age 16 1/2)

I NEARLY HAD KITTENS

Dear Sir: I enclose a sketch of the craft I saw [pictured below] on Friday morning 5th November at 6.21am. I am not doing this as a hoax and I don't want any publicity whatsoever or it going to the press, as if it does I will deny everything. I hope you will treat this matter in strict confidence.

Name withheld
Huntingdon, Cambs, 10 November 1976



MOD note (by Mr HE Mackey): Further to RAF Wyton Signal 05133DZ Nov, I had asked RAF Wyton to try and obtain precise location of incident reported at Oxmoor Estate on 5 Nov '76.

Flt Lt Chapman said he had phoned *name withheld* (on 10.11.76) and his mother answered the telephone. She was well spoken, and brought her son to the telephone. Mr *name withheld* had a broad local accent. After F/L C. had gained his confidence, Mr *name withheld* was very willing to talk about the incident and himself. He seemed (to F/L C.) a kindly likeable person. His voice sounded younger than his 29 years might suggest. He impressed F/L C. as imaginative. He reads a lot, especially books on aviation.

The place of the incident was a playing field between Shapley Rd and Hartford Rd, two acres in area. It transpired that the incident occurring on 5 Nov was not the first time that Mr *name withheld* had sighted the object, the first occasion being about two weeks previously. He had again seen the object on the morning of 9 Nov.

Further Description of Object: Tank-like, rather square with dome-shaped super structure, had white and blue lights. Main body of dark blueish-grey colour. Mr *name withheld* had impression of heat radiating from object.

Noise: Almost silent: thought he detected low-pitched hum. Dog ran into field. Object

descended, but did not actually land, to about 12ft from observer. A "sort of telescopic probe appeared" and seemed to be "probing the ground". At this juncture the object turned round and faced Mr *name withheld*. He was petrified and in his own words "nearly had kittens". The probe then retracted and object made off at speed.

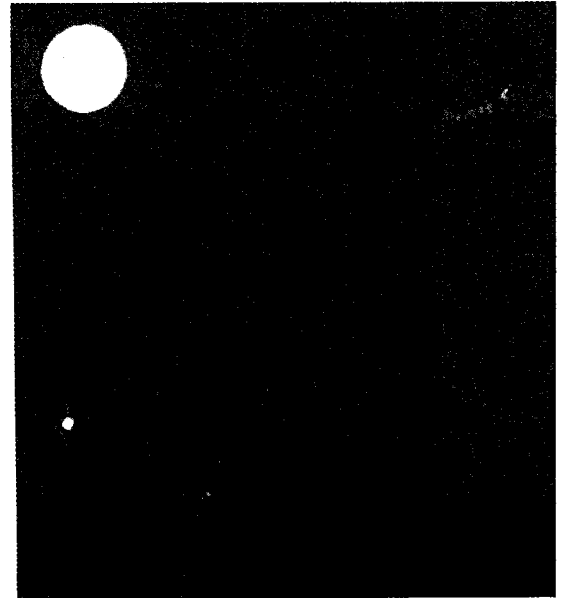
Mr *name withheld* is now no longer frightened of the object, and has taken to looking for it on his walks with his dog. He intends to take a camera with him on future walks, and if he gets results he will contact Wyton.

A RATIONAL EXPLANATION

Dear Mr Mackey: Thank you very much for your letter of the 11 February. Bearing in mind that you will have been given all the relevant information on the sighting, I take pleasure in enclosing an artistic impression of the occasion [pictured right]. The large white disc in the top left hand corner is intended to be the moon and the smaller object above the trees is intended to be Venus. Neither the moon nor Venus were visible to me at the time in question, they are strictly there to give some idea of how, in size, the object I saw appeared to me.

The object travelled downward, following the path of the dotted line. Compared with the objects I've included in the picture, you'll see

Odd orbit: Campbell's artistic impression of the UFO. Was it simply a passing satellite?

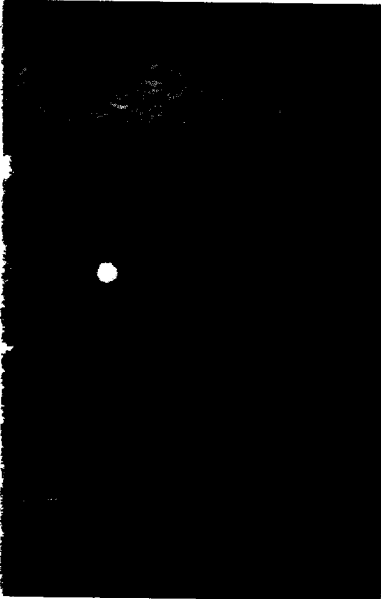


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'You'll see how large it appeared, and considering the speed at which it moved, you'll appreciate my excitement and surprise'

how "large" it appeared to be and considering the speed at which it moved, you'll appreciate my excitement and surprise at that time.

Let me finish by saying that it is not my intention to encourage you to involve yourself in time corresponding with me, but, if there is some simple explanation that I can know about I would appreciate hearing from you.

*LGE Campbell
Harborne, Birmingham, January 1975*

Dear Mr Campbell: Thank you for your recent letter. Although as I explained, we cannot normally undertake to advise observers of the probable identity of the objects they see and kindly report to the Department, I am pleased to be able to give you some information in connection with your report of an unidentified flying object seen by you on 18 January this year.

The under-mentioned Earth satellite

vehicles (ESVs) were within 1,000km at the time of your sighting.

1 Name: ZOND4;
Slant range: 558 km;
Azimuth: 1,32 DEG;
Elevation: 26.2 DEG;
Time: 0035.

2 Name: Cosmos 460;
Slant range: 878 km;
Azimuth: 004 DEG;
Elevation: 30.9 DEG;
Time: 0035.

It seems probable that the object you saw was one of these vehicles.

*H E Mackey
MOD, Whitehall, London, 20 February 1975*

WITNESSED BY 12 OFFICE STAFF

Dear Sir: I telephoned Manston Airport, on Monday January 19 reporting a strange object in the sky. Although the person I spoke to sounded extremely bored, he did suggest I should send in all the details:

I was watching the sunset at VW Motors, Manston Road. At about 16.05 I noticed a strange length of light very far off, in the north west. It was quite high and moving about the same speed as a plane. It could have been a very long aircraft but to me the object was far too

long. I think it was the reflection from the sun, which gave this object a flaming effect. I watched it from north west to west until my view was blocked.

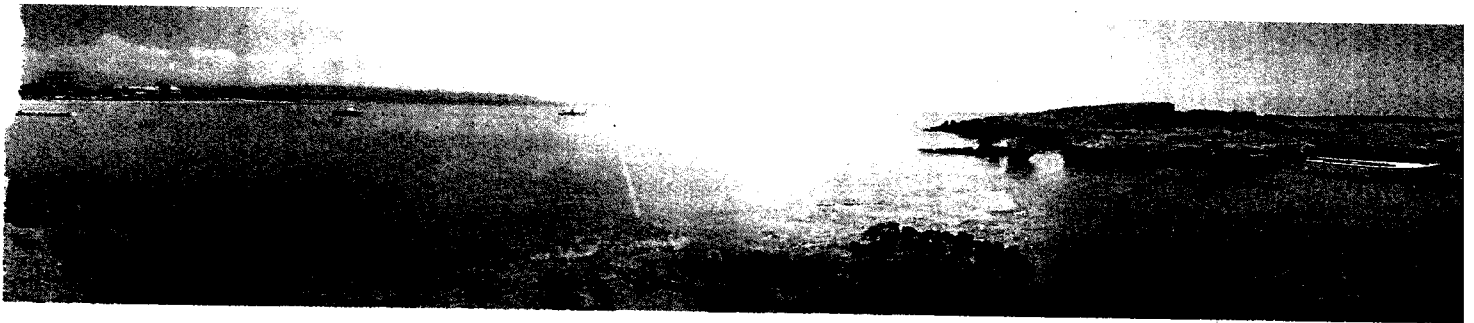
Still watching the sky, at 16.10 my colleagues and I saw a very small ball of light, again north west. There was a few clouds about and my view was blocked for a couple of minutes. Then the speck was gone but a little to the north was an object much closer, at a very rough guess 10-15 miles off. It was bright yellow. Note: By this time the sun was red. The object was the size of about 30 large stars as we see them. It could rotate, ie it appeared length ways, front on and width ways. It left with a fair speed and disappeared altogether. The third sighting lasted from about 16.15 to 16.35.

The whole incident I have stated was witnessed by 12 office staff, my supervisor and my boss. I trust you will look into it.


At a guess I would say that the object I saw was a research craft, measuring the atmosphere or something, but I find it more interesting to think maybe I saw my first UFO.

Ramsgate, Kent, 23 January 1976

*Introduction by Robert Verkaik, National Archives
research by Daniel Poole*



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UFO club may close after no encounters of any kind

Cumbria falls off the the alien-spotter's intergalactic map, reports **Neil Tweedie**

IT IS three o'clock in the morning and you are driving along a deserted country road towards Cockermouth.

Suddenly, a beam of brilliant white light bars the way. Your engine fails and the dog begins to whine. Four hours disappear and you awake to find a strange orange tan covering the right side of your face. Over the next few weeks, you notice men in black suits hiding in the begonias.

It's time to ring British UFO Hunters (Cumbria Branch). But hurry, because if they don't get a call soon they are going to pack it in. ET, it appears, has had enough of Cumbria. If there is a rosette system in the Alpha Centauri tourist board *Guide to Earth*, Cumbria obviously is *not* getting any.

Chris Parr, the Whitehaven-based co-ordinator for Bufoh, said yesterday that he and his helpers would have to call it a day if the decline in sightings experienced over the past few years continued for much longer.

"In Cumbria we have gone from 60 UFO sightings in 2003 to 40 in 2004 and none at all this year," he lamented.

"It means that the number of people keeping their eyes on the skies is greatly diminished. There is only a handful of us now.

"We are a dying breed in this part of the country. I put it down to the end of *The X-Files*, a lack of military exercises in the area that would produce UFO sightings and a lack of strange



Allen life - as not seen in Cockermouth

phenomena." Mr Parr has tried to keep the extraterrestrial flame alive. He owns three camcorders and whips them out whenever he hears of sightings elsewhere in the country in the hope that the flying saucer in question takes a wrong turn up the M6. But it never

does. He doesn't exactly sell his subject, though. About 90 per cent of sightings, he says, are due to nocturnal military activity.

As the RAF now possesses about four aircraft, the decrease in sightings is understandable.

The decline in British ufology was illustrated last year by the closure of the Yorkshire-based *UFO Magazine*, which regaled its readers with tales of alien abduction, alien cattle mutilation and alien implants (or iron filings as they are known on Earth).

The end of Cold War paranoia and an increase in the quality of bifocals are among the reasons cited for the fall in the number of ufologists.

But the picture is not entirely bleak. Over in Filey is the other branch of Bufoh, and business is brisk.

Russ Kellett, the chief researcher at Filey, is enjoying what ufologists call a flap. The skies above the resort are seemingly crammed full of strange craft.

"We had two triangles appear straight out of the North Sea," said Mr Kellett. "A number of bright lights has been seen."

Mr Kellett has enjoyed two close encounters himself. In the second, figures appeared out of his bedroom wall.

"We call them shadow people," he explained.

Hmmm.

The superflies that grow stronger on pesticides

By **Roger Highfield**
Science Editor

to control hospital superbugs. "We found that DDT-resistance in fruit flies confers an

This discovery, made with Dr Caroline McCart and Dr Angus Buckling of Oxford

1970s, gain a two-fold advantage: they survive when other insects cannot and in doing so

text 'store' to



10 August 2005 14:51

UFO-spotters give up hunt for flying saucers

By Ian Herbert, North of England Correspondent

Published: 10 August 2005

The UFO sighted over the Windermere area of Cumbria was described at the time as triangular or diamond-shaped and rather like a twin-hulled catamaran. It seemed to have some respect for the British road system too, hovering for some time above the A592, one witness said, then disappearing into the night sky over nearby Morecambe shortly after midnight on 28 August 1977.

Though some began questioning the strength of the local ale, dozens of witnesses including 10 police officers were adamant they had seen the object. Their story of its charcoal colour and two giant lights remains one of Britain's legendary UFO stories.

Yet if the truth is still out there over the Lake District, the means to engage with it may soon be gone. Gloomy about the fast-diminishing number of sightings, the Cumbrian branch of the British UFO Hunters has declared itself ready to call it a day.

Sightings of UFOs have fallen from 60 in 2003 to none this year. Chris Parr, of Whitehaven, a ufologist and branch member, said the end of Mulder, Scully and The X-Files on television had brought the beginning of the end to UFO-spotting.

"It's also to do with a lack of military exercises in the area," Mr Parr added, expounding a theory that 90 per cent of UFOs can be explained by "secret military projects". He said he got his information from "UFO spotters hanging around outside military bases and breaking into them".

He added: "The number of people keeping their eyes on the skies is greatly diminished. There are only a handful of us now. I have three camcorders and a digital video and I start recording whenever there have been sightings in another part of the country."

A year ago, UFO Magazine closed down after a 25-year run, having once enjoyed a sale of 35,000 copies, which made it the world's top UFO publication. Suggestions of paranormal interference in the publishing decision were ruled out. It was more to do with the death of Graham Birdsall, the editor and world UFO expert who, along with his younger brother Mark, founded the Leeds-based publication in 1981.

Before that had come the death of former diplomat Gordon Creighton, 92, who was editor of Flying Saucer Review, the longest-running UFO magazine.

Andy Roberts, an author of UFO books and former magazine contributor, said: "Ufology is really a thing of the past century. The end of The X-Files series didn't help, and there has been a decline since the televised alien autopsy of the mid-1990s. Basically, it was a hobby that broke into the mainstream. Ultimately, there was only a hardcore following."

But the picture is not entirely bleak. West Kilbride, in Ayrshire, has topped the league for the number of close encounters of a strange kind with 12 recorded sightings last year, three times as many as its closest rival.

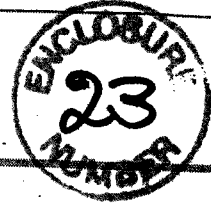
UFO enthusiasts are also excited about the Penzance Triangle, a 226sq-mile area of Cornwall between Land's End, St Ives and the Helford Estuary, where you are twice as likely to spot a UFO and three times more likely to see a ghost, than in the rest of the UK, some say.

Then there is the submission to the British UFO Research Association website, headlined "Extraordinary events in Cumbria" which tells of a "ball of light and vehicle interference" last New Year's Eve at Hethersgill, near Carlisle.

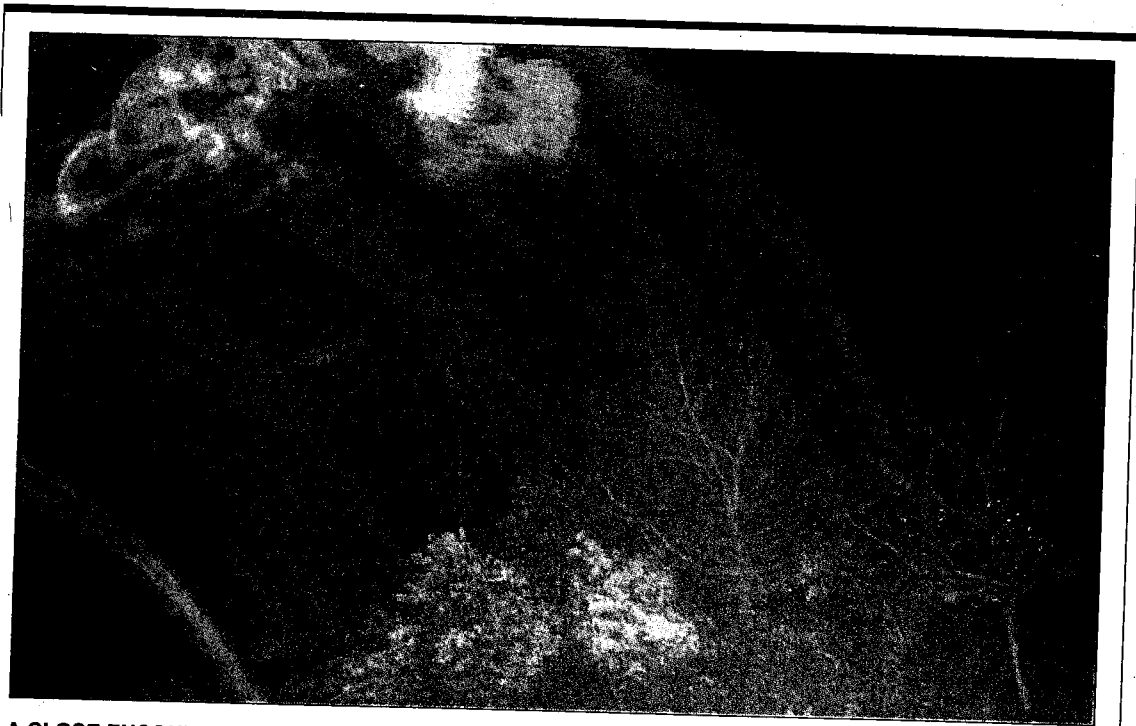
he Barrow Evening Mail, which broke the story, came under e-mail attack from as far away as the United States. "Stop the propaganda," wrote an American. "Everyone knows UFOs come in flaps and waves."

