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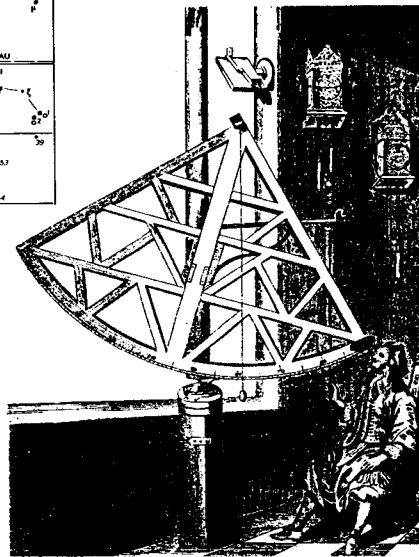
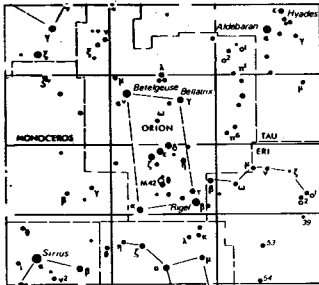
BULLETIN

UFO RESEARCH NEWS AND VIEWS

May 1988

Number 28

IISNN 0265 1947



TWINKLE, TWINKLE
LITTLE STAR.....

Plus second exclusive Whitley Strieber Interview

bufora ————— ●

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1. To encourage, promote and conduct unbiased scientific research of unidentified flying object (UFO) phenomena throughout the United Kingdom.
2. To collect and disseminate evidence and data relating to unidentified flying objects (UFOs).
3. To co-ordinate UFO research throughout the United Kingdom and to co-operate with others engaged in such research throughout the world.

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bufora

British UFO Research Association



Editorial

For some time now, I have watched the subject of ufology change its direction. In fact it is almost a case of *Deja vu*.

In the 1950's, The Extraterrestrial Hypothesis was the only 'credible' theory to account for the many reports of unidentified airborne objects. This of course was fired by the many science fiction films that were being produced at the time: consider 'The Day the Earth Stood Still', which is a classic example. At that time, it was considered that the occupants that dwelled within these mysterious craft, originated from within the solar system.

ASSUMPTIONS

Today, with the advent of space probes and other complex techniques, we are aware that Earth is the only inhabitable planet in the solar system (many flying saucer cult groups may disagree; they have some nice ideas, but are completely wrong). So, we have a situation that the proponents of 1950's ETH had assumptions that were misguided, bought by ignorance, which has wasted many years of walking up the wrong path.

In the early 1980's the subject was almost reborn, with new intelligent and thought provoking ideas concerning the origin of the

UFO. More natural, down to earth ideas were considered, ie meteorological hypotheses like ball lightning (which generated the term Unidentified Atmospheric Phenomena; which has become an accepted concept).

STALE AIR

Persinger's Tectonic Strain Theory and Paul Devereux's Earthlights were also pioneering which blew away the stale air that was still lingering in the subject.

Many other postulations were also placed into the arena, like the connection between close encounter witnesses and the prevalence of ESP, and the correlations between local folklore and UFOs in areas of high sighting reporting.

Most of these hypotheses (including dismissive ones which still have an important place in the subject) have come from researchers in Britain.

Unfortunately, when you look westward to the United States, it is like looking back three decades into the past. Many leading ufologists in the United States are still caught up in a quagmire of little green men, crashed saucers and mythological government secrecy. My fear is that a prevailing wind will dump these old ideas back on our

doorstep and set us back thirty years.

In a recent Editorial, (Nov/Dec 87) Jerome Clark, states that if it were not for the recent upsurge of abduction cases then ufology would be a dead duck. This I cannot agree with. The editor of the International UFO reporter (the house magazine of (CUFOS) should undoubtedly be aware that the subject of ufology stretches much further than the abduction experience. The abduction is part (although an important part) of a multifaceted phenomena which takes on board many scientific disciplines including sociology, psychology and even parapsychology. Are we to just push to one side the photographic cases, trace cases or even Lights in the Sky cases simply because of their unimportance as there was no abduction involved? This is certainly not the correct action to take.

MYOPIC

Taking a simplistic, myopic view of the subject will just place it back into the doldrums.

I have felt for a long time that ufology is so complex and sometimes totally bewildering that it is impossible for a single human mind to perform mental gymnastics with the UFO and discover the ultimate final conclusions. The UFO beast is forever changing form; and has done so throughout history. Every case that is investigated has a hallmark of individuality (very much like a finger print; it has its similarities

with other fingerprints but after close scrutiny, it is ultimately unique) which mirrors the individuality of the psycho-social make-up of the witness that perceived the experience and not forgetting the investigator who will weave his or her persona into the experience.

Now with the resurrection of the ETH and the change of claim that the ETs are not coming from the solar system, but from distant stars within our galaxy, we must expect harder evidence to secure this conclusion than (I have to say it) simply taking the witnesses word for it. The time has come for UFO researchers to be honest with themselves and not follow the path of belief and rumour rather than conclusion born from hard fact.

Now to something completely different...

I was rather amused to read John Rimmers editorial in Magonia 29, where he relates his 'ordeal' of being confronted by a 'Sunday Sport' reporter (that is if you can call anyone writing for this rag a reporter) at the last BUFORA lecture. In his attempt to throw some hilarity on his encounter with the pits of Fleet Street, John Rimmer has put BUFORA in rather a poor light. He stated that the reporter burst his way into the meeting and forced money into the BUFORA cash box, which is not quite true. Prior to the interview we were able to alert John to the presence of the reporter and advised to steer clear of him. This he chose to ignore and of course, faced the consequences.

FEATURE

MIRAGES EXPLAIN UFO REPORTS

by Stuart Campbell

Researcher, Stuart Campbell explains his controversial mirage theory. This paper is a shortened version of the presentation he gave at Congress '87.

This is an attempt to explain UFO reports (sic; 'UFOs' as such do not exist or are not a clearly defined class of objects or phenomena) and some photographs and films of anomalous objects. Genuine UFO reports result from sight of many different objects and phenomena and the UFO problem consists of trying to identify these objects and phenomena. In many cases this is easily done (perhaps too easily done). But some cases present great difficulty. Some people regard these cases as evidence of a genuinely mysterious phenomenon, perhaps alien visitors, perhaps some paranormal activity. I address myself to these difficult cases and claim that they have a simple explanation - they are caused by mirages!

REFRACTION

A mirage is an atmospheric phenomenon caused by the almost total reflection (actually refraction) of light at a boundary between air at different temperatures (a thermocline). In effect the thermocline acts as a mirror and will reflect whatever is in the line of sight at the right angle. Most commonly a mirage is seen on a flat hot surface such as a desert or roadway. This is the inferior mirage. More rarely a thermocline will form in the

air above us when a temperature inversion occurs. The result can be mirage images in the air. These images are often double, with an inverted image above an upright one (see figure 1). This is the superior mirage and it can explain UFO reports. Such superior mirages, apart from being double, can also greatly magnified and highly elevated.

In fact the UFO myth began with mirages; what Kenneth Arnold saw in 1947 were mirages of the peaks of nine mountains in Washington's Cascade Range. They appeared to be moving only because he was moving and they flashed when their light crossed strong thermoclines over two river valleys.

Any bright, low altitude object can be the subject of a mirage, even a lighthouse! Nor does it have to be a terrestrial object; bright astronomical objects can produce mirages and these are the cause of very many reports.

One type of mirage (the Novaya Zemlya effect) occurs over very great distances such that an object below the horizon can be seen on the horizon, enlarged and

distorted. This explains the 1978 New Zealand film which shows a mirage of Venus, then 8° below the horizon.

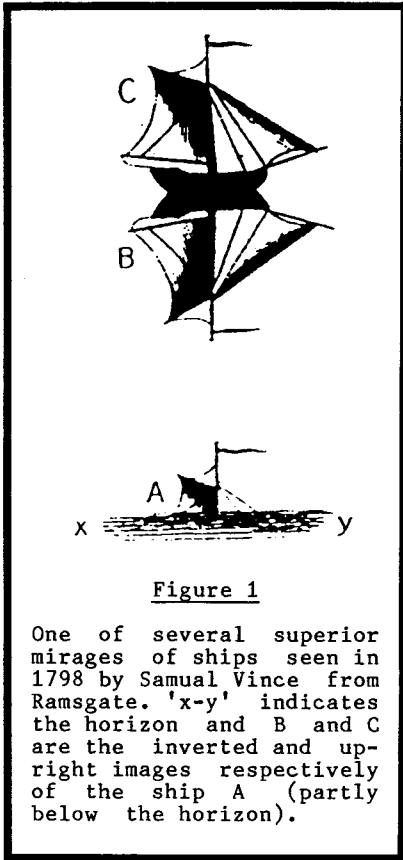


Figure 1

One of several superior mirages of ships seen in 1798 by Samuel Vince from Ramsgate. 'x-y' indicates the horizon and B and C are the inverted and upright images respectively of the ship A (partly below the horizon).

Over shorter distances a mirage of an astronomical object near the horizon can produce two images one above the other varying separation and enlargement as shown in figure 2. Differential refraction can add various colours to the mirage and scintillation can cause flashing. All these go to produce the strange images sometimes reported.

Typical double images have been reported, and even filmed. Both the 1950 Great Falls (Montana) film and the 1952 Tremonton (Utah) film show twin images, possibly of the star Deneb. In both cases the images moved because the thermocline moved or tilted!

All the shapes in figure 2 have been reported at one time or another, sometimes changing from one to another during observation.

SOCORRO

A stellar mirage was the cause of the famous Socorro (New Mexico) incident of 1964. The witness saw a mirage of Canopus, the second brightest star in the sky (although not visible from the UK), then only a few degrees above the southern horizon. The blue and orange colours he noted were caused by differential refraction and the red 'insignia' was the combination of red images sandwiched at the centre of a double image.

The object photographed by RCAF pilot Robert Childerhouse on his record breaking run across Canada in 1956 (see Klass' UFOs - Identified) was a double mirage of the bright star Vega, then only a few degrees above the northern horizon.

The Motunau photograph (BUFORA Journal 10/1, pp 6) seems to show a fragmented mirage of the star Spica, and the painting by a witness from north-east Scotland (BUFORA Journal 9/1, pp 10) seems to

show a mirage of the star Antares (a common culprit). Antares also seems to have been the cause of the mirage photographed in Cumbria in 1977 (BUFORA Journal 6/6, pp 13).

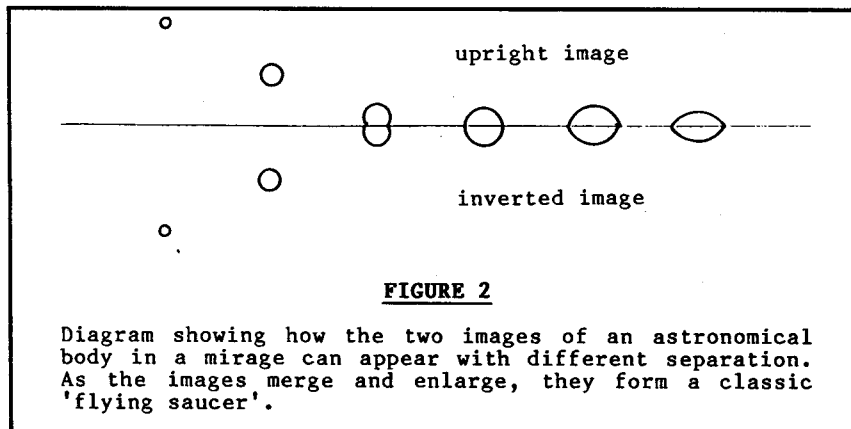
Mirages of planets can also cause UFO reports (as mentioned above) and I have demonstrated how a mirage of Venus can have caused the Livingston incident (JTAP 4/3, pp 80). It can now be shown that the object depicted by Suzanne Quick in her painting which was published in Penthouse (3/2, pp 71) in 1968 was a mirage of Mars; its dominant red colour is evident in the picture.

JUPITER

All the naked-eye planets (with the possible exception of Mercury because it is too close to the sun) can produce mirage effects, not least Jupiter. It was the cause of a mirage photographed at Elsthorpe in New Zealand in 1969 (FSR 15/4, pp 32) in which even Galilean satellites seem to have played a part.

But Jupiter's most sensational appearance, and one that produced the most amazing mirage photographs, was the discoid object seen at Ilha da Trindade (Trinity Island) in the South Atlantic in 1958. Here the typical form of the double/merged mirage was thrown about the sky by a moving thermocline. It threw the image as far as 90° from the direction of Jupiter, then 1° above the western horizon! This displacement was due to the fact that the thermocline was not horizontal; it was probably nearly vertical and curved!

Many other UFO reports can be explained by mirage theory. It can explain the sensational as well as the trivial. It can reach back through time to explain ancient cases such as the reports of airships in late 19th century America. It can explain the 'foo fighters' of the Second World War and the Korean War. It can explain classic cases like the report by the Rev. William Gill in New Guinea who, in 1959, reported seeing



people waving to him from a 'flying saucer' (he appears to have seen a mirage of Sirius). It can even explain features of the Betty and Barney Hill case of 1961; they could have seen a mirage of Antares. The famous Chiles-Whitted report of 1948 seems to have been due to sight of a mirage of the star Aldebaran and the famous Delphos (Kansas) landing report was probably initiated by a mirage of Saturn.

DANGERS

The number of cases to which this hypothesis can be applied is so large that I cannot possibly mention them all (indeed I do not know them all). But I will just mention a few reports by pilots of aircraft, if only because of the dangers involved.

In, 1948 the unfortunate Captain Mantell died chasing a mirage of Jupiter. In 1978, Frederick Valentich, a private pilot, disappeared over Bass Strait (Tasmania) apparently after becoming confused by a mirage of Canopus. Evidently mirages are dangerous if the pilot does not understand what he sees, and reacts in the wrong way. Indeed, some unexplained aircraft losses may be caused by mirages. A recent event over Alaska, where a Japanese pilot tried to shake off what he thought was a pursuing spacecraft, was almost certainly due to sight of a mirage. Back in 1957 the crew of an RB-47 surveillance aircraft chased various aerial lights (besides anomalous radar targets) but the incident began with the sight of a mirage of the star Fomalhaut. The 1973 incident involving a US Army

helicopter at Mansfield (Ohio) was caused by a mirage of the red star Betelgeuse. And so on...

This brings me to the question of reports of experiences inconsistent with mirages, such as perceived heat, radioactivity, ground traces, physiological effects on witnesses, etc. Mirage theory cannot explain these aspects of reports, but they are explicable, due to normal perceptual distortions, false associations and human fear responses (all factors to which insufficient attention is given). When the only instrument involved in a report is a human being, allowance have to be made for the grave defects of the instrument. It is highly suggestible and often grossly inaccurate. It can invent and distort data in a most alarming way. Most importantly, it will output the data it is expected to output (especially under hypnosis). In short, no human being is totally reliable and some are very unreliable. The UFO phenomenon is as much the product of human imagination as it is of unusual stimuli like mirages. But mirages offer an explanation for many unusual accounts and show that some reports are not as imaginative as they first appeared.

CONCLUSION

Mirage theory, especially the astronomical - mirage hypothesis, not only explains protean but consistent form of the objects reported as UFOs but also their worldwide provenance. Reports originate in all parts of the world because stars and planets are

visible from any vantage point and temperature inversions can form anywhere too. Not only that but the theory explains why UFOs are reported to move silently about the sky at great speed and execute 'impossible' manoeuvres, especially sudden stops and reversals. There are no limitations on the speed or manoeuvres of an image!

This powerful theory will explain so many reports and explain them so thoroughly that it can be claimed that the UFO problem is solved! Indeed I do so. Other, more exotic hypotheses are superfluous.

Apologies to Steuart and readers expecting to see the previous article in the last issue of the Bulletin, pressures of space in the last issue was the root cause for its delay. [ed]

A TIBETAN UFO

Manfred Cassirer reporting

What may possibly be the only genuine photographic record of a well defined UFO appeared without warning on National television News on Monday, 7th March.