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A CLOSE ENCOUNTER? A strange happening at Rendlesham Forest, as seen by Brenda Butler

Photograph: CONTRIBUTED

MoD delivered usual line on UFOs

Sir, - Your article concerning UFO sightings in the region (EADT, July 26) was of interest but, through a lack of familiarity with the subject, you allowed the MoD to deliver it's usual public response without question.

As the MoD itself decides upon the threat level of each incident, it's hardly surprising that none have ever been publicly acknowledged as of "defence significance" - the department's usual terminology. Although I don't for one moment subscribe to the commonly held belief of a government conspiracy (some form of covert investigation has been known to occur in selected cases.

Some governments have demonstrated a less complacent view of the phenomena and

have taken a more direct response. Post-war, fighters from various nations have attempted to intercept UFOs, with little success as they lack the performance shown by the intruders. On more than one occasion, this has resulted in the loss of the aircraft and crew - if it happened here no amount of MoD spin could then dismiss the threat.

If the MoD still remain unconvinced I suggest they speak to the Mexican Air Force and the crew of an anti-narcotics aircraft about a certain incident early last year.

GARY STEDMAN,
Ford View Rd,
Stowmarket.

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60 SECOND INTERVIEW



■ Nick Pope was the head of the Ministry of Defence's UFO Project from 1991 until 1994. He went on to write several sci-fi books and is a regular on the UFO convention circuit – lecturing all over the world about his time as the MoD's very own 'Fox Mulder'. Civil servant Pope still works for the MoD but is reluctant to 'go into details' about his job specifics.

Nick Pope

■ **What did your job as head of the MoD's UFO Project entail?**
I had been in the MoD since 1985 and did various things – they move you around every three years – when they suddenly asked me to head the UFO Project. I had no previous interest in UFOs, which was probably the best way to come into that job.

■ **What did you do every day?**
We researched and investigated the UFO mystery to see if reports of UFOs suggested anything of any defence significance. We looked at whether they posed a threat to Britain and if the things that were being reported were cause for concern.

■ **And what did you conclude?**
That 95 per cent of it was just misidentification – aircraft lights, weather balloons, meteors, satellites etc. But there was a five per cent core of things that defied conventional explanation. I had UFOs reported by trained observers, such as pilots and military personnel, plus visual sightings backed up by radar which is always interesting.

■ **You've said you started off quite sceptical but after three years in the job came to believe that aliens exist. What evidence convinced you?**

Yes, I came out of the job convinced that some UFOs might be extra-terrestrial. There isn't proof but there is some intriguing evidence. The best example is Britain's most famous UFO case – the Rendlesham Forest incident of 1980. Essentially, a UFO landed between two military bases; all the witnesses were military, three 'landing' indentations were found in the clearing in the forest and a Geiger counter showed the radiation readings in the area were ten times higher than normal. That really made me think there was hard evidence of UFOs visiting Britain. Two years ago, a US military police officer said he was responsible for it but I very much doubt he is. There are a lot of people who want to write themselves into the story retroactively and it doesn't wash.

■ **Do you believe people have been abducted by aliens?**
I looked at about 100 cases and I'm puzzled. The people involved aren't after publicity or money for their stories, most of them run a mile if you try to involve them in media projects. There have been scientific studies into the people who make

these claims and the conclusions suggest they believe what they say happened really did happen. That doesn't mean it took place in the physical universe, of course.

■ **Have you found any physical evidence?**
No. Some people claim they have been abducted and implanted with an alien tracking device. If I can recover one of these, I can prove the mystery definitively. Until I get one, I don't have anything I can take to the scientific community. It would be foolish to write off these claims just because of scepticism. You should investigate claims no matter how extraordinary they seem and that has always been the view of the MoD.

I'm convinced that some UFOs might be extra-terrestrial. There isn't proof but there is some intriguing evidence

■ **Presumably, you're investigating these tracking devices in your spare time?**
Yes. All my research is now in a private capacity. I had the most interesting job in the country. After three years of that, I couldn't turn my back on it.

■ **Is there anything you remain unconvinced by?**
I was drawn into just about every strange paranormal phenomenon you could imagine. I had people phoning me up offering to become psychic spies for the MoD, tracking Russian submarines or finding hidden caches of drugs with their minds. I used to set them a test. I would hide an object in my flat and challenge them to say what the object was and tell me where I had put it. Sadly, none of them managed it. Had one come up with the answer, I would have taken it further. You have to keep an open mind.

■ **Nick has judged a competition to find Britain's best photo of a UFO. The winning entry will be announced on www.msnspace.co.uk on August 28th. For more on crop circles, goat suckers and what aliens look like, go to www.metro.co.uk**

INTERVIEW: ANDREW WILLIAMS

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OUT OF THIS WORLD: Has E.T. finally phoned home? Don't call us

By **Tim Shipman**
Defence Correspondent

HAVE the little green men invaded Britain yet? The public would like to know.

And are there meatballs still for tea in the Royal Navy? We think we should be told.

These are the thorny issues that the brass hats at the Ministry of Defence are having to juggle with thanks to new freedom of information legislation.

Curious Britons really want to know if E.T. has finally phoned home.

One little girl asked: "Have we done any experiments with aliens? Have aliens actually landed on Earth? There are thousands of questions I could ask but what I really want to know is are there extraterrestrials on this planet? Please, please, please could you tell me if there are photos? Because I really need to know. I PROMISE to keep a secret."

Another member of the public asked for details of the MoD's policy on abduction by extraterrestrials. The official answer: "We have had nothing to do with aliens." So now you know.

One couple who used to work for the Navy were so fond of the taste of curried meatballs that they wrote in to ask for the recipe. A long-serving chef was charged with dredging out the old recipe and now Jan and Tony Rickard are again enjoying their old favourites.

Jan, 61, from Carshalton, south London, said: "The meatballs were absolutely scrummy. The MoD has really come up trumps to track down the recipe. They went to tremendous lengths."

Others have used the Freedom of Information Act, designed to wheedle out the secrets of government, to ask for vehicle operating manuals and to

MoD is hit by a fusillade of mad questions

find out the correct procedure for royal parades.

The MoD receives more freedom of information requests than any other Government department, around 300 each month, but many of them cannot be answered because of exemptions in the law where national security is at stake.

Officials are keen to point out, however, that they have gone out of their way to be helpful to members of the public where possible.

An MoD spokeswoman said: "One of the most popular requests is to ask about alien life but we have to disappoint people. The success of the curried meatballs demonstrates our commitment to going the extra mile to answer as many requests as we can."

Other oddball requests include: ● Could you please tell me whether the warships are moored and the Queen goes past them or whether the warships parade past the Queen?

● Which kind of tea is drunk by the Ministry of Defence?

● Do you know where I could get a workshop manual for a Reynolds Boughton RB44 truck as I'm doing a trip from Sweden to Cape Town?

● I own a Green Goddess fire engine. I am interested in tracing her history. Can you help?

● Could I have a photocopy of the new Pulsar aircrew issue Chronograph watch?

● Is it possible to buy recipe books from the Army?

Can you tell me if any aliens are here? I promise to keep it secret



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December 3, 2004



Aliens made me break the limit

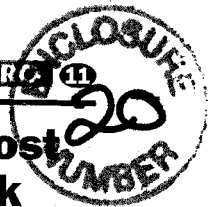
IT WAS all too much for the poor motorist caught by a speed camera. The prospect of three penalty points in his licence and a £60 fine called for an inventive excuse. 'I passed out after seeing flashing lights in the distance, which I believed to be UFOs,' he said in a letter of appeal to officials. 'The flash of the camera brought me round from my trance.' Aliens are not the only bizarre excuse offered by desperate drivers hoping to get off the hook. One man blamed his dying hamster, which he was rushing to a vet. Another claimed to be taking a friend's severed fingers to hospital, said Northumbria Safety Camera Partnership, which monitors speed cameras in the North-East.

'Alien wreckage' found in Siberia

THE wreckage of an alien space craft has been discovered at the site of an unexplained explosion that took place in Siberia nearly a century ago, Russian scientists claim. The team also says it has found a rock weighing 50kg which has been sent for analysis, according to the respected Interfax news agency. Researchers, working for the publicly-funded Tunguska Space Phenomenon group, believe the alien craft crashed on June 30, 1908. Until now, the blast, which devastated 2,000sq km of remote forest, was blamed on a meteorite impact near the Tunguska river. The scientists hope the evidence will help solve the mystery of what happened that day by the time of the centenary of the blast, in four years. The site was first researched in 1927, but no signs of an alien craft were reported then.

Thursday, January 19, 2006

METRO 11



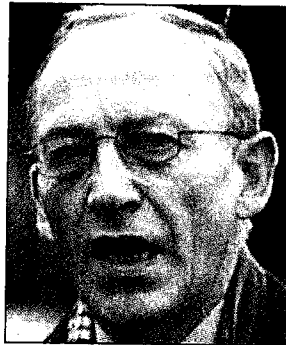
'Locked' by 'made on jet

Airways flight from Abu Dhabi to Heathrow.

Roberts told jurors he was first given Seroxat on the tenth anniversary of a Chinook helicopter crash which killed 29 military personnel in Scotland in 1994, including some of his friends.

chemist Prof Robert Forrest 'I don't believe the alcohol his behaviour unless on.'

on an air- with



Memory loss: Roberts

Ulysses is most valuable book

A RARE first edition of Ulysses by James Joyce has been named the most valuable work of 20th-century fiction. A signed 1922 copy of the novel is worth £100,000, according to Book & Magazine Collector magazine. Second on its list is a 1902 copy of Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound Of The Baskervilles, worth £80,000.

Aliens 'visiting millennium tower'

REPORTED sightings of alien craft have brought tourists and UFO watchers flocking to a millennium tower. Residents claim to have seen a cigar-shaped flashing object hovering over the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth. UFO spotters believe the 170m building is attracting attention from alien life.



What is the truth about Britain's greatest UFO MYSTERY?

It's nearly 25 years since a strange craft landed in a Suffolk forest. When asked about the incident, Margaret Thatcher replied: 'You can't tell the people.' Here, the Government's former UFO expert reveals the amazing story



by **Nick Pope**

Former British Government UFO Project leader

ON MAY 21, 1997, a former Prime Minister made an enigmatic comment that seemed to confirm the reality of Britain's most famous UFO incident. The remark hinted at darker secrets and led to much debate among conspiracy theorists. The politician was Baroness Thatcher and the implications of what she said are extraordinary.

The comment was made at a charity function. London-based socialite and author Georgina Bruni had been researching the Rendlesham Forest UFO incident, fascinated by hints dropped by diplomatic, military and political friends. Sceptical about the subject of UFOs, she thought it was awash with cultists and crackpots.

But Rendlesham was different so, when she met Baroness Thatcher at a dinner, Bruni put

the former PM on the spot. Was there any truth to the rumours about what happened in Suffolk's Rendlesham Forest? What did the Government really know about UFOs? Was it a serious issue or just pie in the sky?

Bruni was expecting a bland dismissal of the story. The official Ministry of Defence position was that no evidence existed to suggest UFOs were extraterrestrial in origin. Then the former PM dropped her bombshell. "UFOs?" she said. "You can't tell the people."

Bruni was astounded and pressed her point. What did she mean? Baroness Thatcher calmly repeated her remark, before departing.

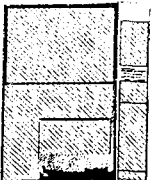
From 1991 to 1994, I ran the Government's UFO Project, based at the Ministry of Defence, and Bruni had interviewed me in the course of her research. Still astonished, she called me at 2am to tell me what had happened. I quickly grasped its sig-

nificance. I went to my study and began to make notes, all the time quizzing Georgina about every nuance of her brief encounter with the former PM.

If you take all the thousands of UFO sightings investigated by the MoD over the years, the Rendlesham Forest incident stood out. We could not ignore it, despite our best efforts to find some conventional explanation. This case was the Holy Grail and Baroness Thatcher's remark put the events into a new light.

SO WHAT actually happened at Rendlesham Forest and what makes the event the UK's strangest UFO encounter? As we approach its 25th anniversary, it's time to re-open the MoD's spookiest X-File.

Late on Christmas night, 1980, and early on Boxing Day, strange lights were seen in the forest. This might not sound particularly significant. When I was running



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the UFO Project I used to receive up to 300 reports of sightings each year.

Most could be explained as misidentifications of aircraft lights, meteors or weather balloons. What made this sighting remarkable was the fact that the witnesses were United States Air Force personnel based at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk.

Rendlesham Forest lies between the bases and, as the Cold War was still decidedly frosty, a UFO sighting at two of the nation's most sensitive military sites was bound to be of interest.

Early on December 26, duty personnel reported lights so bright they feared an aircraft had crashed. They obtained permission to go off-base to investigate. But they didn't find a crashed aircraft - they found a UFO.

The three-man patrol from the 81st Security Police Squadron - Jim Penniston, John Burroughs and Ed Cabansag - saw a small, metallic craft moving through the trees.

At one point, it appeared to land in a small clearing. They approached cautiously and Penniston got close enough to see strange markings on the side, which he likened to Egyptian hieroglyphs. He made some rapid sketches in his notebook. It touched down for only moments and then departed.

Later, because of the complicated legal and jurisdictional position of US Air Force bases in the UK, police from Suffolk Constabulary were called to the apparent landing site. They conducted a brief but inconclusive examination.

Three indentations were visible in the clearing and, when mapped, they formed the shape of an equilateral triangle. A Geiger counter was used to check the site and the readings peaked markedly in the depressions where the object - possibly on legs of some sort - had come to Earth.

News of the UFO encounter came to the attention of the Deputy Base Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt. He was sceptical, but had the witnesses write up official reports, including sketches of what they had seen.

The following evening, Halt was at a function when a young airman burst in and ran up to him. "Sir" he stammered, "It's back." Halt looked confused. "What?" he retorted. "What's back?" "The UFO, sir - the UFO's back."

Halt gathered together a small team and went out into the forest to investigate. He subsequently stated that he had no expectation of seeing anything and that his intention was to "debunk" the whole affair. But he didn't do so because he too encountered the UFO, becoming one of the highest ranking military officers to go on the record about such a sighting.

As he and his men tracked the UFO, their radios began to malfunction and powerful lamps taken to illuminate the forest mysteriously began to cut out. But a hand-held tape recorder the colonel took to document his investigation did not malfunction.

THE TAPE recording still survives and one can hear the rising tension in Halt's voice and the voices of his men, as the UFO approaches...

"I see it too... it's back again... it's coming this way... there's no doubt about it... this is weird... it looks like an eye winking at you... it almost burns your eyes... he's coming toward us now... now we're observing what appears to be a beam coming down to the ground... one object still hovering over Woodbridge base... beaming down."

At one point the tension in their voices almost seems to become panic as the UFO makes a close approach and fires light beams down on Halt and his men.

Halt wrote an official report of the incident. Although somewhat innocuously entitled Unexplained Lights, it described the first night's UFO as being "metallic in appearance and triangular in shape... a pulsing red light on top and a bank of blue lights underneath... the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy".

He went on to detail the radiation readings taken from the landing site and set out the details of his own sighting.

The report was sent to the section of the Ministry of Defence where, a little over 10 years later, I spent three years researching and investigating UFO sightings. It went to my predecessors, who began an investigation, but they were hampered by a mistake that was to have dire consequences.

For whatever reason - and it may have been nothing more

than a typographical error - Charles Halt's report gave incorrect dates for the incident. So when the MoD checked the radar tapes, they were looking at the wrong days.

Radar evidence is a critical part of any UFO investigation. Many spectacular UFO sightings over the years have been correlated by radar. MoD files detail several such cases, including ones where RAF pilots encountered UFOs and gave chase. Unsuccessfully, I might add.

In the absence of any radar data that might confirm the presence of the Rendlesham Forest UFOs, the investigation petered out. Yet, as I was to discover years later, the UFO had been tracked after all.

I spoke to a former RAF radar operator called Nigel Kerr. He had been stationed at RAF Watton in Norfolk at Christmas 1980 and took a call from RAF Bentwaters asking if there was anything unusual on his radar screen. For three or four sweeps,

something did show up directly over the base, but it faded away and no official report was ever made. It was only years later that Kerr heard of the Rendlesham Forest incident and realised he might have a missing piece of the puzzle.