The news item dealt with the riots during the Butter Festival at the Potala in Lhasa, and was presumably shown on all channels. I myself watched it twice, firstly on Channel 4 at 7pm

and again at 9pm on BBC 1.

While columns of Chinese soldiers were rushing through the streets, monks and worshippers were prostrating themselves in front of the Potala, the camera suddenly zoomed in on a luminous object in the sky. Whatever it was, was clearly delineated and sharply in focus. It seemed to consist of two dome like structures, one above and one below. A still or video recording of the event would be most desirable for further study. Personal enquiries have so far only resulted in two additional reports: one viewer of the news reel reported a rather differently shaped configuration, while the other dismissed it as a possible lens-flare!

RELIGIOUS FERVOUR

The footage was shown without comment, and attracted none in the press and was followed by a sequence of the moon (the festival being held at full moon). The Butter Festival had been repressed for some twenty years, but the Chinese regime, (who are becoming more aware of their less than perfect human rights record) lifted the ban this year. Expressions of extreme religious fervour such as are generated by great emotion could sometimes engender luminosities (mysterious lights etc). Further research is obviously necessary before considering this hypothesis at any greater length.

Neither the Buddhist Society nor the London office of His Holiness the Dalai Lhama had any comment to make. Meanwhile, enquiries continue.

THE STATISTICAL TREATMENT OF UFO REPORTS

by Paul Fuller

Paul Fuller is a professional statistician with a degree in statistics. In the first of a series of articles, Paul discusses the misuse of statistics within Ufology.

Over the past year or so, I have become increasingly concerned with the more widespread use and abuse of statistical techniques by Ufologists to 'prove' or 'disprove' their particular theories regarding UFOs.

Statistics is a special branch of mathematics which allows us to make precise quantitative statements about the real world and its phenomena without examining every item of interest. Unfortunately, the application of statistical theory is as much an art as a science, its use depends upon a whole range of factors and assumptions which may not always be clear when we summarise UFO reports and draw conclusions from them. For this reason, I feel I must draw attention to some of the problems Ufologists face in the use of statistics and to possible solutions to these problems.

1. SAMPLING

The first problem I wish to discuss is perhaps the most important. When we use statistics to make claims about UFO reports we are in fact obtaining a **sample** of UFO reports from a much larger **population** of all possible UFO reports. Apart from the definitional problem of what

actually constitutes a UFO report, this fact is very important because Ufologists often forget that this is what they are doing and they make a critical error by pretending that it doesn't matter. I have news for you, it does!

When we obtain a sample of UFO reports, we in fact are making a very big assumption about our sample which will ensure that the statements we make about our sample will apply equally well to the population of UFO reports. This assumption is that our sample is a **representative** or **unbiased** sample of the **population** of UFO reports.

GENERAL ELECTION

To draw an analogy, let us imagine that a General Election was called tomorrow and I wanted to know which party was most likely to win. Now it would be no use at all if I were to travel to Finchley, in North London and ask the first 100 people I met who they intended voting for. The chances are that a very high proportion of my sample would express their preference to vote for the Conservatives, because Finchley is the Prime Minister's constituency.

In this example, my sample would be very useful for predicting the outcome of the election in Finchley, but it would be almost totally useless for predicting the outcome of voting behaviour across the entire country. To achieve this more difficult task, I would have to visit a REPRESENTATIVE sample of constituencies throughout the country, taking care that I did not visit a high proportion of constituencies that were considered 'safe seats'.

This concept of choosing a representative sample of UFO reports (from which we could infer characteristics of UFO reports in general) underlines all the statistical tests we would wish to carry out on our sample. This thus extends beyond the simple question of whether or not people living in one part of the country are more likely to report UFOs than people living in other parts of the country (which is a very important question); it extends across every variable or parameter we might wish to collect about these reports are subject to all kinds of subjective and subtle influences which might effect the quality of data or even the very act of reporting the sighting.

BIAS

For these reasons, ufologists need to be extremely careful in the future about making statements about the population of UFO reports from the (biased) samples we have been collecting. In my view, there has not been a single database of UFO reports which did not contravene this basic premise

for the statistical analysis of UFO reports. Let me take an example...

During 1953 the US Air Force secretly contracted the prestigious Battelle Memorial Institute to statistically evaluate the first five years worth of UFO reports made to the USAF. The team used a rigorous method of evaluating the 2199 cases in which the Air Force had obtained sufficient data to allow such an analysis, drawing upon specialists unconnected with Battelle where necessary, in an attempt to find rational explanations for the individual reports. The team then compared parameter by parameter, the KNOWN UFO reports (ie, reports which could be explained as misidentifications) with the UNKNOWNs. The result 'proved' that the unknowns differed from the knowns to a very high level of significance.

There are several reasons why I criticise the outcome of the study (of more later) but the most important question must be whether or not the team's sample constituted a representative or unbiased sample of UFO reports. Consider the number of factors which would have influenced whether or not an individual sighting would have been reported to the USAF and whether or not a proper investigation would have been instituted by the military authorities (given that 'officially' UFOs didn't exist). ie:-

(1). The Majority of military bases would not have been located in dense, urban areas therefore, urban witnesses to

UFO events would have been less likely to live close to a base and consequently less likely to report their sightings than rural witnesses;

(2). The act of reporting a sighting to the military depends entirely upon the knowledge of the existence of a base, thus witnesses living close to well known, publicity conscious bases would have been more likely to report their sightings than witnesses living close to top secret bases (remember, this was the era of the Cold War, many bases would have been dominated by a belief that World War III could break out at any moment).

(3). Even if there was uniform geographical reporting (which I greatly doubt) we still cannot be certain that every report submitted would have been investigated and recorded in a uniform manner. I think it was J. Allen Hynek who once said that throughout his many years of consultancy with Project Blue Book, the act of passing on a report to Blue Book depended almost entirely upon the whim of the intelligence officer concerned (and we can be sure that this situation was worse prior to the commencement of Blue Book in 1952).

RANDOM SAMPLING

For these reasons (and several more I could add), no statistician would feel confident that the Battelle results could be more widely applied to the population of UFO reports. A better (but not fool-proof) method of sampling would have been to ensure that American citizens all had an equal chance of reporting

sightings to military authorities, for example by widely publicising a highly accessible method of reporting (eg to the police). This method would meet the statistician's definition of an unbiased sample and the study could then have examined a sample of those reports by using a suitable method of random sampling.

Unfortunately, the same criticism could be aimed at Allan Hendry's otherwise invaluable contribution to Ufology (1) because we cannot be sure that every witness to a UFO event during the study period would have had an equal chance of making a report. The truth is that unless we can be reasonably certain that witnesses throughout the US were equally aware of the CUFOS "hot-line" (which Hendry fully admits they did not), then the sampling cannot be uniform and consequently all his statistical results need to be treated with a great deal of caution.

CONCLUSION

The question of sampling is clearly important to Ufologists because it underlies all the statistical tests and hypotheses we might wish to carry out on our (inadequate) samples. Consider for example the often-made claim that UFO reports are negatively correlated with population density. Currently BUFORA has approximately two dozen investigators throughout the country. Only one covers Scotland, there are no investigators in central or north Wales and no investigators in the south-west peninsular. Witnesses living in these areas are

simply too far away from existing investigators for their reports to be adequately investigated (and thus qualify for proper statistical analysis). Thus any database of British UFO reports cannot currently be used to test the claim of an inverse relationship with population density because there are large gaps in our nationwide coverage and as a result the reporting mechanism cannot be representative of the population of UFO reports.

To carry out statistical tests on samples of UFO reports, Ufologists need to pay more attention to the factors which affect the reporting mechanism and the inherent bias in all current methods of collecting reports.

REFERENCE

(1). The UFO handbook, Hendry, A. (1980) Sphere.

BUFORA RESEARCH

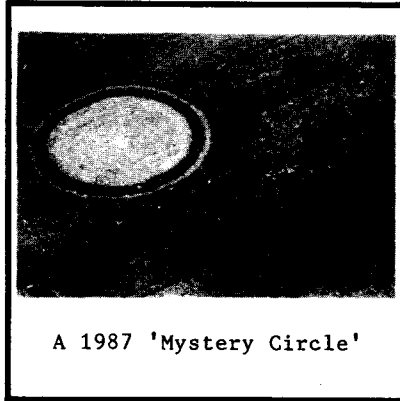
NEWS

A detailed, 42 page report commissioned by both BUFORA and the Tornado and Storm Research Organisation and written by Paul Fuller has recently been completed.

This in depth report, details the results of nearly two years research of 'Mystery Circles', unexplained geometrically shaped crop damage that has occurred across Southern England since 1980.

The major part of the report

is the statistical results of a questionnaire sent to nearly 300 cereal farmers. The questionnaire asked carefully designed questions concerning geometric crop damage and the farmers views of 'Mystery Circles'. Statistics of the type of cereal farming and their density in the south of England was also gathered to ascertain the probability of natural phenomena being the cause of the damage.



There is no plans as yet to publish this paper in large quantities. But a limited edition has been printed for academic consumption.

This kind of unbiased, in depth research is vitally important if we seriously wish to solve the UFO enigma. And it is a credit to BUFORA to have had the ability to harness the co-operation of a professional scientific organisation such as TORRO.

Paul Fuller will undoubtedly review his findings in these pages (or JTAP) in the near future.

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MEMBERS NOTICE

Is there anyone with an open mind, interested in starting a UFO investigation network for the **West Country**. If so please contact: Robert Moore, 83 Church Road, East Huntspill, Highbridge, Somerset, TA9 3NG.

Also, can a Mr Gordon Wood and Mr John Walker please contact me at the above address as they have expressed an interest in the forming of such a local group.

ASTRONOMICAL UFOS

by Ian Ridpath

Ian is a science/space writer and has penned several books on the subject. He is also a member of CSICOP and thus holds highly sceptical views concerning the subject of UFOs. In this paper, Ian points out the many ways that witnesses, including trained observers can misidentify prosaic astronomical bodies.

Of all the many causes of mistaken UFO reports, by far the main offenders are astronomical objects. In a classic analysis of 1,300 UFO reports made to the Centre for UFO Studies in the United States, and published by Allan Hendry in the 'UFO Handbook' (sphere), just over half of all identified nocturnal lights were accounted for by the causes I shall discuss in this article: stars, planets, satellite re-entries (for this purpose I categorize satellites as astronomical objects).

What's more, astronomical objects also feature prominently among the identified daylight discs, radar-visuals and close encounters of the first, second, and third kinds. In short, an astronomical solution should always be uppermost in a UFO investigator's mind. It follows that basic astronomical knowledge is necessary for any would-be ufologist. Good sources for checking the location of objects in the sky are the 'Handbook of the British Astronomical Association' or the 'Yearbook of Astronomy', either of which should be available in your local reference library.

LIGHTS IN THE SKY

Why should simple lights in the sky produce such confusion? The sad truth is that most people are totally unfamiliar with the sky. Highly credible witnesses such as teachers, policemen and pilots (yes, and astronomers) can still be surprised by the unexpected appearance of a bright star, planet, meteor or satellite.

Usually, a description such as "it seemed to hover for an hour" is diagnostic of a star or planet (people often get fed up watching after about an hour, or the object sets). Often there are other descriptions such as flashing coloured lights" or "it appeared to be rotating" which are good descriptions of the way stars appear - look at Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, twinkling low in the south on a frosty winter's night and you'll see what I mean. Binoculars do not always help identification, for optical defects in cheap binoculars often produce spurious shapes and colours in astronomical objects.

Additional information such as "it wasn't there before" or "it appeared to move slowly"

or" it dodged around" are still consistent with characteristics of stars and planets. Many people do not realise that the sky changes in appearance during the year, or that planets come and go with greater rapidity than stars. Neither do some of the witnesses consider the fact that the rotation of the Earth makes objects in the sky seem to move slowly during the night.

Another, more subtle phenomenon is known technically as the autokinetic effect. In simple terms, natural movements of the eye make a stationary object appear to move irregularly, sometimes zooming up and down or swinging from side to side like a falling leaf. Autokinetic motion can be particularly uncanny when watching satellites, which often appear to zig-zag or even make deviations around stars in their path (see figure 1).

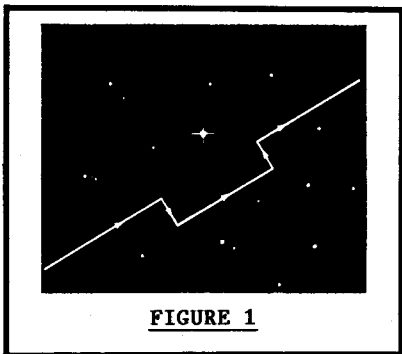


FIGURE 1

REFERENCE POINTS

A large part of the problem is that there are no reference points in the sky to give accurate guides to distance, height, size, speed or direction of travel.

Unfortunately, this means that much of what witnesses report is of little value. And the witnesses' own circumstances can further degrade the accuracy of their report. That is why all observations made from a moving vehicle are suspect, particularly those from an aircraft where there is no fixed frame of reference whatsoever. It is impossible to judge distances of lights in the sky. A planet millions of miles away, an aircraft several thousand feet away, or a torch bulb a few dozen yards away all appear much the same size and brightness at night. The examples in this article show the tendency of witnesses to grossly underestimate the distance of astronomical objects.

Let's start by looking at some instructive examples involving the planet Venus, the biggest UFO culprit of all. Venus at its brightest can be quite startling, brighter than aircraft landing lights and certainly brighter than any other planet or star. It is so bright that it dazzles the eye, sometimes appearing cross-shaped (remember the famous "fiery cross" observed by West Country policemen some years ago?). Venus always appears close to the Sun, either as the evening "star" setting in the southwest after sunset, or as the morning "star" rising in the southeast before sunrise.

A UFO PHOTOGRAPH, AND A FAMOUS

WITNESS

My first example concerns a "very bright stationary light...in view for about an hour" in the SSE at 6 a.m. on

November 24, 1967, seen from St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex. The light was photographed by Robert Burke and his father James, who was a news photographer and WWII bomber pilot. Enlargements of the photograph were published in Flying Saucer Review vol. 14 no. 2 (1968) with accompanying text by Professor Charles Gibbs-Smith, a respected aviation historian. Gibbs-Smith was so impressed that fifteen years later he was still displaying these photographs as evidence for UFO's. The pictures seem to show camera-shake of a point source, which is what one would expect of a time exposure of Venus. I was surprised to find that Gibbs-Smith had never checked the position of Venus at the time of the sighting. Had he done so, he would have found that Venus was a brilliant object in the dawn sky at that time.

The witness at ST. Leonards-on-Sea described the object as alternately becoming intense, then fading to a pin-point. Keep this behaviour in mind when considering the following report, made by a former American Naval Officer trained in celestial navigation and nuclear physics. The witness reported that he and 10 other people in the town of Leary, Georgia, in 1969 watched a brilliant UFO low on the horizon which appeared to move towards them and away again, while changing in brightness, size and colour. He estimated the distance as between 300 ft and 1000 ft, and said that at times it became almost as big and bright as the full moon.

This case has been thoroughly investigated by Robert Sheaffer, who describes

it in his book 'The UFO Verdict'. For a start, Sheaffer found that the witness was nine months out in his recollection of the date - the report was not filed until four years after the date. Of the 10 claimed witnesses, Sheaffer could find only one who even remembered the incident, and he thought the object might have been a balloon. But with the correct date established, Sheaffer found out that the witnesses had been looking straight at brilliant Venus. This case is significant because of the identity of the main witness: Jimmy Carter, later to become President of the United States. Note that there are many errors in his report which witnesses typically make: the size and brightness is overestimated, the distance is underestimated, and the spurious motion is attributed to the object.