In the apparent absence of radar data to verify the presence of the UFO, arguably the most critical piece of evidence was never followed up. The Defence Intelligence Staff had assessed the radiation readings taken at the landing site and judged them "significantly higher than the average background". In fact, they were about seven times what would have been expected.

So what are we to make of all this? UFO believers are convinced the sightings involved an extra-terrestrial spacecraft. They still hold sky watches in the forest and claim to see UFOs regularly.

The sceptical theories are almost as bizarre, with suggestions that the highly trained military witnesses actually saw the lights of a police car, or the beam from the local lighthouse. "Lighthouses don't fly," Charles Halt said, incredulously.

More rational sceptical theories include the testing of a prototype aircraft, but the bottom line is that, while there are things being developed you won't see at the Farnborough Air Show for 10 or 15 years, we know where we fly our own hardware. The "black projects" theory doesn't hold up.



COL HALT'S evidence was obtained by American UFO researchers in 1983, under the Freedom of Information Act. But it was not until 2001 that the rest of the file came to light, including most of the details we now know.

Georgina Bruni had requested several documents on the incident under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information - the forerunner to Britain's Freedom of Information Act. She had also enlisted the help of former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Hill-Norton - himself a firm believer in UFOs.

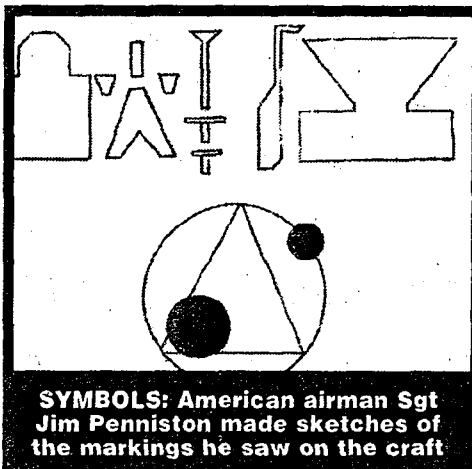
Despite the claims of conspiracy theorists, the MoD is committed to open government and was happy to release the file. It can now be viewed in entirety on the MoD website. The MoD and the National Archives are bombarded with requests about UFOs but have a rolling programme of disclosure. These are the real X-Files and they are being released.

As the 25th anniversary of this UFO encounter approaches, there is great interest in the incident. Enthusiasts are planning an anniversary vigil. The Forestry Commission - which has created a UFO Trail in the forest - is planning an event. Several television documentaries are being made and there's even talk of a Hollywood movie.

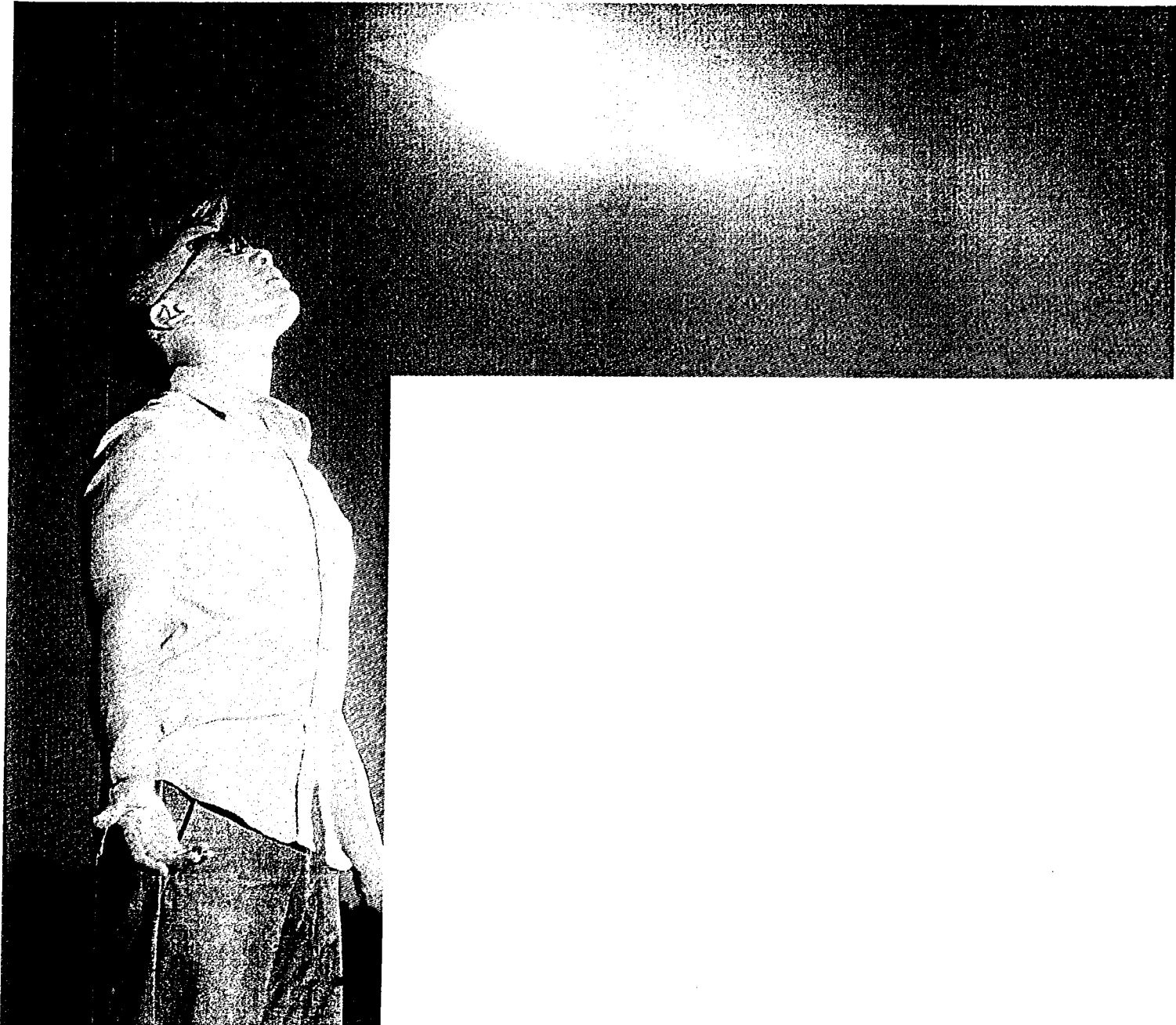
But despite the wealth of documentation to have emerged and

the testimony of the witnesses themselves, we are no nearer to knowing what happened in Rendlesham Forest.

The truth is still out there. Somewhere.



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Loose Minute

DI52/103/10

Section 40
24/2

DI55a Attn Section 40

Unexplained Lights

Reference: DI55/108/15/1

1. Like DI55, DI52 do not know of any serious explanation for the phenomena described at reference.
2. Background radioactivity varies considerably due to a number of factors. The value of 0.1 milliroentgens (mr), I assume that this is per hour, seems significantly higher than the average background of about 0.015 mr. I would not expect the variation in this to be much more than a factor of two, although it might be greater for specific reasons.
3. If you wish to pursue this further I could make enquiries as to natural background levels in the area. The way the US report is written, however, suggests that 0.1 mr was greater than they expected.

Section 40

23 February 1981

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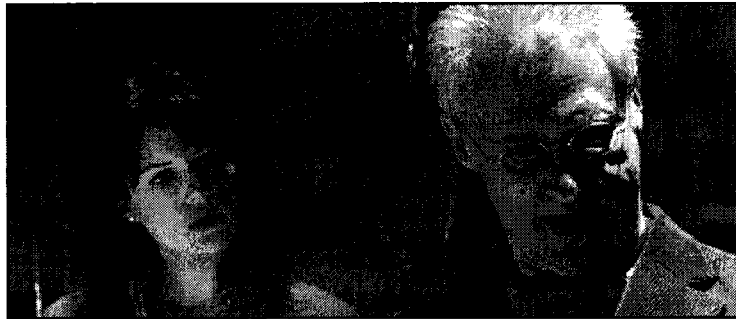
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REVIEWS



Sci-fi purists might find CBS' "Threshold" disconcerting, but for the rest of us, this is scary fun and suspenseful dramedy.
 Sep. 15, 2005

Threshold

By Barry Garron
 9-10 p.m. Friday, Sept. 16
 CBS

Odd things happen when aliens invade. People exposed to eerie music go nuts and become zombies. Brain waves are altered. And just about everything from cockroaches to radar screens end up dancing to some sort of pinwheel pattern. What does it mean? Mainly that, in this version of Planet Earth Meets the Space Huns, the sober taste of terror and sci-fi has been sweetened with a dash of comic book excess and campy humor. Sci-fi purists might find it the taste of CBS' "Threshold" disconcerting, but for the rest of us, this is scary fun and suspenseful dramedy. Also, it comes as close to actual tactical government response as "The Love Boat" was to a real cruise ship operation.

The opening scenes of the double-episode premiere show a Navy crew in the Atlantic quickly decimated by a UFO that looks like some sort of Christmas ornament screensaver. In response, the U.S. calls on Dr. Molly Anne Caffrey (TV sweetheart Carla Gugino), who has made a living drafting contingency plans for various end-of-the-world scenarios. Now that this is a distinct possibility, she gets to assemble the eccentric team she proposed in her Threshold plan.

National Security Adviser J.T. Baylock (Charles S. Dutton) tells her, "You've just become the most important person on the planet." And she knows it, too. Later in the first hour, Caffrey tells her colleagues, "We've got to stare into the face of the unknown and make damn sure we don't blink." Be honest. Where, outside of a comic book, will you find dialogue like that?

And so the team is assembled, a veritable instant Fabulous Five. Under Caffrey's command is biologist and former 1960s radical Dr. Nigel Fenway (Brent Spiner of "Star Trek" renown); nervous young physicist Lucas Pegg (Rob Benedict); macho commando Cavanaugh (Brian Van Holt); and mathematician-linguist Arthur Ramsey (Peter Dinklage), whose other pursuits include booze and women. It is their interplay, as much as any weird science conjured up by aliens, that makes the time pass quickly.

More than most shows, the collaboration among exec producers is obvious here. Brannon Braga is a veteran "Star Trek" writer and

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Bottom line: What good is an alien invasion if you can't have some fun with Earth's defenders?

FILM

- ▶ The White Countess
- ▶ The Libertine
- ▶ Through the Fire
- ▶ Bam Bam and Celeste
- ▶ In Memory of My Father

TV

- ▶ The Ghost Squad
- ▶ Las Vegas: ... History
- ▶ SNL: Lost and Found
- ▶ I Have Tourette's but Tourette's Doesn't Have Me
- ▶ The Virgin Queen

HOME VIDEO

- ▶ Wages of Fear
- ▶ The Wizard of Oz
- ▶ Halloween treats

- ▶ Cinderella
- ▶ Titanic

CONCERT

- ▶ Clark, Ely, Hiatt, Lovett
- ▶ Bauhaus
- ▶ Jamiroquai
- ▶ Broken Social Scene
- ▶ Isaac Hayes

THEATER

- ▶ Almost Heaven: J. Denver
- ▶ Otherwise Engaged
- ▶ Karla
- ▶ See What I Wanna See
- ▶ Jersey Boys

- ▶ The Beatles
- ▶ The Lost One
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producer. David S. Goyer has a history of turning comic books to films, such as "Batman Begins" and the "Blade" series. David Heyman, producer of all four "Harry Potter" films, is adept at whimsical fright. If the sum isn't greater than the parts, it is at the very least equal to them. What's more, there's nothing remotely like "Threshold" on the competition, and Friday night -- as fans of "The Twilight Zone" and "The X-Files" -- will tell you, can be a welcoming place for otherworldly drama.

THRESHOLD

CBS

Braga Prods., Phantom Four Films and Heydey Films in association with Paramount Network Television

Credits:

Executive producers: Brannon Braga, David Heyman, David S. Goyer

Co-executive producers: Bragi Schut, Marc Rosen, Anne McGrail, Dan O'Shannon

Supervising producer: Mike Sussman

Creator: Bragi Schut

Directors: David S. Goyer, Peter Hyams

Teleplay: Bragi Schut, Brannon Braga, David S. Goyer

Directors of photography: Steve Bernstein, Frank Byers

Production designers: Carlos Barbosa, Stefania Cella

Editor: Conrad Smart

Music: Ramin Djawadi, Steve Jablonsky

Set decorator: Nancy Nye, Jim Mees

Casting: Ronnie Yeskel

Cast:

Dr. Molly Anne Caffrey: Carla Gugino

J.T. Baylock: Charles S. Dutton

Cavennaugh: Brian Van Holt

Lucas Pegg: Rob Benedict

Dr. Nigel Fenway: Brent Spiner



Arthur Ramsey: Peter Dinklage

Angela Hatten: Diane Venora

Gunneson: William Mapother

Captain: Scott MacDonald

Crewman Sonntag: Kevin Durand

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UFO Dept

From/Oddi wrth: **Section 40** [Redacted]

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Number of Pages Sent (Including Cover Sheet)/;
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this from today's Daily Post.*

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'Tell us the truth on moorland UFO'

By HYWEL TREWYN

A UFO investigator hopes to unravel a 30-year mystery - did spacemen land on a North Wales mountain?

Unexplained lights in the sky, an earthquake and secretive men in suits all happened on a dark winter's night in 1974 as the people of Llanddêrfel and Llandrillo, villages in the Berwyn mountains near Bala, sat down to their evening's TV.

But the quiet was shattered by the rumbles of an earthquake, registering 3.5 on the Richter scale.

As people ran from their houses, fearing another tremor, they witnessed a blaze of light on the mountainside above.

A local nurse and her daughters watched as a huge egg-shaped craft lay on the ground with a pulsating orange and red glow.

Police converged on the mountains, expecting to discover a crashed passenger jet -

Cover-up claim on 30-year-old riddle

but what they did find has never been divulged.

Some think it was an experimental man-made top secret military aircraft, possibly a prototype Stealth bomber. Others believe it was an alien craft from another world.

The incident fired the imagination of many, including UFO researcher Russell Kellett, who now is trying to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Next month Mr Kellett, 42, will reveal what he claims are "the true facts" at a meeting in Bala. It will be at the White Lion Hotel on March 25, at 1pm.

Mr Kellett, who lives in Filey, North Yorkshire, says he has 115 pages of documents about the "UFO crash" about which he

insists there was a "cover-up."

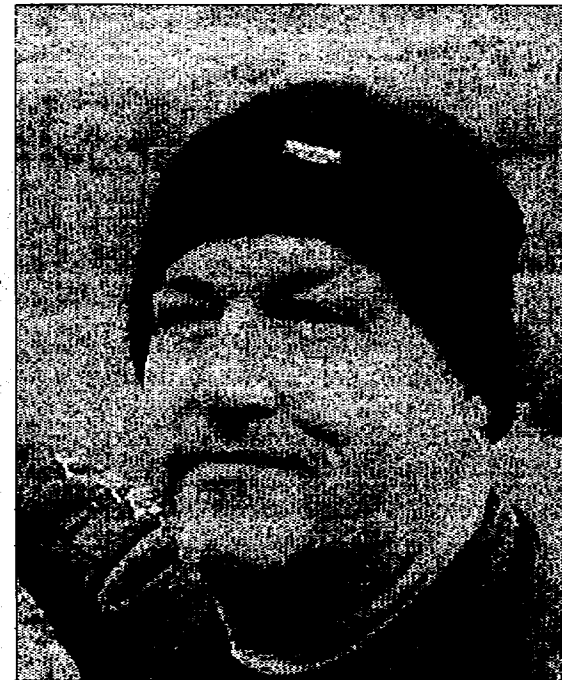
Last night Mr Kellett said: "I've had some information given to me, testimonies from a group of gentlemen. I have 115 pages of documents but the Ministry of Defence have told me that under the Freedom of Information Act I can't have documents "because of the fractious and conjure of internal discretion".

Mr Kellett believes "they're talking gobbledegook."

Mr Kellett said on that night some personnel were given information to "expect 50 flashes of light in the sky".

But, strangely, there are no records this exercise took place.

hywelltrewyn@dailypost.co.uk



UFO investigator Russ Kellett has been probing mysterious events on the Berwyn mountains in 1974

What was in those mystery boxes?

IN true X-Files style there were reports of soldiers mysteriously arriving in the area and stopping people on their way home.

One woman claimed she saw "coffin shaped" boxes being loaded aboard MoD vehicles.

Previous UFO researchers said they were contacted by soldiers claiming they removed "bodies" to Porton Down, the top-secret MoD germ warfare laboratory.

Farmer Hugh Lloyd, of Garthiaen, Llandrillo, who was 14 at the time, remembers seeing "this incredibly bright light lit up the sky, like an arc welder, two or three miles away, lasting for about 20-30 seconds."

Although he never discovered the source of the light, a mysterious, colourful rock was found nearby by his sister a couple of days later.

It was sent to London University but they have never seen it since.

Mr Lloyd said: "I do not believe that it was a UFO but I would like to find out exactly what it was."

London's A-Files.

BY ELLEN WIDDUP

LONDON'S X-Files have been opened to the public.

Reports of "lights in a worm shape wriggling around in the sky", a shiny "doughnut-shaped object" and a "massive light in the shape of an iron" are among sightings of UFOs which were meant to have been secret for 25 years.

The files show that Loughton in Essex is the UFO capital of the Home Counties.

The MoD has six sightings listed there — five on the night of 10 September last year, when there was a series of reports of three mysterious orange lights in the sky.

The sightings in Greater London, dating from 2002 and kept on Ministry of Defence files, have been released after a request under the Freedom of Information Act by the Evening Standard.

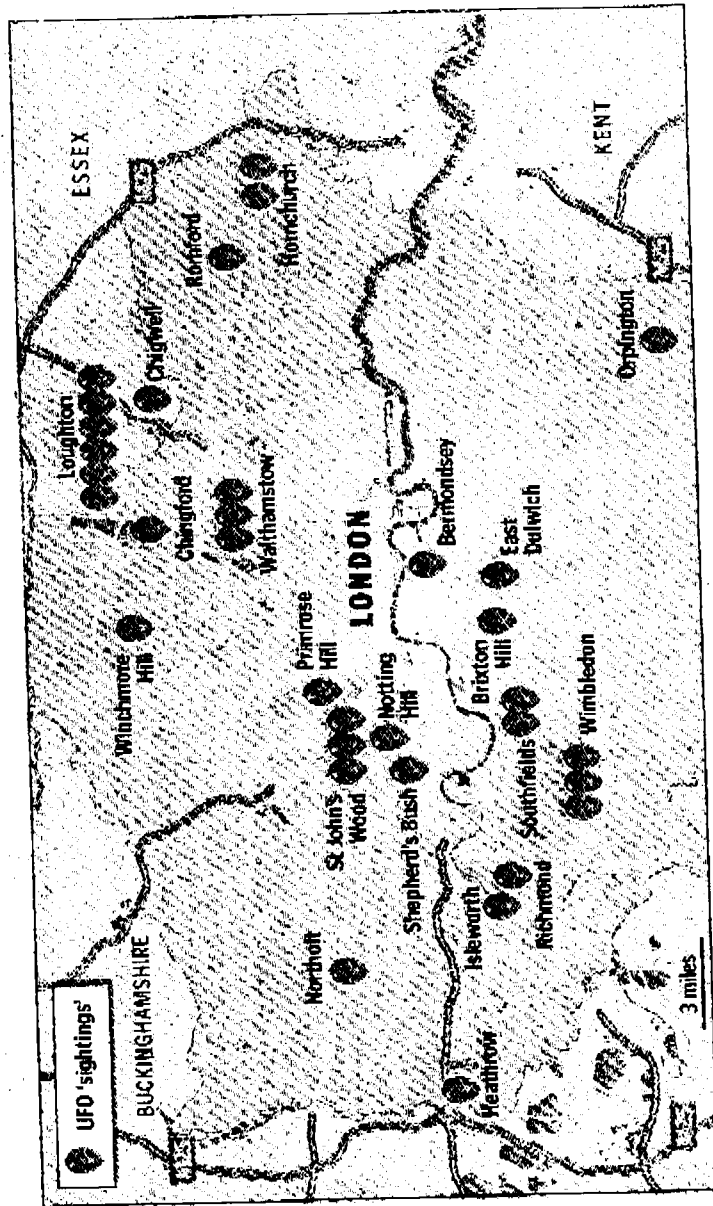
The MoD receives hundreds of reports of sightings every year, most of which are dismissed as aircraft lights or natural phenomena.

But some have no rational explanation, and as a result, the Government remains "totally open-minded" about the concept of flying saucers and spacecrafts.

Following the Standard's request,



Lawman Lou Ferrigno



the MoD's UFO department — SF4 — revealed details of 34 sightings with their date, time and location.

Among them are descriptions of "a black cigar-shaped object which accelerated to a speed which would

outstrip a fighter jet" over south-east London and a "rectangle-shape white light" hovering above Primrose Hill.

Nick Pope, who ran the Government UFO project between 1991 and 1994, said the data was unsurprising. He

said: "London has the most sightings because there are more people living there to witness any unusual activity."

"Almost 95 per cent of sightings can be explained away but that still leaves five per cent. I am not out to spook

anyone but I do believe it is totally feasible that we are not alone in this universe."

One of the witnesses, Robert Sloan, said: "There was a triangle of three piercing globes. It reminded me of a scene out of Close Encounters. Everyone was gobsmacked. There was no way a plane would look or move that fast."

Other UFOs spotted include three over St John's Wood, two over Hornchurch, Essex, and three over Wimbledon.

Timothy Good of Beckenham, an author of several novels on UFOs, said: "UFOs remain the most sensitive subject in British intelligence. It is wonderful that some of this information is now being made public even though I believe they are withholding even more."

"The sheer number of sightings over London and the fact that none has a rational explanation is both fascinating and exciting to me."

An MoD spokesman said there was nothing to suggest alien activity. "We examine reports of UFOs solely to establish whether there is any evidence that the UK's airspace has been compromised by hostile or unauthorised air activity," he said.

"We do not know of any evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena."

Hulk changes from green monster ... into real-life policeman

BY PAUL SIMS

THE Incredible Hulk has changed from a raging green monster — into a policeman.

Lou Ferrigno, the former bodybuilder and star of the hit *Sevenites* TV show, has been sworn in as a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Depart-

ment reserve deputy. "I'm having a blast," Ferrigno, 54, said after last night's ceremony. "My father was a police officer with the New

York Police Department. I've always had a high respect for officers," he added. "I want to give back to the community and work with young kids, help them get off drugs."

Ferrigno was a renowned bodybuilder before he starred in the CBS TV series *The Incredible Hulk* from 1977 to 1982.

Sheriff Lee Baca



Angry as the Hulk

ENCLOSURE

The truth is out there... in Essex

ENCLOSURE
13



X-Files detectives Mulder and Scully

X-FILES TV detectives Mulder and Scully could have their hands full – the Ministry of Defence has released its secret report on UFO sightings.

The files dating since 2002 raise questions about extra-terrestrial life with over 170 'incidents' recorded, including five on one night in Loughton, Essex, alone.

The MoD's UFO department – SF4 – receives hundreds of sightings every year. Most are dismissed as natural phenomena, but some cannot be explained.

There are 34 incidents alone over the capital. Among them are descriptions of 'a black cigar-shaped object which accel-

BY IAN GRIGGS

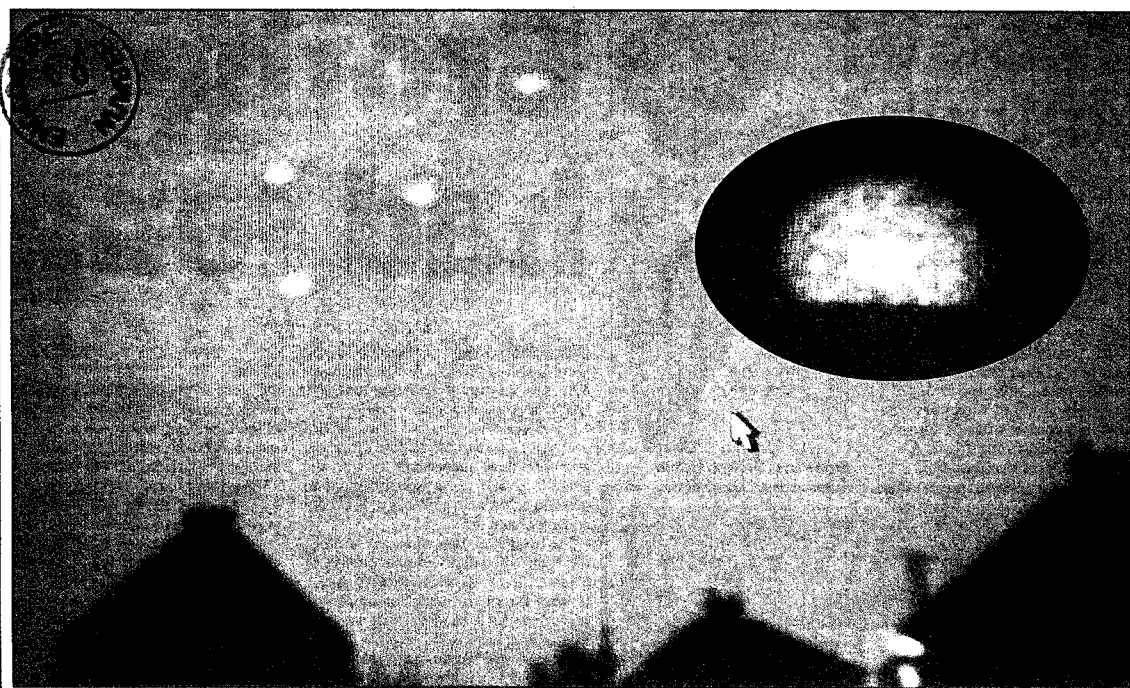
erated to a speed which could outstrip a fighter jet' over the South-East and 'an object that changed from a cylinder to a crescent moon shape, with red and silver stripes,' over Isleworth, West London.

The MoD says it remains 'totally open-minded' about UFO sightings.

Nick Pope, who ran the Government UFO project between 1991 and 1994 said: 'Almost 95 per cent of sightings can be explained but that still leaves five per cent. I am not out to spook anyone but I do believe it is feasible we are not alone.'



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UFOs? The MoD was called in to investigate the lights – which turned out to be lanterns (an enlarged one is shown inset) Picture: North News and Pictures

UFOs? U're kidding

IT WAS supposed to be a harmless stunt to celebrate moving into a new house.

But it left Paul McKinney and Emma Henfrey at the centre of an X Files-style UFO investigation, after some stargazers thought they were 'messing an alien invasion.'

The couple released lanterns – which can float up to 300m (1,000ft) in the air and glow bright orange and white – into the sky at their house-warming party.

The following day, they heard police had been bombarded with sightings of glowing lights in the sky, and decided it was best to keep quiet.

Fearing public ridicule, the couple even warned friends their party lanterns should be kept a secret.

But things got even more out of hand when the MoD launched an investigation – and the couple knew they would have to come clean.

The military experts were called in after police received 20 calls about the lights, to find out whether British airspace had been invaded. An MoD

BY STEPHEN HULL

spokeswoman said: 'We examine UFO sighting reports to establish whether there is any evidence to suggest that UK airspace has been compromised by hostile or unauthorised air activity.'

Mr McKinney, 28, and Ms Henfrey, 30, had released the lanterns, which hold candles, after moving into their new home in Seaham, County Durham.

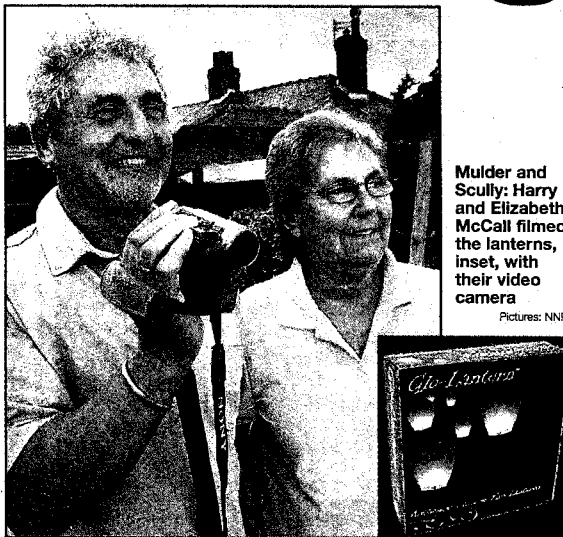
Mr McKinney said: 'I wasn't going to say anything but then my cousin saw something in the local paper about the MoD investigating, so I thought I had better own up.'

Witnesses who spotted the lanterns were convinced they were UFOs.

Harry McCall, 67, and his wife Elizabeth, 74, filmed the lights.

'I said to my wife they were UFOs until I could be convinced otherwise – and now I have been,' said Mr McCall.

'It is quite funny to find out and it's good to know the explanation'. See, the truth really is out there.



Mulder and Scully: Harry and Elizabeth McCall filmed the lanterns, inset, with their video camera

Pictures: NPN

Sir Mick learns a lesson at last

AFTER belting out rock songs for 35 years Sir Mick Jagger has broken the habit of a lifetime – he's started having lessons. Sir Mick, 63, has voice coaching to help him warm up his vocal cords.

He told Virgin Radio: 'Better late than never. I did a bit of voice coaching a couple of years ago, after 35 years with no voice coaching. A bit of voice coaching and warm-ups really help.'

'I always tell these younger singers "I never used to do it either but you should".'

The Rolling Stone added: 'A lot of people have voice problems, not just older people, younger people too.'

'I mean, you sing a lot, every night you are singing for hours and hours and your voice gets tired. It's like anything, like running every night, that's why you have to warm up properly.'

The Stones are on a world tour.

METRO FACTFILE

In the 1820s, a group of hotel owners filled a boat with animals and ran it off the Niagara Falls – to attract tourists. They pushed the schooner – with buffalo, bears, foxes, a raccoon, a dog, a cat and geese – over the edge. Only two geese and a bear, who swam to shore, survived the fall. Some 10,000 people watched.

Pet goat taken on drunken ride

A REVELLER who drank ten pints (6litres) of cider stole a goat and took it on a joyride, a court has heard. Carl Myles took a shine to 11-month-old Snowy as he walked home from a party. The 20-year-old put the goat in the back of farmer Huw Leyshon's Volvo and then drove off with it. He was caught after he crashed the car into the back of a tractor. But Myles said he could not remember anything because of the amount of alcohol he had drunk. Myles, of Trallwn, Swansea, admitted one charge of aggravated vehicle-taking. Judge Richard Williams, of Neath magistrates, sentenced him to a 120-hour community order, disqualified him from driving for two years and ordered him to pay £1,394 compensation to Mr Leyshon. The goat died, possibly from shock, two days after the incident last month.

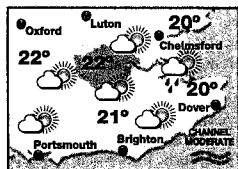
METRO weather

London Today
Sunny spells and areas of cloud with just the outside chance of a brief shower. A cooler day than yesterday with a brisk north-westerly wind. High 21-22C (70-72F).

Thursday AM		18°
Thursday PM		22°
Friday AM		18°
Friday PM		22°

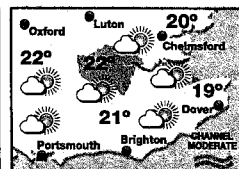
Outlook
Tomorrow is expected to be a dry day with sunny spells. Saturday morning should be dry but increasing cloud will bring showers later.

South-East and the Home Counties



Today
Sunny spells and variable amounts of cloud with just the small chance of a shower. Feeling cooler than yesterday with brisk north-westerly winds. High 20-22C (68-72F).

Sunset: 8.33pm Air pollution: Low



Tomorrow
Quite a blustery day but it will stay dry throughout with sunny spells and varying amounts of cloud. Moderate to fresh north-westerly winds. High 19-22C (66-72F).