ASTRONOMICAL

"CLOSE ENCOUNTERS"

In the UFO Handbook, Allan Hendry describes an apparent close encounter of the third kind stimulated by the planet Venus. A woman reported that a very bright object in the southwest had made a slow, jerky descent over a period of an hour, one evening. She became convinced as she stared at it, that she could see occupants with rounded silvery heads looking out of the object's windows. The UFO turned up again on subsequent nights, exactly where Venus should be.

This report of apparent occupants is reminiscent of that made by Betty and Barney Hill concerning the famous UFO which chased them. From Betty

Hill's own sketch, Robert Sheaffer has identified the UFO as Jupiter, which is second only to Venus in brightness. The apparent 'chasing' is another familiar phenomenon of astronomical objects, which appear to keep pace with moving cars. Sheaffer describes an hilarious 100 mph police chase of Venus through Ohio and Pennsylvania in 1966. They never caught it, but they did inspire a scene in the movie Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

SICK

Another example of a 'close encounter' with Venus concerns a Spanish family driving home one evening. They reported that they were chased by a bright light which descended to a height of 7 or 8 metres above their car, extended landing gear and caused one of their children to be violently sick. Venus at that time was a brilliant object in the evening sky, but the investigators of this case, one of whom was an American professor of physics, Willy Smith, rejected Venus as an explanation because the celestial body set around 9.30 pm GMT, whereas the Spanish UFO was visible until 10.30 pm. They therefore regarded this as a true close encounter with a mystery craft. However, Spain keeps time one hour ahead of GMT, which means that the visibility of the UFO matches Venus exactly [as far as I can ascertain, Spain is not one hour in front of GMT except during differences in BST or light saving time Ed]. The child's stomach upset is explained by a combination of fear and travel sickness on the winding road. Hence even

a case endorsed by a professor of physics can have a simple astronomical explanation.

It is understandable that people can misidentify bright planets and stars - but surely not the moon? Nevertheless, it happens. Allan Hendry describes a case in which three witnesses observed a saucer "25 ft in diameter" accompanied by two pulsating lights which hovered over a hospital car park for nearly an hour, dimming the car park lights as though draining power from them. A humming noise was heard which changed to a loud beeping before the saucer shot straight up into the sky. A parakeet owned by one of the witnesses screeched and her dogs barked. The woman felt as though she was in a trance and could hardly speak or move.

This has all the hallmarks of a classic UFO case: electromagnetic effects, animal reactions, and physical effects on the witnesses. However, Hendry determined that the witnesses were looking at the crescent moon (the "saucer") with Mars and Jupiter next to it (the "pulsating lights"). The dimming of the car park lights was caused by intermittent mist which eventually obscured the Moon and planets. The rest of the report is a marvellous product of human imagination. Faced with cases like this, one wonders how far it is possible to credit any UFO report.

METEORS AS UFO'S

Meteors, popularly known as shooting stars, are less easy to identify after the event.

A meteor appears as a sudden streak of light that typically lasts for no more than a second, though some leave trails that may endure for several seconds. Humans are as bad at estimating time as they are estimating brightness and distance, and reports often exaggerate the time for which a meteor was seen.

Bright meteors outshine the stars, and some flare up at the end of their path or even fragment into several pieces. A few meteors will be visible randomly on any clear night, but there are also regular showers when the frequency goes up to a few dozen per hour. The most abundant shower of bright meteors is the Perseids, seen in mid-August, but there are at least eight other important showers in the year, so there is something going on in most months.



Not all meteors appear to fall downwards; in fact, they can move horizontally, overhead, or even (apparently) upwards. Their paths can appear straight or curved, they can sweep across the entire sky, they can appear in any part of the sky, and they can be any colour. Meteors are caused by tiny particles about the size of grains of sand burning up high in the atmosphere, but occasionally a much larger lump of debris enters the atmosphere. The bigger a particle is, the longer it takes to burn up and the brighter it can become. The terms bolide or fireball are used for such brilliant meteors, which can appear as bright as the moon and be visible for ten seconds or more, sometimes in daylight. Consequently even people normally familiar with meteors can be fooled.

Here is an example quoted by Phillip Klass in his book 'UFOs Explained'. Pilots aboard a commercial jet flying at 39,000 ft over the United States in 1969 were reportedly buzzed at a distance of 300 ft by a formation of four objects emitting a blue-green flame. This was in daylight, not at night. A military jet flying some miles behind the airliner reported a squadron of UFOs approaching that suddenly started to climb as if to avoid collision. At the same time as this UFO "encounter", a brilliant daylight fireball broke up into several flaming pieces over the United States, and there seems little doubt that this is what the pilots saw, despite the fact that it was actually over 100 miles away from them. So we see that experienced pilots can make major errors of identification and distance.

This doesn't make them bad airmen, just human.

ARTIFICIAL SATELLITES

Despite the fact that first artificial Earth satellite, Sputnik I, was launched 30 years ago, many people are still surprised to find that orbiting satellites 100 miles or so high can be seen from the ground with the naked eye. Satellites are unlike other UFOs in that they really are spaceships - our own. They look like stars slowly moving, taking several minutes to cross the sky. Most satellites move from west to east, but some are in polar orbits and will be seen moving from north to south or vice versa. Some satellites appear to flash as they rotate; others may fade and disappear as they enter eclipse in the Earth's shadow, a behaviour that could be interpreted as "vanishing rapidly upwards" because the fading object might appear to be moving away.

I have mentioned the apparent zig-zagging of satellites due to effects of the eye. Arthur C. Clarke, in his book 'The View from Serendip', describes an unexpected sighting of the Echo satellite which appeared to stop and hover overhead before resuming its onward path. The reasons, he points out, were that he and Stanley Kubrick, who was also watching, were too excited to observe calmly; it is almost impossible to assess the motion of something overhead; and moonlight had swamped the background stars against which the motion could be judged. Echo, a particularly brilliant satellite, has now gone from

orbit, but the Space Shuttle will appear brightly in our skies on its various missions, doubtless sparking off UFO reports.

Finally satellite re-entries. With thousands of pieces junk up there in orbit, re-entries are becoming increasingly common. In appearance they are similar to fireballs, but can be brighter, longer-lasting and slower moving. As a man-made object burns up it usually fragments into numerous pieces, giving the impression of a cigar-shaped UFO with portholes. For instance, when the Soviet Zond 4 spacecraft burned up over the United States in 1968 a woman in Tennessee described it as a cigar-shaped craft made of metal sheets riveted together, with a row of square windows illuminated from within. A woman science teacher in Ohio, watching the same event, reported three saucer-shaped UFOs flying in formation. She flashed a torch at the saucers but they didn't flash back. During the incident her dog lay down and whimpered. This woman had a PhD and served in the Navy during WWII - not the sort of person one would consider given to fantasizing. (Incidentally, it was later established that the dog was whimpering because of the sub-zero temperatures, not because of the UFO).

Predictions of satellite passages and re-entries are handled by a department at the University of Aston (phone 021-359 3611) and there is also a satellite tracking unit at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, Herstmonceux, Sussex. (phone 0323 833171).
continued on page 25

FEATURE

SCOTTISH UFOS, REVISITED

by Malcolm Robinson

Malcolm continues his in depth review of Scottish cases.

The following account is as yet unexplained and occurred in April 1982. Only the names of the witnesses have been changed to protect their identity.

It was midnight, Monday 26th April, when Mrs Alison Clarke mentioned to her husband that she saw what she thought was a shooting star. Out of curiosity, Mr John Clarke decided to have a look.

Looking out of the fully glazed patio door, he observed what he thought was a fireball. Mr Clarke's house is in the village of Shieldhill near Falkirk, and is situated whereby it gives one a full uninterrupted panoramic view of the Forth Valley. At this point the object was stationary. Deciding that this was somewhat unusual, he went to fetch a pair of binoculars (16x50), hoping that this would enable him to view the object more clearly. Through these he observed that the object was indeed stationary, and not moving away from him at an angle. The object remained in this position for roughly 8 minutes. It was during the last 2 minutes however, that there appeared to be a distinct change in the appearance of the object.

As Mr Clarke explained, "Over the last two minutes there appeared to be some movement within itself, with

an appendage appearing to rise from the main body without becoming detached, or appearing to reduce the size of the primary object."