Sunrise: 5.39am Air pollution: Low

Britain Today

North	19°	South	21°
N.West	21°	S.Wales	20°
Yorks	21°	N.Wales	20°
W.Mids	21°	Scotland	20°
E.Mids	21°	N.Ireland	18°

Around Britain yesterday

Aberdeen	16 Showers	Leeds	17 Fair
Belfast	15 Cloudy	Liverpool	16 Rain
Birmingham	18 Cloudy	London	20 Sunny
Cardiff	21 Sunny	Manchester	17 Fair
Edinburgh	18 Fair	Newcastle	17 Fair
Glasgow	15 Fair	York	18 Fair

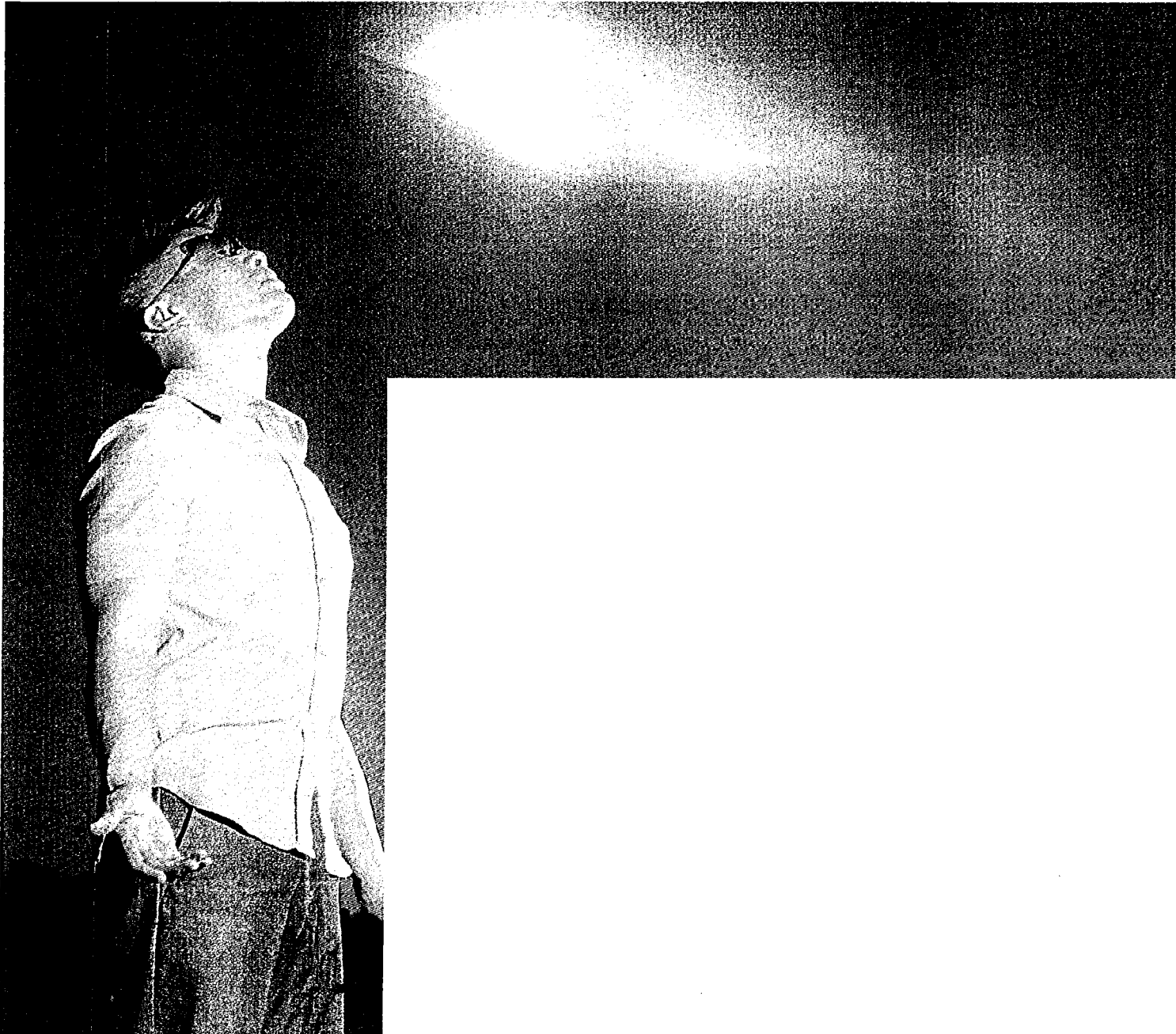
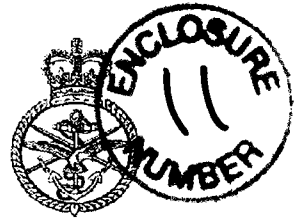
Europe Today

Athens	33°	Geneva	23°
Barcelona	29°	Madrid	35°
Berlin	20°	Moscow	17°
Brussels	18°	Paris	22°
Dublin	20°	Rome	27°

Around the World yesterday

Amsterdam	18 Cloudy	Madrid	28 Sunny
Athens	30 Sunny	Miami	31 Fair
Barbados	29 Showers	New York	29 Fair
Cape Town	15 Sunny	Paris	21 Rain
Hong Kong	33 Fair	Sydney	15 Cloudy
Los Angeles	25 Sunny	Tokyo	26 Showers

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COL HALT'S evidence was obtained by American UFO researchers in 1983, under the Freedom of Information Act. But it was not until 2001 that the rest of the file came to light, including most of the details we now know.

Georgina Bruni had requested several documents on the incident under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information – the forerunner to Britain's Freedom of Information Act. She had also enlisted the help of former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Hill-Norton – himself a firm believer in UFOs.

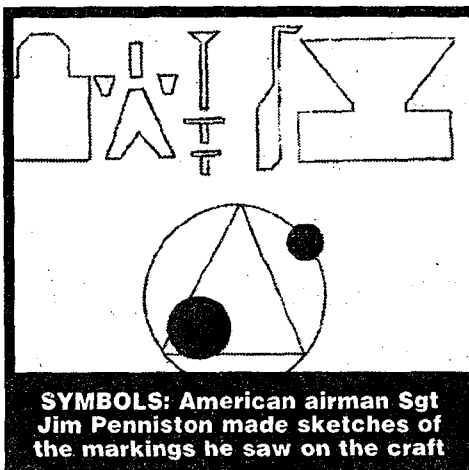
Despite the claims of conspiracy theorists, the MoD is committed to open government and was happy to release the file. It can now be viewed in entirety on the MoD website. The MoD and the National Archives are bombarded with requests about UFOs but have a rolling programme of disclosure. These are the real X-Files and they are being released.

As the 25th anniversary of this UFO encounter approaches, there is great interest in the incident. Enthusiasts are planning an anniversary vigil. The Forestry Commission – which has created a UFO Trail in the forest – is planning an event. Several television documentaries are being made and there's even talk of a Hollywood movie.

But despite the wealth of documentation to have emerged and

the testimony of the witnesses themselves, we are no nearer to knowing what happened in Rendlesham Forest.

The truth is still out there. Somewhere.



SYMBOLS: American airman Sgt Jim Penniston made sketches of the markings he saw on the craft



What is the truth about Britain's greatest UFO MYSTERY?

It is nearly 25 years since a strange craft landed in a Suffolk forest. When asked about the incident, Margaret Thatcher replied: 'You can't tell the people.' Here, the Government's former UFO expert reveals the amazing story



by **Nick Pope**

Former British Government UFO Project leader

ON MAY 21, 1997, a former Prime Minister made an enigmatic comment that seemed to confirm the reality of Britain's most famous UFO incident. The remark hinted at darker secrets and led to much debate among conspiracy theorists. The politician was Baroness Thatcher and the implications of what she said are extraordinary.

The comment was made at a charity function. London-based socialite and author Georgina Bruni had been researching the Rendlesham Forest UFO incident, fascinated by hints dropped by diplomatic, military and political friends. Sceptical about the subject of UFOs, she thought it was awash with cultists and crackpots.

But Rendlesham was different so, when she met Baroness Thatcher at a dinner, Bruni put

the former PM on the spot. Was there any truth to the rumours about what happened in Suffolk's Rendlesham Forest? What did the Government really know about UFOs? Was it a serious issue or just pie in the sky?

Bruni was expecting a bland dismissal of the story. The official Ministry of Defence position was that no evidence existed to suggest UFOs were extraterrestrial in origin. Then the former PM dropped her bombshell. "UFOs?" she said. "You can't tell the people."

Bruni was astounded and pressed her point. What did she mean? Baroness Thatcher calmly repeated her remark, before departing.

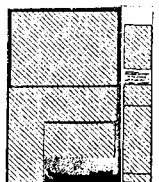
From 1991 to 1994, I ran the Government's UFO Project, based at the Ministry of Defence, and Bruni had interviewed me in the course of her research. Still astonished, she called me at 2am to tell me what had happened. I quickly grasped its sig-

nificance. I went to my study and began to make notes, all the time quizzing Georgina about every nuance of her brief encounter with the former PM.

If you take all the thousands of UFO sightings investigated by the MoD over the years, the Rendlesham Forest incident stood out. We could not ignore it, despite our best efforts to find some conventional explanation. This case was the Holy Grail and Baroness Thatcher's remark put the events into a new light.

SO WHAT actually happened at Rendlesham Forest and what makes the event the UK's strangest UFO encounter? As we approach its 25th anniversary, it's time to reopen the MoD's spookiest X-File.

Late on Christmas night, 1980, and early on Boxing Day, strange lights were seen in the forest. This might not sound particularly significant. When I was running



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the UFO Project I used to receive up to 300 reports of sightings each year.

Most could be explained as misidentifications of aircraft lights, meteors or weather balloons. What made this sighting remarkable was the fact that the witnesses were United States Air Force personnel based at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk.

Rendlesham Forest lies between the bases and, as the Cold War was still decidedly frosty, a UFO sighting at two of the nation's most sensitive military sites was bound to be of interest.

Early on December 26, duty personnel reported lights so bright they feared an aircraft had crashed. They obtained permission to go off-base to investigate. But they didn't find a crashed aircraft - they found a UFO.

The three-man patrol from the 81st Security Police Squadron - Jim Penniston, John Burroughs and Ed Cabansag - saw a small, metallic craft moving through the trees.

At one point, it appeared to land in a small clearing. They approached cautiously and Penniston got close enough to see strange markings on the side, which he likened to Egyptian hieroglyphs. He made some rapid sketches in his notebook. It touched down for only moments and then departed.

Later, because of the complicated legal and jurisdictional position of US Air Force bases in the UK, police from Suffolk Constabulary were called to the apparent landing site. They conducted a brief but inconclusive examination.

Three indentations were visible in the clearing and, when mapped, they formed the shape of an equilateral triangle. A Geiger counter was used to check the site and the readings peaked markedly in the depressions where the object - possibly on legs of some sort - had come to Earth.

News of the UFO encounter came to the attention of the Deputy Base Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt. He was sceptical, but had the witnesses write up official reports, including sketches of what they had seen.

The following evening, Halt was at a function when a young airman burst in and ran up to him. "Sir," he stammered, "It's back." Halt looked confused. "What?" he retorted. "What's back?" "The UFO, sir - the UFO's back."

Halt gathered together a small team and went out into the forest to investigate. He subsequently stated that he had no expectation of seeing anything and that his intention was to "debunk" the whole affair. But he didn't do so because he too encountered the UFO, becoming one of the highest ranking military officers to go on the record about such a sighting.

As he and his men tracked the UFO, their radios began to malfunction and powerful lamps taken to illuminate the forest mysteriously began to cut out. But a hand-held tape recorder the colonel took to document his investigation did not malfunction.

THE TAPE recording still survives and one can hear the rising tension in Halt's voice and the voices of his men, as the UFO approaches...

"I see it too... it's back again... it's coming this way... there's no doubt about it... this is weird... it looks like an eye winking at you... it almost burns your eyes... he's coming toward us now... now we're observing what appears to be a beam coming down to the ground... one object still hovering over Woodbridge base... beaming down."

At one point the tension in their voices almost seems to become panic as the UFO makes a close approach and fires light beams down on Halt and his men.

Halt wrote an official report of the incident. Although somewhat innocuously entitled Unexplained Lights, it described the first night's UFO as being "metallic in appearance and triangular in shape... a pulsing red light on top and a bank of blue lights underneath... the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy".

He went on to detail the radiation readings taken from the landing site and set out the details of his own sighting.

The report was sent to the section of the Ministry of Defence where, a little over 10 years later, I spent three years researching and investigating UFO sightings. It went to my predecessors, who began an investigation, but they were hampered by a mistake that was to have dire consequences.

For whatever reason - and it may have been nothing more

than a typographical error - Charles Halt's report gave incorrect dates for the incident. So when the MoD checked the radar tapes, they were looking at the wrong days.

Radar evidence is a critical part of any UFO investigation. Many spectacular UFO sightings over the years have been correlated by radar. MoD files detail several such cases, including ones where RAF pilots encountered UFOs and gave chase. Unsuccessfully, I might add.

In the absence of any radar data that might confirm the presence of the Rendlesham Forest UFOs, the investigation petered out. Yet, as I was to discover years later, the UFO had been tracked after all.

I spoke to a former RAF radar operator called Nigel Kerr. He had been stationed at RAF Watton in Norfolk at Christmas 1980 and took a call from RAF Bentwaters asking if there was anything unusual on his radar screen. For three or four sweeps,

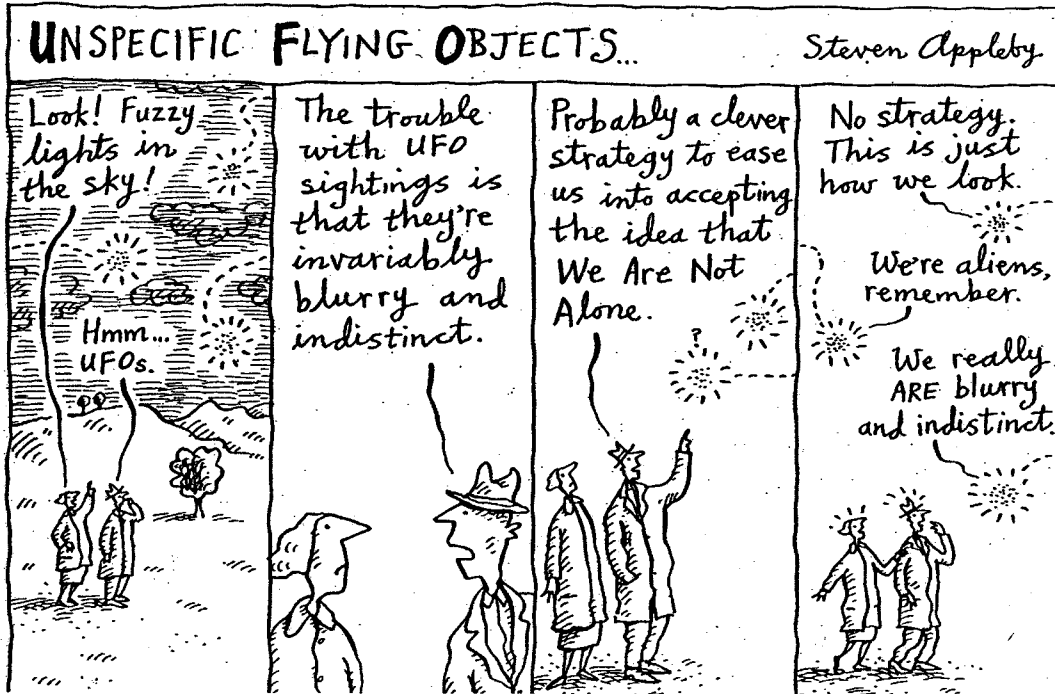
something did show up directly over the base, but it faded away and no official report was ever made. It was only years later that Kerr heard of the Rendlesham Forest incident and realised he might have a missing piece of the puzzle.

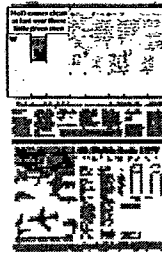
In the apparent absence of radar data to verify the presence of the UFO, arguably the most critical piece of evidence was never followed up. The Defence Intelligence Staff had assessed the radiation readings taken at the landing site and judged them "significantly higher than the average background". In fact, they were about seven times what would have been expected.

So what are we to make of all this? UFO believers are convinced the sightings involved an extra-terrestrial spacecraft. They still hold sky watches in the forest and claim to see UFOs regularly.

The sceptical theories are almost as bizarre, with suggestions that the highly trained military witnesses actually saw the lights of a police car, or the beam from the local lighthouse. "Lighthouses don't fly," Charles Halt said, incredulously.

More rational sceptical theories include the testing of a prototype aircraft, but the bottom line is that, while there are things being developed you won't see at the Farnborough Air Show for 10 or 15 years, we know where we fly our own hardware. The "black projects" theory doesn't hold up.





MoD comes clean at last over those little green men

While the world celebrates the apparent rapprochement between Israel and the Palestinians, a glimmer of hope can be detected in the long-running dispute between another two factions: the scientific community and believers in UFOs.

For more than half a century, the debate over UFOs and whether they really are alien spacecraft has been characterised by wild-eyed zealotry and a refusal to listen to reasonable argument – and that's just the scientists. Those who believe that UFOs really are alien spacecraft show a preference for conspiracy theories over critical reasoning.

Part of the problem has been the official attitude towards reports of UFOs, which has been decidedly sniffy. It is now clear that this has been a bit of a pose. Following a request made under the Freedom of Information Act, the Ministry of Defence last week released the details of more than 80 UFO reports made by military personnel and members of the public in the last year.

The MoD pointed out that it has thousands more reports on file – thus confirming the long-standing claims by UFO

buffs that “the authorities” knew far more than they let on. It has to be said that the reports are risibly mundane: “strange lights in the sky” over Whitstable, a saucer-like object over Stoke on Trent, a “bright light” over Barry, South Wales. Indeed, some UFO enthusiasts now claim there is a new conspiracy in which only the ho-hum sightings are released, while the MoD keeps the juicy stuff to itself. Rather more interesting, however, was the official statement accompanying the release of the documents, in which the MoD declared that it remained “totally open-minded” towards the issue of aliens and UFOs.

This seems a long way from attitude of the Government working party which in 1951 dismissed the idea of taking UFOs seriously as “a singularly profitless enterprise”. The new receptive attitude is in line with that taken by the authorities in a growing number of countries, including Belgium, Chile and France.

There are signs that the scientific community might also be getting over its aversion to the notion of aliens visiting Earth. In recent years, a number of academics have made public their frustration with the dismal level of

debate on the subject, and have sought to rectify it. An independent group of American scientists is responsible for the first paper arguing for the existence of UFOs to appear in a serious academic journal in 25 years.

Writing in the *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society*, the group claims that advances in scientific knowledge have made the case for alien visitation stronger than many might think.

For example, sceptics have argued that while life may well exist elsewhere in the universe, the probability that it is both intelligent and relatively close to Earth is extremely low.

Yet as the authors of the paper point out, since the mid-1990s, several methods for faster-than-light travel have been put forward in serious physics journals, thus undermining the argument that the sheer size of the

universe makes alien visitation implausible. The authors concede that while possible in principle, no practical scheme for faster-than-light travel has yet been put forward.

Even so, some advanced civilisation could have succeeded, which prompts the authors to point out another recent discovery. Last year a team of astronomers showed

that stars capable of supporting life in our galaxy are typically a billion years older than the Sun. If so, this could mean that aliens may be as far ahead of us as we are compared to primordial bacteria.

None of this proves that UFOs are real, of course, but it does show that some of the standard arguments used by sceptics do need sprucing up. Even so, for those of us taking a broadly agnostic stance, the fact remains that there is still no compelling evidence that UFOs are alien craft.

Yet in the most disconcerting of all their arguments, the authors of the *JBIS* paper claim that all those dodgy photographs and spooky encounters may be yet further evidence for the reality of aliens. They argue that all those brief encounters of the third kind may be part of a deliberate long-term strategy by the aliens to ease us all into accepting that we are not alone. Some scientists have argued that the proof of the existence of aliens could be very traumatic for human society.

Frankly, it is not half as worrying as discovering we are the target of a cosmic campaign run by little green spin doctors.

UFOs IN 2002, UFOLOGY WAS DECLARED DEAD. SO WHY ARE SO MANY SIGHTINGS STILL REPORTED? **JAMES ELLIS** INVESTIGATES

Just flights of fancy?



It was the announcement many had waited for. Four years ago, the then editor of paranormal bible Fortean Times, Bob Rickard, told the world that UFOs piloted by aliens did not appear to exist and sceptics danced on the graves of little green men.

The statement was followed by the closure of UFO Magazine in 2004 and premature reports of the winding down of the world's oldest club dedicated to extraterrestrials, the British Flying Saucer Bureau.

Yet reports of odd lights in the sky that apparently fly at unimaginable speeds persist, with Ministry of Defence records recently published under the Freedom of Information Act showing Britain still averages more than 100 sightings a year.

Open and shut case

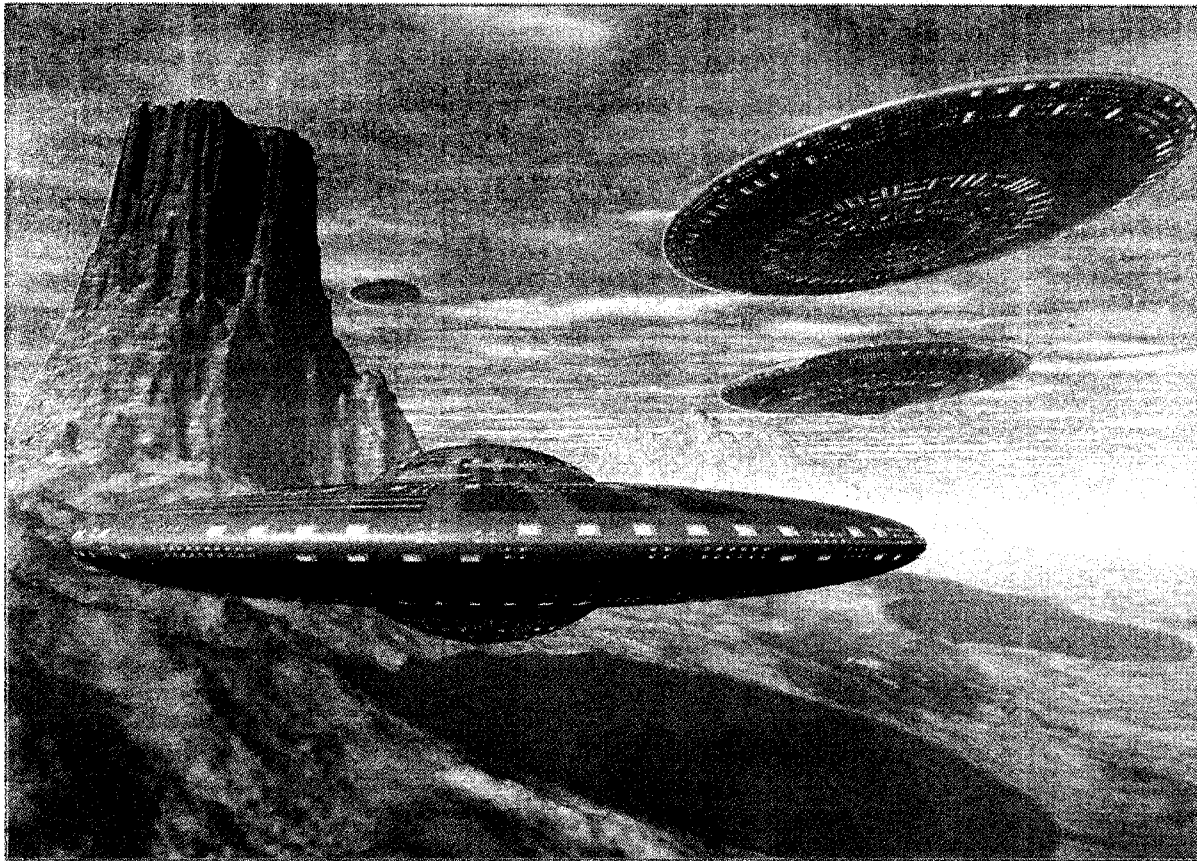
Officially, the MoD has closed down its 'X-Files' UFO project and no longer investigates sightings in depth, other than to ascertain whether they are a potential threat to UK airspace or a violation by aircraft from another country.

However, a spokesman for the ministry admitted to Metro that the jury is still out there, even if aliens may not be. 'We keep an open mind on the subject but it is not our job to prove or disprove the existence of extraterrestrials,' he said.

Nick Pope, who used to head the MoD's UFO project, is adamant the subject should not be buried. 'If there is no such thing as UFOs, then why are there still so many sightings,



Gotcha: An alien in Mars Attacks!



Picture: The Image Bank/Ceity Images

Fact or fiction? There may be more to flying saucers than a graphic artist's imagination, say believers

some of them very accurately described?' he says. 'This whole issue was blown out of proportion and some of the information seems to have been manipulated. For instance, the only reason UFO Magazine closed down was because the owner died, while the BFSB's membership dropped as many of them were too old to carry on.'

Rickard's successor at Fortean Times, David Sutton, is also keen to point out that ufology is very much alive: 'It's not only not dead but it's not even starting to smell,' he says. 'You only have to look on the Internet to see the amount of literature there is still on the subject.'

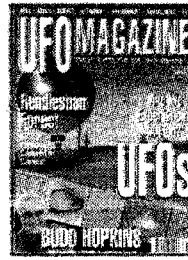
According to Sutton, one website currently causing a storm in the

world of ufology is Serpo.org - which claims to have access to confidential Pentagon documents proving there was a top secret exchange programme of 12 US military personnel to a planet in the Zeta Reticuli star system in the 1970s and 80s.

A different approach

So if there is still so much interest in ufology, why did Rickard make his original comment? 'It was taken out of context as it makes a good soundbite,' says Sutton.

'If we were seen to dismiss UFOs, then others may have followed. What



Bob actually said was that it was time for a different approach. People have spent many years looking for proof that aliens exist and not found it, so perhaps we should be looking elsewhere for an explanation. There's no doubt people see unexplained objects in the sky. Whether they are craft piloted by aliens or not is another matter.'

Aliens, eh? Like small blue helmet-shaped creatures with two legs and no arms? Of course they don't exist... Let us know what you think at www.metro.co.uk



Who? 'Mama' Cass Elliot.



Where? The ghost of the supersized California Dreamin' singer and one quarter of 1960s superstars The Mamas And The Papas hangs out in Dan Aykroyd's house in Beverly Hills.

How? The Ghostbusters star claims his Stairmaster turns itself on and jewellery is moved around the house. Even spookier, he claims the ghost occasionally gets into bed with him. 'I'm sure it's her,' he says. 'You get the feeling it's a big ghost.' We should say so.

Anything else we should know? Despite the urban myth, Cass did not choke on a ham sandwich. Contrary to early newspaper reports, the pathologist who performed the post-mortem examination found no food blocking her trachea and concluded she died of an obesity-related heart attack.



The myth: Men think about sex every 15 seconds.

The truth: Look, we know we're bad but we're not that bad. According to the Kinsey Institute in the US, widely regarded as the authority when it comes to sexual research: 'Fifty-four per cent of men think about sex every day or several times a day, 43 per cent a few times per month or a few times per week, and three per cent less than once a month.' And if half the male population thinks about sex just a few times a month, then it simply can't be true. Can it?

Edited by **JAMES ELLIS** mysteries@ukmetro.co.uk

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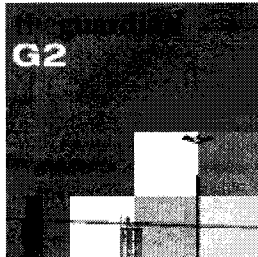
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Inside story

The Martians aren't coming

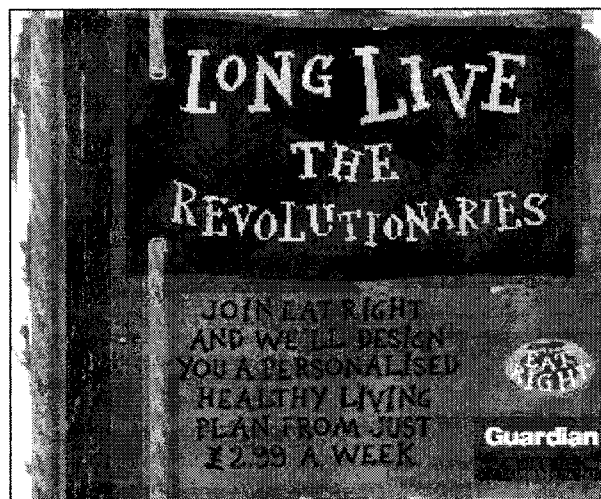
British UFO-spotting clubs may have to close because of a lack of sightings. Have the little green men really stopped visiting, or do we earthlings just have bigger things to worry about?

Stephen Moss
Thursday August 11, 2005
The Guardian

It may only be a small, translucent green gleam on the horizon, but there are signs of a crisis in UFO-spotting. Chris Parr, coordinator of the Cumbrian branch of the British UFO Hunters, sent a shiver through the hearts of ufologists with his announcement this week that his group may be forced to wind up. There don't seem to be any UFOs in Cumbria any more.

Or maybe there just aren't any spotters. Parr's statement seemed to leave both possibilities open. "In Cumbria we have gone from 60 UFO sightings in 2003 to 40 in 2004 and none at all this year. It means that the number of people keeping their eyes on the skies is greatly diminished. We are a dying breed in this part of the country. I put it down to the end of The X Files, a lack of military exercises in the area that would produce UFO sightings, and a lack of strange phenomena." A lack of strange phenomena or a shortage of strange people? Take your pick.

[Article continues ▾](#)



It has not been a happy couple of years for ufology. The closure last year of UFO magazine, following the sudden death

List of the day

of its editor Graham Birdsall, was a disaster for the close-knit UFO-spotting community. Several websites have sprung up to try to fill the void, but the best-known one, Ufodata - launched by Russel Callaghan, who used to work with Birdsall, his father-in-law, on UFO Magazine - kept making my computer crash. Spooky.

Parr's statement echoes those of UFO groups in Indiana and New Jersey, where ufologists are also having a long, dark night of the soul. Meanwhile, a leading Scandinavian ufologist has suggested that "maybe people are just fed up with the UFO hysteria". The sceptics reckon they have enough evidence to pronounce ufology dead.

"The whole UFO thing is a kind of meme," says Susan Blackmore, a psychologist who studies paranormal activity. "It's a craze, a bit like sudoku. UFOs were just a rather long-lived version. But crazes thrive on novelty, and eventually that dies out. It's taken a long time, but it's good that the UFO era is over. My prediction is that it will go away for a long time and then come back."

Blackmore has spent most of her working life examining the paranormal. She became interested in the subject after what she describes as a "dramatic out-of-body experience", and reached the conclusion that there really is nothing out there. "Everything is explicable in terms of psychology," she says. "I'm as sure as you can be that there are no paranormal experiences, and I've spent 30 years looking."

She says belief in UFOs and the existence of extraterrestrials, while mostly harmless, can in some cases be very damaging. "For most people, belief in them is neither here nor there," she says, "but some people can become very frightened and obsessed. It can also lead to an anti-science attitude and the belief that everything is being hushed up."

Britain's beleaguered band of ufologists are not, however, going to give up without a fight. "Cumbria is a delightful part of the country, but it has a small population and you shouldn't read anything into the fact that no UFOs are being spotted there," says Callaghan. He is currently excited, for example, by the extra-ordinary level of UFO activity in Filey, North Yorkshire, where he says there have been 80 reports in the past eight months. Russ Kellett, who describes himself as a UFO researcher, has been documenting them. "In Filey Bay there have been sightings of something that looks like a flying triangle," he says. "They are not conventional aircraft. They keep appearing and disappearing, defying the laws of physics. I've got video evidence and will be showing it at the Great British UFO Show in Leeds in October."

As is often the case with committed ufologists, Kellett's interest dates from a personal "close encounter" in 1988. "I was sat at a level crossing on a motorbike," he recalls, "when suddenly I was aware of light all around me and a beam of light hitting me. The crossing went up so I carried on, but I saw this big ball of light moving towards Halifax." Kellett is one of those who believes there is an official cover-up of the number of UFO incidents. "You can't have panic," he says. "All we can hope is that someone will bring the truth out about this."

Veteran ufologist Denis Plunkett, founder chairman of the British Flying Saucer Bureau, accepts that "there is not a lot happening at the moment" and that "the loss of the magazine was a great blow - Birdsall was a shining light". But he, too, insists that ufology should not be written off. "Belief in UFOs

and extraterrestrial life has gone up from 10% of the population to 80% over the 50-plus years the BFSB has existed."

Plunkett, a former civil servant who says his career suffered because of his publicly stated belief in flying saucers, argues that the evidence for extraterrestrials is "incontrovertible". He believes extraterrestrial life forms visit earth frequently. "They seem to be observing us but not interfering with us," he says.

Nick Pope, author of *Open Skies, Closed Minds*, used to run the Ministry of Defence's UFO project. He began as a sceptic, but the difficulty he had in explaining some cases he assessed shook that scepticism. "I became more open when I was there," he says. "Now I won't rule out an extraterrestrial explanation. During my three-year tour of duty from 1991 to 94, I had to investigate 200 to 300 sightings a year: 80% of them had perfectly rational explanations - meteors, satellites, weather patterns; with another 15% it was difficult to reach any conclusion; but with about 5% there was evidence of something more intriguing."

It was 1978, he says, that was "the peak in UFO sightings [it helped that Close Encounters of the Third Kind had been released the previous year], when there were 750 reports. We have seen these UFO waves many times. If a paper runs a UFO story and puts a line at the bottom saying, 'If you have seen a UFO, ring us,' they will be inundated. You try it."

David Clarke, a historian at Sheffield University and the *Fortean Times*' UFO correspondent, is not convinced by the "peaks and troughs" line. "People haven't stopped believing, but they do seem to be seeing far less than they did and it's not clear why," he says. "There's been a massive drop in sightings since 1996, which is when *The X Files* was on TV. It may also be that since 9/11 people have had other things to worry about. There is not just less interest in UFOs, but in all supernatural phenomena. People are more worried about terrorist bombs. The MoD also lost interest in UFOs when the cold war ended: what they had really been looking for was Russian intruder aircraft. They only collate sightings now because MPs keep asking questions about UFOs."

So is there a crisis in ufology? Joe McGonagle, who runs UFOlogyinuk, the main internet newsgroup for British ufologists, believes there is. "Ufology has shot itself in both feet and needs drastic surgery in order to recover," he told his 1,000-strong membership yesterday in an emailed response to the news from Cumbria. "Ufology is suffering from the paranoid accusations of government cover-ups which some of the more vociferous groups and individuals are all too willing to believe and kick up a fuss about. All of these things drive people away from what is already a peculiar subject."