TRANSPARENT

The appendage Mr Clarke is talking about appeared from the the end of the oval shaped object, and rose horizontally to vertically, and was no larger than the primary object itself. Mr Clarke then went on to say that the object did not appear solid, apart from a definite line at the bottom right hand edge. Nor did the object appear patchy or transparent, rather it seemed hazy. He estimated that the approximate viewing position of the object would be four to five miles distant from his viewing point, which would mean that it had been between Larbert and Torwood.

Another surprising factor was the objects disappearance. The object seemed to reduce in size over a few seconds until it could no longer be seen. This may suggest to some people that it could have been a cloud. Perhaps so, but we must remember and consider that Mr Clarke, who is fortunate enough to have this splendid view, is well used to looking out of his window at all times of the day and night, and in all kinds of weather. He has never

witnessed anything like this before.

ALARMED

Again, in this next incident, we respected the witnesses wish to remain anonymous, and shall therefore call her Miss Linda Taylor of Denny. It was a cold morning near the end of October 1980, and at roughly 6.30 Miss Taylor was leaving home to catch the mini-bus to work. Whilst walking along a path her attention was drawn to what she describes as, "a red vivid glow of light". Slightly puzzled by this, and getting a little alarmed, she noticed that this red light appeared to be above one of the houses farther along the road. The object itself appeared to be egg-shaped and at an angle where it appeared to be on end. Unfortunately for Miss Taylor there was no one else about at this time of the morning to also witness this experience. However, continuing her observation she noticed that the object also appeared to have a white band of light through its centre. She estimated that she watched the object for roughly ten minutes whilst it was stationary above the roof-top of this house. Suddenly the object lifted straight into the sky, and travelling at a fair speed, was out of sight in a matter of minutes.

Gathering her senses, Linda could find no logical explanation to explain what she had seen. It was a dark morning with stars visible. One may suggest that it could have been a bright planet, but Miss Taylor as we recall, claims that after the object had remained stationary for a while, it lifted straight up

into the sky and was gone in a matter of minutes. This does not sound to me to have the characteristics or motions of a planet.

The following incident was one in which the sighting lasted only a few seconds, but it was in that time, the witnesses claim, that they had never seen anything so strange and peculiar as on that day in question.

Returning from a social call some time in February 1982, John Walls, his wife and young son were travelling in their car from Falkirk to Denny. Just outside Denny they approached a double bend in the road and subsequently slowed down. It was at this point that John and his wife Ann viewed what they described as, "a very bright orange spherical light". This light was stationary above a bank of trees on their right hand side. It was the intense brightness of the light that initially captured their attention. In fact Ann likened the brightness to that of a belisha beacon. The light appeared very bright at its centre with distinct hazy edges. They both estimated that the light was in the region of about half a mile away.

At this point John remembered that there was a lay-by farther on up the road, and so decided that he would stop the car there and see if he could obtain a better view. Unfortunately, however, when they reached this point the light was nowhere to be seen. The conditions for this sighting were scattered cloud with slight breeze. Mr Walls reckons that the intense orange light was only viewed for more than seven seconds.

Not a startling account by any means, but one which at least was very puzzling to the Walls family.

The next account appears slightly different from the previous case, to the effect that the object, or whatever, was considerably smaller. It could pose a different possibility altogether; that it may in fact have been 'Ball Lightning.'

Mr Terence Dempsey aged 30 of Godfrey Avenue, Denny, was taking his dog for a walk in the early hours of a Saturday morning in late August 1981. After a while he decided to take a rest at a local spot known as 'Sandy Hill'. As he lit a cigarette, he noticed to his left a round white light, approximately 20 feet above the ground. This light was sharply defined and was moving very slowly.

Mr Dempsey estimates that the distance between himself and the light was in the range of 500 to 700 yards. It continued to move away very slowly until suddenly it stopped and hovered for roughly 30 seconds. It then proceeded to move further away in a southerly direction. Mr Dempsey estimates the duration of the sighting to be about 3 minutes, and can offer no explanation as to the nature of the phenomenon. The witness also mentioned that there was no noise to be heard in association with this light, and the conditions at the time of the sighting were fairly good, with a clear sky and virtually no wind.

It has been shown in other cases similar to this one, that doesn't necessarily have to be a stormy day for ball lightning to appear. Ball

lightning has appeared in all types of weather conditions. Of course, another possibility which may be able to answer this particular incident, would be 'The Earth Light Hypothesis' postulated by Paul Devereux. Basically what this implies is that UFO reports, being mostly luminous in nature, are caused by strain within the earth at regions of geological fault. Stress within the rocks can cause these balls of light to manifest. This would consist of a plasma of hot ionised gases, and because of their electrical charge, they would move erratically about the landscape. The movement of rock strata interacting with rock crystals is a basic factor of this hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS

This hypothesis is gaining more credence as studies of this effect are conducted. However, there is a strange footnote to Mr Dempsey's sighting. About 2 minutes after this ball shaped light was lost to view, a small light plane flew over the area. This in turn was followed by a helicopter, both appeared to be searching in and around the locality to where this small ball of light was light seen. After a matter of minutes, they both flew off in a different direction. This may of course have been pure coincidence, but all this added more confusion to an already peculiar situation.

My main witness from the town of Denny, was Mrs Elsie Beveridge, a lady who claimed many sightings of UFO's, a person in UFOlogy terms known as a 'repeater witness'. It would prove tedious to give

all of Elsie's observations in print, suffice to say I shall inform the reader of some of the more interesting ones.

Elsie's first UFO sighting was not in Denny but in Glasgow back in 1979, while she was waiting for a bus. Casually gazing up in to the sky, she says that she saw what she first thought was a plane, until she observed it come closer where she saw that it was in fact a dome-shaped object moving at an angle. She also observed at this point that the object was moving up and down, and then quickly shot up into the sky and was gone in a matter of seconds.

It wasn't until 1978, when Elsie moved to Denny, that she began to witness an abundance of strange aerial phenomena. Many were of the LITS kind, but as Elsie says "There were a good few that were more spectacular." One of the spectacular ones she claims, hovered over her house in 1978. Herself and her daughter observed a yellow beam of light coming down from the sky and almost touching her roof. At this point she could not identify any object that could be causing the beam of light, however, continuing her observation, she noticed that the yellow light was swaying backwards and forwards. Then suddenly this light turned slowly to the right and gradually moved away. She discerned in the darkness an outline of an object, as it picked up speed and moved away into the sky. She informed me that her young daughter was very scared by this episode.

Elsie has observed balls of fluorescent light which she claims just "sit and glow up

in the sky". These are not planets or bright stars she maintains. Back in 1982 she was quite startled by the size of an object which flew over a dam not far from her home. She mentioned that it was the size of a Lancaster Bomber. She explains: "It appeared heavy, it was the way it carried itself. It was straight in appearance, with three enormous lights on it. There was a young girl with me who delivers our milk, she also saw the object. I said to her, 'Wait, we are sure to hear something.', but there were no sounds coming from it. It wasn't an aeroplane. I knew it must be a UFO. Then all of a sudden it began to change into a big sort of triangle. I actually phoned a man down the road to come out and see it, actually he went up to his bedroom and saw a lot of lights and the grass all around was lit up."

I again asked Elsie during my interview with her, "Are you sure that this wasn't an aeroplane or a helicopter?" She replied, "Oh it wasn't an aeroplane, it was so big and beautiful. When the triangle showed it was like the illuminations; and the young milk girl got an awful fright, she just ran for her life and said that she wasn't coming back."

Elsie claims to have witnessed ten objects in formation in the sky above the town of Denny. She explained, "Surely if these were ten aircraft in the sky I would have heard some kind of noise, but I did not." Elsie claims to have witnessed 12 balls of light in a circle back in 1979, even one which was above a neighbours house for over an hour!

I asked Elsie has she ever tried to draw attention to other people in regards to these objects. She replied, "Yes. Apart from my family and the young milk girl, I have asked my next door neighbour and the man down the street." On one occasion, Elsie explained, she had even 'phoned the police. A policeman came up to her house and when she explained to him what she had seen and that the object had come down toward the dam area, the policeman was seemingly reluctant to go and pay a visit!