It isn't just Cumbria. McGonagle points to the decline in the number of local UFO clubs as ufologists get their information from the internet instead; apathy among the public (oddly, he links the failure to report sightings to the falling turnout in general elections); and a general "loss of focus" in ufology. The great flying saucer-spotting days of the mid-20th century are long gone. Contrast the panic generated by Orson Welles' radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* in 1938 with the indifference which greeted Tom Cruise's recent "blockbuster" movie version.

David Clarke thinks the rise and fall of ufology is a rich subject for study and is currently trying to attract funds for just such an

undertaking. "I see it as part of modern folklore," he says. "UFOs are like modern-day angels, and descriptions of meeting aliens are just like descriptions of people meeting angels in the Middle Ages." Filey was probably big on angels, too.

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I'm an alien hunter

Government investigator Nick Pope, 39, has spent his life chasing ETs – and here he opens Britain's secret X-Files...



Fireworks peppered the cool night sky. It was November 5, 1990 and three silver RAF Tornado jets powered through the air at hundreds of miles an hour.

The pilots peered down at the North Sea and flew on.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, bright lights tore past, blinding them. As the pilots' jaws fell open, an other-worldly, diamond-shaped black craft overtook them in seconds.

The experienced fighter pilots knew this was no RAF plane. The Tornados' top speed was 1,452mph – but this craft had outflown them in seconds.

As the lights of the flat, flying object disappeared in the distance, the flight crews were left confused. They'd never seen anything like it.

So, who did the pilots report the strange unidentified flying object to?

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) UFO Project. Much like the FBI department in TV's X-Files, where agents Mulder and Scully worked to track down aliens, this British project investigates strange, out-of-this-world phenomenon.

And between 1991 and 1994, the team was headed by Nick Pope. Nick

UFO hotspots

Saucer spotters should visit...



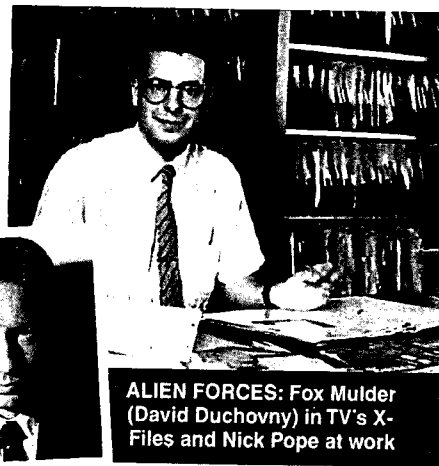
became the British expert on UFOs after working in the RAF. For four years he was investigating about 300 UFO sightings a year.

"My workmates started calling me Spooky Mulder," laughs Nick, 39. "About 95 per cent of UFO sightings can be explained. But the five per cent kept me awake at night – that I could never explain," he says.

When strange objects were spotted, Nick was the one man in the country who could explain them away. He had radar reports, all the flight paths and knew where helium balloons were flying.

"If nothing showed up, I'd check with the Greenwich Royal Observatory and specialist scientists," he says. "Any photo or video evidence would be analysed and if there was still doubt, I would contact the civilian UFO groups."

"The MoD would never discount a public sighting. However, if a trained



ALIEN FORCES: Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) in TV's X-Files and Nick Pope at work

witness, such as a policeman or armed forces member made a sighting, this would be seen as more reliable as they are trained in distance sightings and used to seeing planes."

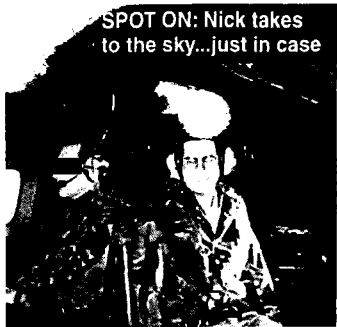
Nick says the MoD have never tried to cover up anything about UFOs.

In fact, details of possible UFO sightings can be found on their website, www.mod.uk.

Nick's investigations have led to

PHOTOS: LISA BRIDGMAN. PHOTOS: 20TH CENTURY FOX, REUTERS

SPOT ON: Nick takes to the sky...just in case



plausible explanations for most of the strange sightings. However, he admits there are four or five that remain a mystery, including the North Sea one. "One of the most famous was Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk in 1980. The sightings occurred on a British RAF USAF air base over Christmas," Nick explains.

"On Boxing Day night, a guard patrol spotted a small silver craft landing in the forest. Apparently, the guards got close enough to see some strange hieroglyphics on the craft – some even touched it.

"The following night, in a function at the base, a soldier rushed in and told the man in charge, Lieutenant Commander Hall: 'Sir, the UFO's back.'

"Thinking it was a hoax, Hall took a squad of men into the forest to investigate it. There he saw a strange almond-shaped craft moving slowly above the trees. Hall was convinced he'd seen a UFO and took casts of indentations of the landing site.

"Many have said it's a hoax but, to this day, it hasn't been explained."

Rendlesham's not the only case still puzzling Nick.

"March 30 and 31, 1993, witnessed a wave of sightings across England," he recalls. "Police and military in Devon, Cornwall, Wales and the Midlands reported strange lights in the sky.

"RAF personnel on RAF Cosford saw a UFO flying overhead at 1am. A civilian family driving home chased the UFO by

'I saw a spaceship when I was at a funeral'



Jo Mullins, 30, from South Croydon, is one of MoD expert Nick Pope's cases. She had a close encounter at a funeral in November 1999...

"I watched as the coffin was lowered into the ground. 'I'm really going to miss you, Felix,' I thought, glumly glancing over at my brother Jerome, 41, a builder. As Felix's best friend he was devastated.

The cool November wind whipped my face and I pulled my coat tighter.

Look left!

The thought echoed in my mind.

Turn left, look up!

My eyes swivelled left and fixed on something glinting in the dark afternoon sky.

Peering closer, I distinctly made out a dull, silver egg-shaped object floating in the air above the grubby London tower blocks.

Looking at the crowd of mourners, I realised no-one else had noticed.

I gazed back and saw the silver craft floating directly overhead.

I'd never seen anything like it. It wasn't an aeroplane or a balloon...

A faint humming filled my ears as

a sinister black helicopter appeared and began circling the craft. I watched, amazed, as the unmarked helicopter tried to shoo it away.

Suddenly, the silver ship lit up from the outside, filling the sky with an eerie golden glow. As the light intensified, the helicopter kept circling until there was a blinding flash. The silver object vanished into thin air and seconds later the helicopter flew off.

I stood reeling from the shock, wondering if I'd imagined it. I could still see the helicopter, so I knew I wasn't dreaming. Had the egg-shaped craft been from another world? Had I seen a UFO?

I didn't tell anyone at the funeral as they might have thought I was bonkers. But later I talked to Nick Pope at the MoD.

No-one knows what exactly I saw, but I'll never forget my encounter with a spaceship."

car until it vanished above a field." This craft, too, was diamond-shaped.

Nick continues to investigate UFO sightings all over the world – but does he really believe E.T. is out there?

"When I started my job I didn't

believe in UFOs and aliens at all," he admits. "I was the ultimate sceptic.

"But after years of investigation I began to change my mind. Now I believe there is evidence, but no proof."

And with that, he smiles knowingly.

Have YOU had a close encounter of any kind?

Our five tests to help tell if you've had an alien experience...

1. Get a photo of it

As soon as you see any strange flashing lights or images, get a snap of it on your mobile so it can be investigated.

2. Grab a pen and some paper

No camera? Make a sketch. Then note down the exact date, time and location of your sighting. Include any strange markings or unusual light effects.

3. Make enquiries

Ask in your local pub or shop to find out if anyone in the area saw the same thing as you.

4. Get the local newspaper and radio station involved

Local reporters may run an article asking if anyone else has had a similar sighting. The more response, the more credibility.

5. Use common sense

Ask yourself: could it have been an aeroplane, a satellite, a star or lights from a nearby sports stadium? Account for fireworks displays around Christmas or Bonfire Night.

If all other possibilities have been ruled out, phone the Ministry of Defence UFO 24-hour hotline on: 020 7218 2140 or e-mail: das-ufo-office@mod.uk

For more information on Nick Pope's UFO Investigations, visit www.nickpope.net

Top UFO Films



1. Close Encounters Of The Third Kind
2. 2001: A Space Odyssey
3. E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial
4. Species III
5. Independence Day

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Species III, the sci-fi thriller, is out now to rent on DVD and VHS. MGM Home Entertainment are giving away a chance to win the DVD and the Sony Home Cinema System. Five winners will receive the Species III special edition. To enter, the competition just asks you the question: 'What number in Species III is our top UFO film?' and if you've got a chance to win Species III, you'll want to make it your number one choice. For more information visit www.mgm.com



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Science

Is it a bird? Is it a spaceship? No, it's a secret US spy plane

Sightings of flying object over Britain worried MoD

Questions threatened to strain relations with US

James Randerson
Science correspondent

is the stuff of internet conspiracy theorists' dreams. A top secret, hypersonic, cold war spy plane that was allegedly owned by the Americans in UK airspace without the government's permission.

Publicly, the UK government played one newspaper story about people who reported seeing UFO-like phenomena. But documents released under the Freedom of Information Act suggest the Ministry of Defence took the rumours very much more seriously. Its investigations even threatened to strain the special relationship. "It does show that they were concerned that this thing did exist and the Americans were flying it around willy-nilly over the UK," said David Clarke, a social scientist at Sheffield Hallam University, who obtained the documents. "It certainly suggests that the British government suspected that they were being kept in the dark."

The United States has never confirmed the existence of the mysterious aircraft, the Aurora, which was supposedly designed to sneak at very high speed over the Soviet Union and take covert snaps of that the enemy was up to. It was reputed to be capable of flying at up to Mach 8 and so could reach anywhere on

the planet in less than three hours. In the early 1990s there was a string of supposed sightings and strange sounds over Scotland which some bewildered locals attributed to UFOs. Rumours in the press that Aurora was operating secretly out of RAF Machrihanish on the tip of Kintyre prompted Scottish MPs to ask questions in parliament.

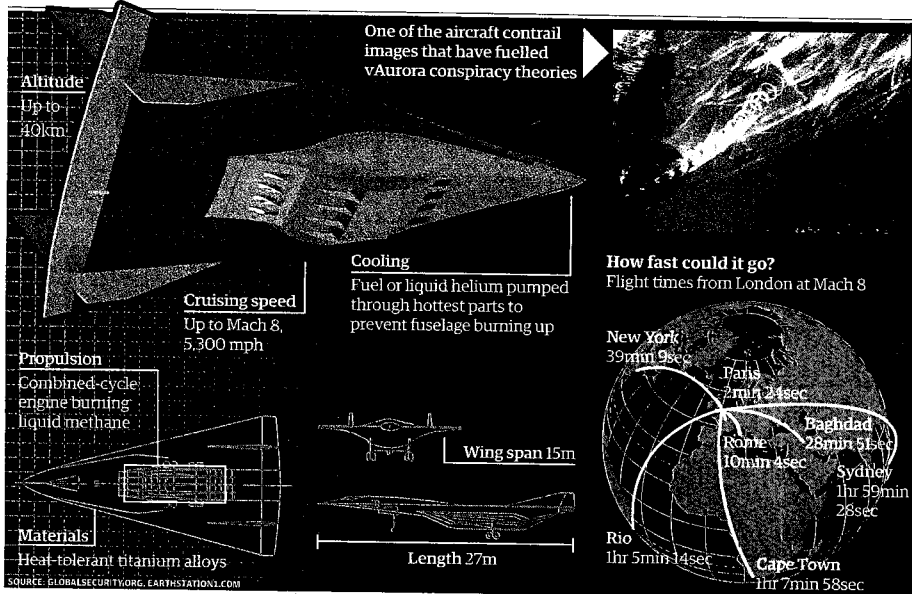
Briefing notes given to the then defence secretary, Tom King, on March 4 1992 show that civil servants did give the idea credence. "There is no knowledge in the MoD of a 'black' programme of this nature, although it would not surprise the relevant desk officers in the Air Staff and [Defence Intelligence Staff] if it did exist."

The response suggested to an MP's question was rather less revealing: "The existence of any such project (or operation) would be a matter for the US authorities." The Americans denied everything, but the reports kept coming.

The most credible witness was Chris Gibson, who had 12 years' experience with the Royal Observer Corps and was an expert on recognising aircraft. He saw a triangular plane flanked by two US fighters being refuelled in flight by tanker while he was working on the Galveston Key oil rig in 1989. The plane was unlike anything he had ever seen. "There was no precedent for this," he said. "I kind of suspected that it was something I shouldn't have seen." He reported the sighting to Jane's Defence Weekly in 1992.

On December 22 1992, the air attaché to the British embassy in Washington wrote to the assistant chief of the Air Staff in London explaining US reaction to renewed MoD questions prompted by Mr Gibson's sighting. "Secretary of the Air

If Aurora exists, it could look like this



Force, the Honorable Donald B Rice, was to say the least incensed by the renewed speculation, and the implied suggestion that he had lied to Congress by stating that Aurora did not exist.

"As you will have gathered, the whole affair is causing considerable irritation

'There is some evidence of an unidentified object operating over the UK'

within HQ [US Air Force], and any helpful comments we can make to defuse the situation would be appreciated."

"The sort of prickly reaction to people not believing their denials is pretty unusual," said Bill Sweetman, an expert on

top secret US black projects with Jane's Defence Review. "They generally don't deny things actually because it generally doesn't hurt them too much if somebody thinks they have a capability they don't."

A further batch of sightings on March 31 1993 over Devon, Cornwall, South Wales and Shropshire prompted another investigation by the MoD. These turned out later to be a Russian rocket re-entering the atmosphere, but the MoD investigators at the time suspected Aurora.

"There would seem to be some evidence on this occasion that an unidentified object (or objects) of unknown origin was operating over the UK ... If there has been some activity of US origins which is known to a limited circle in MoD and is not being acknowledged it is difficult to investigate further." Mr Sweetman suspects

that by the end of the decade the MoD knew about Aurora. Another document from 2000 on the MoD's investigations into UFO sightings – or unidentified aerial phenomena as they prefer to call them – states that "some UAP reports can be attributed to covert aircraft programmes".

The section, which discusses other covert US aircraft such as the SR-71 Blackbird, contains two paragraphs and two illustrations which were censored before its freedom of information release last month. Codes next to the removed material indicate that it was excised in the interests of international relations. "Certain viewing angles of these vehicles may be described as saucer-like," the document says.

guardian.co.uk/science

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Ipwich* £65	M6, Jct 7* £49		Turin £85
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	Colchester* £69		

Bad science

Food for thought on alternative therapy

Ben Goldacre

It can sometimes seem like there are two competing ways to make a decision about any complex matter of evidence-based medicine. One is to purchase and digest How To Read A Paper by Professor Trisha Greenhalgh, and then find, read and critically appraise every published academic study independently and in full for yourself. The other more common method is to rely on "experts", or what I like to call "prejudice".

But there is a third way: what we might call "evidence-based prejudice". I can't possibly debunk every single alternative therapy column you will ever read; but if I could show that their single most popular claim has no foundation, then you could safely ignore everything else they say, thus saving valuable brain energy, and creating time to write best-sellers and eradicate world poverty.

And so to antioxidants. The basic claim of the alternative therapy industry is as follows: free radicals in the body are bad, but antioxidants neutralise free radicals; people who eat vegetables with antioxidants in them live longer, therefore antioxidant tablets are good.

Now this "free-radicals-bad, antioxidants-good" morality tale looks great on paper. But if you're going to read a biochemistry textbook and pull bits out at random, you can prove anything you like. For example, my phagocytic cells build a wall around invading pathogens and then use free radicals – among other things – to kill the bacteria off, before the bacteria kill me. They're probably doing it right now. So do I need free radical supplements to help me fight infections? Sounds plausible. You can see, now, how I could make some serious money if I ever turned to the dark side. Of course the "antioxidant good"



are surveys, looking at people who, like me, already have healthy diets and lifestyles. But it's not just the antioxidants in rocket salad.

So what happens, then, when people do big studies, forcing people to eat salad? Well, it's not an easy thing to do, if only because it's difficult to get people to eat what you tell them, and measure what they eat, and check if they're truthful, and so on. The Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial in the 1970s was probably the single biggest medical project. It took 12,866 men, advised them, monitored them, cajoled them, persuaded them, followed them up for a decade, and found little benefit from dietary change. Intervention trials for diet have continued, since then, to produce negative results.

But what about vitamin tablets? They're easy to study, in the sense that it's easy to take a tablet – easier than changing your whole food lifestyle – easy to find a placebo control for, and so on. And there have been innumerable studies, and systematic reviews of those studies, and meta-analyses of those studies, and they have found no benefit for antioxidants. A meta-analysis – a mathematical combination of lots of smaller studies to give one larger and more accurate answer – of 15 studies, a total of more than 200,000 patients, followed up for between one and 12 years, found no benefit for cardiovascular outcomes. The current Cochrane review on antioxidants and bowel cancer had just as many patients, and again found no benefit for the pills. That must be the single most prevalent claim of the antioxidant industry.

Eat a mind meal



THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

BEXLEYHEATH has been identified by UFO experts as one of the top spots for seeing UFOs.

The town ranks number eight in a top 20 list of hotspots for UFO activity in the country, with Bonnybridge in Lanarkshire in first place.

The research comes as no surprise to one teenager who, while babysitting his sister two years ago, witnessed what he believed to be an alien ship hovering near his home.

Conor Sherwood, now 15, of Malvern Avenue, Bexleyheath, said: "My mum was out for the evening and I was in babysitting my little sister.

"I was sitting in my living room and I heard a strange vibrating noise. I thought it was interference on the television, so I got up and turned the TV down.

"But the noise was still there and it was getting louder. My house was shaking a little and I thought it could be a low-flying plane.



■ SCOTT SINCLAIR

the area and I had never felt the house shake like that.

"When my dad came back, I told him and he phoned the police straight away.

"No one else had reported seeing anything, although there had been a couple of phone calls about the vibrations.

"I really thought it was a Concorde but when I looked closer, it had lights all around it and I have never seen a plane or anything like it before.

"I don't really believe in aliens but this was very strange and was definitely a UFO."

"But this was not the first time I had seen something. When I was younger, my uncle had a barbecue and there was a small, green, round shape in the sky. My uncle immediately got a camcorder, and my whole family saw it."

Conor logged his sighting on a Lycos website.

The list was compiled by leading UFO expert Nick Pope for Grolsch beer.

Mr Pope, who ran the Ministry of Defence's UFO desk from 1991 to 1994, said: "It is difficult to arrive at a precise number of sightings in any one place as there is no central data collection point.

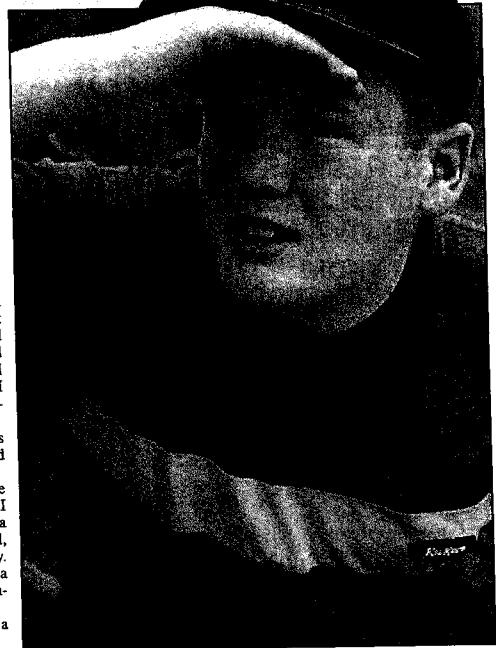
"We must also take into account widespread under-reporting due to fear of ridicule and the fact most people are unsure where to submit reports.

"However, it is certainly possible to gauge the intensity of current UFO activity.

"Our listed hotspots exhibit up to 20 times as many sightings as anywhere else."

Lewisham also made the top 10.

● Have YOU seen a UFO? If so, contact Scott Sinclair on 0208 269 7000 or e-mail s.sinclair@inuk.co.uk



SIGHTINGS: Conor Sherwood.

XF/1995/5C

Triangle

"I went outside and saw to my left a white triangle. It wasn't very high up, maybe as low as a plane coming into land or a tall building.

"The triangle looked like it was falling from the sky, but slowly, like the ashes of a firework that had just exploded."

"Then the telephone rang in my house, so I ran in to answer it and when I returned, which was almost straight away, it was gone. The sound had gone as well.

"My sister slept through the whole thing."

Conor believes what he saw was an Unidentified Flying Object, and said it was not his first UFO sighting.

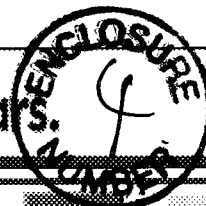
He added: "I thought it was a Concorde plane, because of the noise and the vibrations, but I have never seen one before over

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Mexican Air Force pilots film unidentified objects

Wednesday, May 12, 2004 Posted: 1210 GMT (2010 HKT)

MEXICO CITY, Mexico (AP) -- Mexican Air Force pilots filmed 11 unidentified objects in the skies over southern Campeche state, a Defense Department spokesman confirmed Tuesday.

A videotape made widely available to the news media on Tuesday shows the bright objects, some sharp points of light and others like large headlights, moving rapidly in what appears to be a late-evening sky.

The lights were filmed on March 5 by pilots using infrared equipment. They appeared to be flying at an altitude of about 3,500 meters (11,480 feet), and allegedly surrounded the Air Force jet as it conducted routine anti-drug trafficking vigilance in Campeche. Only three of the objects showed up on the plane's radar.

"Was I afraid? Yes. A little afraid because we were facing something that had never happened before," said radar operator Lt. German Marin in a taped interview made public Tuesday.

"I couldn't say what it was ... but I think they're completely real," added Lt. Mario Adrian Vazquez, the infrared equipment operator. Vazquez insisted that there was no way to alter the recorded images.

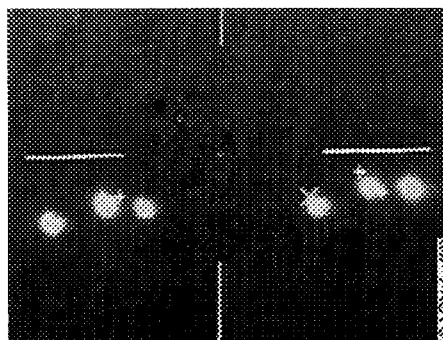
The plane's captain, Maj. Magdaleno Castanon, said the military jets chased the lights "and I believe they could feel we were pursuing them."

When the jets stopped following the objects, they disappeared, he said.

A Mexican Defense Department spokesman confirmed Tuesday that the videotape was filmed by members of the Mexican Air Force. The spokesman declined to comment further and spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

The video was first aired on national television Monday night then again at a news conference Tuesday by Jaime Maussan, a Mexican investigator who has dedicated the past 10 years to studying UFOs.

"This is historic news," Maussan told reporters. "Hundreds of videos (of UFOs) exist, but none had the backing of the armed forces of any country. ... The armed forces



Unidentified lights appear on a videotape taken by Mexican air force pilots.

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don't perpetuate frauds."

Maussan said Secretary of Defense Gen. Ricardo Vega Garcia gave him the video on April 22.

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THE truth, FBI agent Fox Mulder famously claimed, is 'out there'. The X-Files motto became a creed for the millions who believed in alien visitations, abductions, conspiracies and cover-ups.

But now, it seems, even though the truth may well be 'out there', no one seems to care. The UFO phenomenon, which started nearly 60 years ago, appears to have run its course, with dwindling numbers of people reporting sightings.

Now comes the news that UFO Magazine, one of the most popular publications that carried endless tales of sightings and other close encounters, is to close down.

Two years ago, the British Flying Saucer Bureau — the world's oldest flying saucer club — was shut by its eccentric founder Denis Plunkett, after 49 years. Not only had membership dwindled, so had the number of visitations.

So what has happened to UFOs? Why are we not seeing them any more?

UFOs were born in the technological white heat and paranoia of the Cold War. Fifty years ago, when food was still rationed and half our cities were still, courtesy of the Luftwaffe, rubblestrewn awaiting the planners to do their worst, the skies over these islands were alive with strange lights, cigar-shaped objects and, especially, flying saucers.

The spotting craze had begun on June 24, 1947, when American pilot Kenneth Arnold saw a flock of bat-shaped metallic objects skipping through the air 'like a saucer if you skipped it across the water' over the Cascade Mountains east of Seattle.

He soon became a celebrity, and despite the fact that the objects he described were most definitely not saucer-shaped, the newspaper shorthand 'flying saucer' stuck.

Soon, people all over the world were seeing machines in the sky that matched the description of the original sighting.

Nowhere were they more common than in the skies over Britain. They were spotted performing amazing acrobatics, turning on a sixpence at 2000mph and climbing at speeds no missile could emulate.

It was perhaps not surprising that the new fad took off so quickly in a country that had only recently seen its cities devastated by bizarre flying machines — Hitler's bombers, and later the sinister V1 and V2 rockets that were the prototypes for the spacecraft which later travelled to the Moon.

FLYING saucers in the U.S. burst upon the scene at a time when there was widespread paranoia about the perceived superiority of Soviet technology. Significantly, when the Russians launched the first satellite, Sputnik, in 1957, UFO sightings shot up again.

The Russians saw UFOs too. In the old Soviet Union, reports of alien spacecraft would come flooding in at times of political unrest. During the upheavals of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras, sightings were at an all-time high.

UFOs were seen by people from all walks of life — pilots and soldiers, schoolchildren and pensioners. In the U.S., a young Jimmy Carter even filed a sighting of a mysterious object in the skies of his native Georgia.

Winston Churchill found the whole phenomenon bemusing. 'What does all this stuff about flying saucers amount to?' he asked in a 1951 memo. 'What can it mean?' The Ministry of Defence set up its own 'X-Files' unit to investigate.

For 50 years, the debate raged. On the one side was the hardcore UFO enthusiasts, whose passion for the subject is skin to religious fervour.

These people believed — many still do — that the Earth is being

U-F-O-N-O?

Fewer flying saucer sightings than ever — but that doesn't mean there's nothing 'out there' ...



by **Michael Hanlon**

SCIENCE EDITOR

visited on a regular basis by alien visitors. A key tenet of UFO mythology is that these aliens — often described as rather sinister, grey-skinned humanoids — will pick on individuals and kidnap them, usually with the aim of performing uncomfortable and often obscene medical experiments.

The 'abductee' phenomenon is big in the U.S. Several thousand people are reported to believe that they were taken by aliens, only to have their memories of these events erased. Only by using hypnosis and the tricks of 'recovered memory' is the 'truth' revealed.

On the other side of the debate were those who believed that all UFO sightings were mistakes or — more often than not — hoaxes. So who was right?

It is true that 99 per cent of all UFO sightings are perfectly explicable. Birds, Venus (the brightest of the planets), reflections in car windows, experimental aircraft and weather balloons probably account for the majority of sightings.

As for tales of alien abduction, they are almost certainly the ramblings of the deluded and inadequate. Indeed, the 'alien autopsy' video, released in the 1990s and purporting to show film of a dead alien recovered from a supposed UFO crash at Roswell, New Mexico in 1947, was easily exposed as a crude forgery.

The MoD concluded, after 50 years, that the UFO phenomenon was a myth and so, two years ago, the British X-Files were quietly closed.

One of Britain's most famous UFO sightings — the appearance of a 'spacecraft' over an American military base at Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk, 24 years ago — was last year revealed to be an ingenious hoax, perpetrated by a

bored policeman equipped with flashlights and a loudspeaker.

But can we dismiss every single sighting as an illusion or a case of mistaken identity? Is it really impossible that alien spacecraft or people from another dimension are visiting the Earth?

The answer is no, but one is forced to ask why they would choose to do this — or at least do it in the way the sightings suggest. Travelling across space is very difficult and that's true for even the most advanced alien.

It is hard to see why, having put all this effort in, they would choose to buzz a remote corner of the American Mid-West or Gloucestershire (another UFO hotspot) and show themselves to the sort of people no one was going to believe anyway.

AND THERE is also the fact that humans have a long history of seeing strange things in the skies. But in the old days, it was not flying saucers that people saw. Instead, it was angels or other religious visions.

According to 'Ufologist' and sceptic Andy Smith, flying saucers are just a modern manifestation of a very old phenomenon.

He said: 'The will to believe in UFOs comes from the religious impulse. The prevailing cultural myth is that they are ET — but in the old days they would have been the Virgin Mary.'

Now the Cold War is over, and we no longer believe that we are about to be obliterated by mysterious Soviet technology. Our fears are more mundane — pollution and global warming.

The growth in the popularity of science fiction — which mirrored the rise in the UFO phenomenon — may have also contributed to its decline.

As more people associate space aliens with entertaining fictions such as The X-Files and Star Wars, the less likely they are to take them seriously as fact.

The Unidentified Flying Object will probably go down in history as a unique part of late 20th-century culture. For many, this will be a great shame.

To the diehard true believers, the skies, now empty of flashing lights and strange, cigar-shaped rocketships, will never be quite the same again.

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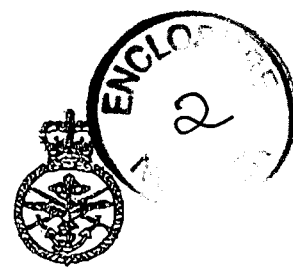
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UFO picture is out of this world



THIS photograph of an apparent UFO was hailed by experts last night as one of the best ever.
The astonishing picture shows a ghostly, disc-like craft hovering over rooftops.
Ufologist Bob Boyd said: "It's one of the five best UFO photographs I've seen in more than 25 years. There's no doubt in my mind it's the real thing."
The image was taken by an anonymous private investigator in the north of England.
Boyd said the photograph was "one of the best ever seen".

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THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Navy to probe 'one of best five UFO pictures ever seen'

AN extraordinary image of a shimmering disc-shaped object above the English coast has been hailed as one the best pictures of a UFO ever taken.

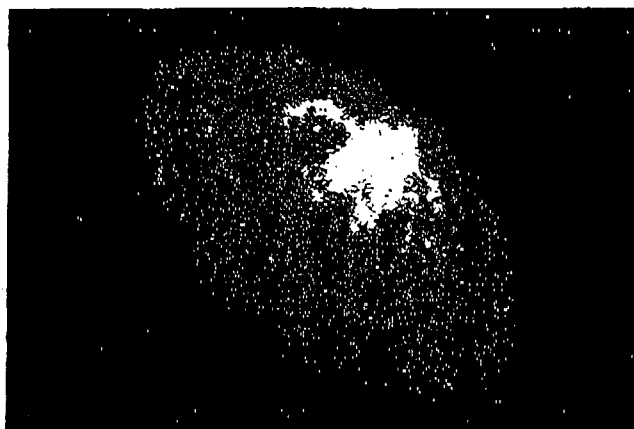
With a pinkish outer rim, golden middle and a light at its centre, there is no explanation for the "flying saucer".

* Photographic experts say the pictures are not faked and a Royal Navy team has launched an investigation.

An un-named dockyard worker captured the image with his new digital camera in Plymouth. And Bob Boyd, chairman of the city's UFO research group, said: "It's one of the five best I've seen. There is no doubt it is the real thing."

There were no other sightings on the night of January 28, but he added: "If 100 people see a UFO, only one will report it."

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PERFECT: Snap of the UFO that has caused such excitement

* D News RAF confirms that someone who worked for the Navy at Plymouth Dockyard, said they had a photo of a UFO and asked if they wanted to see it. They said no but there is no investigation being conducted

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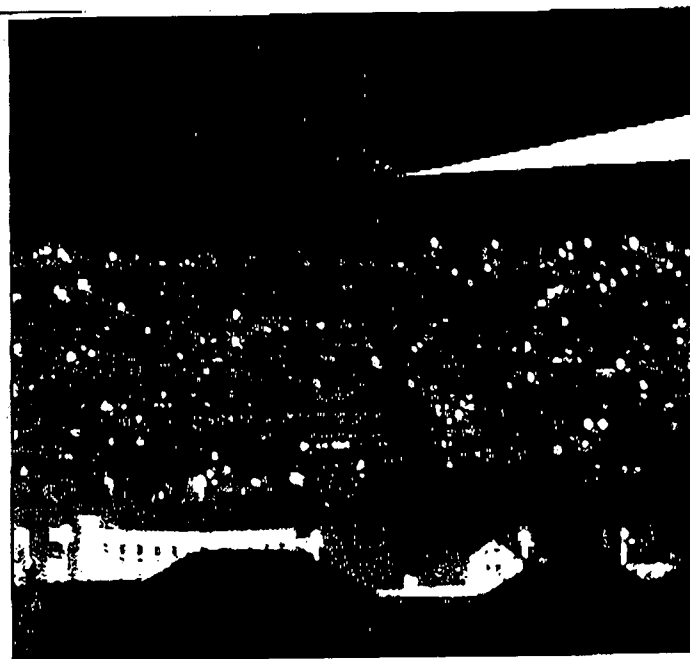
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SIGHTING: The UFO is captured in early evening above the St Budeaux area of Plymouth

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