MANIFESTATION

During my investigation of Elsie Beveridge's claims, I continually asked her, "Are you sure these objects that you have been observing can not be aircraft or helicopters?" She replied, "Look, I've been showing my daughter how to tell the difference between a plane and a UFO. We were watching this plane one night and I was explaining to her the difference between this plane and a UFO, when all of a sudden this light started to manifest out from a bundle of stars and started to follow the tail end of the plane. And it followed the plane right across the sky. We saw all this from my front door. I mean this light was just sitting up in the sky when this plane came along and this light and this light came out between some stars and started to follow the plane." I asked Elsie if she thought that this light could have been a satellite. She replied that she was aware of

satellite's and their movements, and this was not one of them.

Apart from contacting the police, Mrs Beveridge has also been in touch with the newspapers and Airforce to try and get someone to believe her. Apart from the police no-one paid any attention she claims. Mrs Beveridge has also experienced strange phenomena in her home. She has heard footsteps coming down the stairs and no-one was seen. She has also heard strange noises coming from various parts of her home and could not account for these.

It was in 1984 that Elsie's husband's health started to deteriorate and she gave all her time to looking after him. Indeed, so much was the case that she informed me over the 'phone that she was giving up UFO spotting to take care of her sick husband, and that I would be best to leave it for a while. This I accepted and abided by. I got in touch with Elsie after a period of time and found that she had still given up on UFO spotting, but would be in contact if there were any further developments.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, Scotland has it's fair share of UFO sightings over the years. The incidents included in this article are but a few from my own files, there are many more I could mention! There are many other cases from other researches in Scotland that may be seen in future editions of the Bulletin (namely Billy Gibbons, Ray Simpson, Tab O'Neil, Arthur Lynch etc). UFO's are real, there is no question about it. But it is what they are or represent

that is the question. One day this answer may become apparent. Until that day we can only continue research and hope that this will shed some new light on this age old phenomena. Here's hoping anyway.

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- (3) Exploring The Supernatural
- (4) Livingstone, A New Hypothesis. S. Campbell
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continued from page 19

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that even trained observers can grossly misidentify astronomical objects, and there is certainly a wide variety of objects to choose from. One final tip for UFO investigators: make contact with your local astronomical society. Amateur astronomers spend more time watching the sky than anyone (including professional astronomers!) and if anything interesting is going on they're likely to know about it.

Readers responses to Ian's article are invited. [Ed]

Letter

Dear Sir,

In my latest article 'Are UFOs Basic or Incidental?' I state that, "Alleged radiation effects are explicable psychologically as psychosomatic." This (unsubstantiated) idea is not new; John Rimmer, eg, in 'Phenomenon' (pp 165) says of radiation burns that they, "Also resemble the sort of symptoms that can be brought about by certain nervous conditions."

It is true that some psychologists analogously have not difficulty in "explaining" typical haunting incidents (of an objective paranormal type) by reference to delusion, hysteria and hallucination, as if pathology could account for one's house catching fire or being periodically flooded without any ascertainable cause.

Having meanwhile, consulted specialised psychiatric authorities as to whether radiation symptoms are ever psychogenetically induced, and having been told that the only such case refers to a CE, I now wish to withdraw my uninformed suggestion in the article

Unfortunately, there were two misprints in the article that may cause confusion: para 5 line 9 should read, "the sightings which we are" and in para 9 line 2 "psi-conductive" should be "psi-conducive".

from Manfred Cassierer
London

Thanks for your correction and I apologise for not doing mine! [Ed]

COMMUNION TWO

SECOND EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

by Mike Wootten

Since the publication of the book 'Communion', UFO researchers have believed without question, sat on the fence or criticised totally, the close encounter claims of Whitley Strieber.

However, whatever may be said about his alleged abductions, no one can deny the fact that Strieber has continued to search for cohesive answers to his experiences. Since his first encounter with the 'Visitors' in December 1985, he has been analysed or counselled by psychologists, physiologists, priests and ufologists, all being the best in their fields of practice. But until now, no real concrete conclusions have become apparent.

UNPUBLISHED

After a very recent, exclusive trans-atlantic telephone interview, with Whitley Strieber, I am able to disclose previously unpublished developments. If these developments are indeed accurate, they may prove to be indisputable physical evidence that the 'Visitors' do "exist".

Over the past few months, Strieber has undergone highly complex neurological examinations at the pioneering New York University Hospital. The most recent examination was conducted on the 18th March 1988, where the very latest Magnetic Resolution

Scanner was used to produce detailed, three dimensional images of his brain.



Whitley Strieber

The Magnetic Resolution Scanner's computer can generate sectional cut-away views of the organ that is the subject of the examination. Therefore, any abnormalities can be detected with ease.

FRUITFUL

In Strieber's case, the results of these scans have

apparently proved to be fruitful. The neurologist who performed the examination (and wishes to remain nameless for the time being) made the following conclusions:

The subject's brain appears to be physiologically normal with a perfect circulatory system. Despite this, three punctate foci [which apparently have the appearance of three small ball bearings, Ed] of high resolution were detected. These three abnormalities reside in the cerebral white matter of the frontal lobe and the temporal parietal regions of the brain.

This discovered condition (Demyelination) is normally associated with the crippling disease Multiple Sclerosis. But no other symptoms of MS were found by the team at the New York Hospital. In fact, the team commented that Strieber was indeed, very healthy. The doctors stated that the scan returns in question were certainly unknown.

NEEDLES

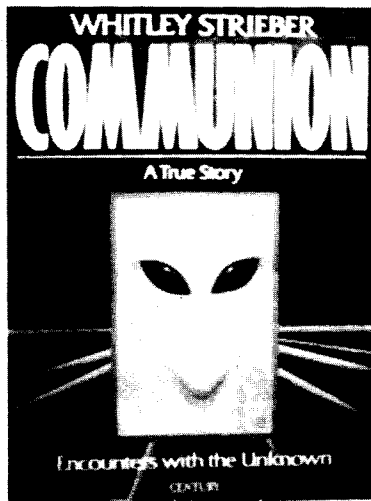
Readers of Communion will recall that Strieber claimed that needles had been inserted into his brain by the 'Visitors' during one of his encounters. The Neurologists are working on the theory that these punctate foci are possibly insertions made by the 'Visitors'. Their continued research includes analysing the point and angle of entry of the needles recalled by Strieber, ie the

left nostril and the right ear and find whether these details correlate with the positions of the abnormal scan returns.

Whitley Strieber stresses that these examinations were extremely important and must continue. He is also anxious for other abductees to have the same sort of examinations especially the magnetic resolution scans to see if other witnesses have similar abnormalities.

LETTERS

On another front, the paperback version of the book is selling very well, no doubt thanks to the well organised publicity.



Whitley Strieber assures me that he is still receiving over fifty letters and phone calls a day from people reporting their abduction experiences. In fact it is

running at such a pitch that witnesses are reporting their recalled abductions to Strieber within twenty four hours of them happening! This is surely a record. Most investigators are considered fortunate to receive a misidentification of Venus in that time let alone a full blown abduction.

We will obviously wait with interest to hear of any further developments from New York. But these new revelations should be observed with an open mind until a confirmation is obtained.

bufora

SKY MAP MANUAL

review by Hilary Evans

Ronny Blomme has produced an excellent 30 page **Sky Map Manual** (in English) which not only provides UFO investigators with a grounding in basics of astronomy, insofar as they assist towards the identification of IFOs, but illustrates their use with actual case histories. Besides the manual itself, Blomme offers a computerised programme and an on going sky map service; which provides sky maps relevant to specific investigations.

This service, which appears to be offered free of charge, provides any group or

individual investigator with a valuable information service. Request forms are provided, enabling bona fide researchers to specify their needs. All in all, a well thought out project which merits support.

Write to: Ronny Blomme,
Pierre Curielaan 31, Box 2,
B-1050, Brussels, Belgium.

RESEARCH REQUEST

Earnest Still and Susan Pollock are conducting collective research into all Northamptonshire UFO cases. If you have any material that you feel would be of use, then please write to:

Ernest Still, 46 Occupation Rd
Corby, Northants, NN7 2EF.

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Unfortunately, due to pressures of space, the usual letters section and book reviews has been curtailed for this issue. They will no doubt return in **BUFORA Bulletin 29**.

Please remember that any correspondence for inclusion in the Bulletin should be addressed to the editor at:

4 Ivy Road, Leyton, London,
E17 8HX.

Research

THE COMPUTER AS AN ACE UFO INVESTIGATOR

by Jenny Randles

After a recent charge that the National Investigations Committee were too 'secretive', Jenny Randles, Chairperson of the Committee, highlights one of the many projects that the NIC are currently working on.

Recently, the NIC has begun an exciting experiment. We are attempting to develop a system whereby EVALUATIONS of case reports can be offered by computer!

MUNDANE

The Normal procedure is for an investigator to work on the basis that approximately 90 % of all UFO reports turn out to have some sort of mundane explanation, eg as aircraft, balloons and stars etc. A good investigator will check for the main possibilities and assess them in his or her report. In this way, a suggested explanation might be offered, which is sometimes agreed with, disputed or added to by the Director of Investigations and/or the research team as the case report passes through on its way to the files.

There is no intention whatsoever of superseding this system. Human evaluation by the investigator 'on the spot' will always be fundamental and will continue to receive due prominence in the files. However, we have recognised for some time, the advantages of using a computer to check standard case input against factors that are consistent for various main types of IFO.

In this way a purely mechanical rating of the case would be possible. It has the advantage that you will be able to say to a witness (who does not like your evaluation), "Okay, we've asked BUFORA's computer and it says that the most likely explanation of your sighting is"

In the BUFORA Book 'UFOs 1947 - 87', Dr Jacques Vallee writes about the development of an 'expert system' in Silicon Valley, which uses a powerful computer to weed out cases at a very early stage of investigation. In this way questions can be framed over the phone of a 'UFO hotline' so that would-be UFO reporter answers' can be fed immediately into the computer. The computer will then immediately suggest a possible explanation, redirect more questions over the phone and prevent unnecessary waste of time on IFO cases.

MECHANICAL ESTIMATE

BUFORA's project, which we have now codenamed the ACE system (ACE being Amstrad Computerised Evaluation), works in a different way. It is being developed to use the home micros available to many UFO investigators and also to

work on a case after investigation, so as to offer nothing more sophisticated than a mechanical estimate to go alongside the purely human interpretation of a case

ACE depends upon a piece of commercial software from Heptacon, called 'Second Opinion'. This is a decision making program devised in the main for managers who are involved with employee selection. However, it is ideally suited to modification for UFO evaluation purposes and that is exactly what I am presently engaged in doing.

ADJUNCT

ACE works on my own personal Amstrad 8256, under CP/M. Other Amstrads of the 8256/8512/9512 configuration will be able to operate the system. BUFORA has access to several of these, including a 9512 owned by the Association itself. Unfortunately, because of the copyright restrictions in purchase, we are at this stage intending the system to be used only as an adjunct to BUFORA NIC case reports. By the time of reading this, Accredited Investigators will be able to request an ACE report on any of their cases, providing that the correct information is included in their case reports. However, BUFORA is intending to offer ACE reports to any other serious UFO investigator or international group as a service to the UFO community, and whilst the procedures for this operation are yet to be decided, anyone inside or outside of BUFORA who is interested in the ACE system should contact myself, or any other BUFORA council member.

A brief description of the ACE system is as follows. Of course, it depends upon some human decisions at the programming stage and it is not the computer alone that makes the evaluation.

Despite this, the programming of the system follows logical investigatory rules and once set, no interference from a human will take place in the future. A thousand cases can be evaluated using the same ground rules and ACE will report on its findings completely on its own initiative.

Essentially,, it relies upon key distinguishing factors in case reports. For instance, duration is important. As we know, witness estimates vary, but as an example, if a UFO is reported as taking two seconds to whiz across the sky a meteor is a likely explanation, whereas a balloon is not. On the other hand, if the witness states that the object was in view for thirty minutes, we can say with virtual certainty that a meteor is an impossible explanation, since these are never visible for any length of time.

KEY FACTORS

ACE boasts a wide range of features and uses highly complex mathematical calculations, mostly inbuilt into the system. It requires only basic key factors (principle ones being duration, colour, shape, type of lighting, mode of flight, and number of objects visible) to be entered to ultimately produce a meaningful and accurate result.

ACE then reviews the IFO categories which it holds in its memory, and at this stage I anticipate 20 different IFO types will be included (from the obvious ones, such as aircraft and helicopters, to the less obvious, such as flocks of birds). It will mechanically produce a printed set of ratings of all the appropriate IFOs in numerical form. For instance, it will say of ant IFO type is specifically excluded **excluded** by the data input and will rate any that are not excluded according to descending order of probability. The likelihood of ant particular explanation being valid will be reflected in the given score.

For instance, ACE might suggest that for a particular case, the evaluation aircraft scores 250, stars 150, balloons 10 and meteors are excluded. In practice it will probably be more complex and detailed than that, but you can see how ACE will aim not just to express the most **likely** explanation, but the relative strengths of other feasible options too. This will be useful information to include with the case report or to report back to the witness.

CONCLUSION

We are really not expecting that ACE will be either foolproof or give definitive answers. Of course, it will not achieve either aim. Since a great deal depends upon the original ratings it is useful that the software is very flexible in allowing these to be easily updated until we get it right. Constant modification, once in operation seems inevitable, at

least for the first few months or years of use.

This is an experiment as is to be treated as such. It should be an interesting one and I hope that UFO investigators everywhere might think about ACE and how it might benefit them, suggesting any ways in which they feel it might be improved.

In the meantime, You will doubtless be seeing ACE evaluations cropping up in UFO magazines, including this one, from now on.

BUFORA POSTAL LIBRARY

As a service to members, BUFORA has set up a new postal library, with a wide range of UFO books, including most of the old 'classics'.

The books will be made available against a returnable deposit (less postage costs).

Any member interested in this service please write to:

BUFORA (PL), 16 Southway,
Burgess Hill, Sussex, RH15 9ST

BUFORA CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

To supplement the investigator training workshops, that are organised during the year, a correspondence course which will cover basic investigation techniques and procedures will be available shortly to members interested in active UFO research.

Enquiries and constructive comments to:

BUFORA (CC), 16 Southway,
Burgess Hill, Sussex, RH15 9ST

4th June

BUFORA LECTURE **The Reality of the UFO Phenomenon**
Speaker **Martin Shough** at the LBS.

Please remember that this will be the last of the present series of lectures.

The new 1988 - 89 BUFORA lecture season, that commences on Saturday September 3rd, will soon be finalised and lecture programmes will be available in due course.

BUFORA Lectures are held every first saturday of the month at the London Business School, Sussex Place, Outer Circle, Regents Park, London, NW1. The LBS is only a five minute walk from Baker Street tube. Lectures start at 6.30pm. All are welcome. Full lecture programmes are available from BUFORA (LP), 16 Southway, Burgess Hill, Sussex, RH15 9ST.

If you have an event that you wish to publicise on this page **free of charge** then please write to the editor (Diary) 4 Ivy Road, Leyton, London, E17 8HX. Three months in advance.

UFOs 1947-1987

THE 40-YEAR SEARCH FOR AN EXPLANATION

COMPILED AND EDITED BY **HILARY EVANS**
WITH **JOHN SPENCER**
FOR THE **BRITISH UFO RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

UFOs 1947 - 1987 is an anthology of commissioned articles compiled for BUFORA by Hilary Evans and John Spencer, to commemorate the 40 years of Worldwide investigation of the evidence for unexplained aerial phenomena. Commonly termed UFOs.

Contributions represent a statement of current informed opinion about UFO sightings, reports,

and the wide variety of related subjects including: selections of significant cases which continue to defy explanation and a wide range of current thinking relating to the origin of the UFO. Available from BUFORA, 16 Southway Burgess Hill, Sussex, RH15 9ST. £12.50 including postage and packing. Essential reading.

