

Area 51: Only the mountains appear on the maps as the government denies it exists, but clandestine images of the base are on the Internet.

Main photograph by Chuck Clarke

Nightmare in Dreamland

A lawyer is threatened with jail as the US government claims the right to hide its crimes at a secret air base, reports Ed Vulliamy

WHILE the movie *Independence Day* is packing cinemas with its story of aliens and a secret base called 'Area 51', a surreal law suit that echoes its plot is building into a secrecy trial of great significance.

One of America's leading public-interest lawyers is threatened with 10 years in jail after bringing a case over secrecy and death at the real Area 51, a US Air Force site, on the desert plains of Nevada. Its existence is denied by the government.

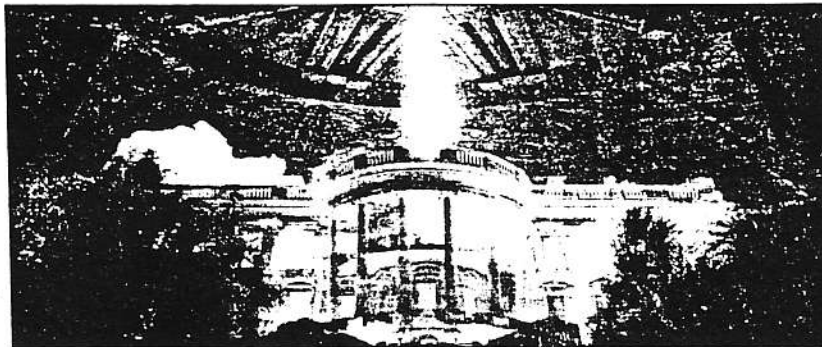
For the first time in American history, an administration is claiming that if it has committed crimes, it has the right to classify the evidence. Even the Nixon and Reagan administrations did not claim such privilege.

Recent incidents show the Clinton administration to be obsessed with secrecy and surveillance.

Evidence includes a rapid increase in authorised telephone taps and the calling-in of FBI files on political opponents.

In the movie, space aliens are kept by the air force at Area 51, and the President takes refuge there during a UFO assault. In the real world, workers at Area 51 have died or developed fatal diseases while building the Stealth fighter bomber and other supersonic aircraft.

The workers are suing the government. It, in turn, is threatening to imprison their lawyer, Jonathan



The White House is destroyed in 'Independence Day' - a surreal parallel with the mirage of Area 51.

Turley, if he refuses to hand over all his case papers which it asserts include classified documents. These would reveal the names of his clients and their evidence.

Turley, director of the environmental law project at George Washington University, who gives his services free, said the consequences of compliance 'would be that no whistle-blower — or anyone who wants to break ranks to tell some truth — can be legally represented or afforded any reliable legal protection'. If Turley refuses — which, he told the *Observer*, he must — he faces imprisonment and loss of a legal licence.

The Area 51 workers have testified to witnessing criminal breaches of environmental law which directly caused their illnesses. They are suing the President's National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, Secretary of State for Defence William Perry and Air Force chief Sheila Widnall as responsible for Area 51 at the Groom dry salt lake, north of the Nellis air force base.

One client is Helen Frost, whose husband, Bill, died of horrific skin diseases and chemical burns after working at Area 51. The others are former workmates who suffered similar diseases, some of whom are close to death.

Area 51 has a bizarre history, part fantastical, part very real. It was developed to build and test prototypes for the then secret Blackbird supersonic spy plane. Later it became the high temple of UFOs and alienology.

Enthusiasts became convinced that the parts of a supposed flying saucer which crashed at Roswell, New Mexico, in the 1950s were taken to Area 51. Bob Lazar, a scientist working on supersonic planes, said he had worked with space aliens on developing the technology. The theme was excitedly taken up in *Independence Day*.

In reality, the facility continued to be a laboratory for the next century's lightning aircraft. The Stealth fighter bomber was prototyped and tested

there, and now work is under way on the Aurora, which will be able to fly at 3,000mph, leaving no radar trace.

The government's insistence that the facility does not exist means it is not on any maps. Two years ago the *Observer* visited the area. The supersonic jets roared below a desert sky bright with stars. A long mountain track led to what campaigners called 'Freedom Ridge', from which one could see the hangars, runways and planes landing and taking off in the harsh sunlight. 'Freedom Ridge' has since been closed by a Pentagon order, commandeering another 40,000 acres.

The aircraft flitters merely fuel the ardour of UFO enthusiasts, who stay at the Little Ale Inn trailer motel and marvel at their sightings. More important, each day at 3am, an unmarked 747 leaves Las Vegas airport carrying men to work, to build the air force's latest machine.

Turley's clients come from among these men, with tales of open trenches filled with terocious toxins

used as paint-hardeners, metal re-enforcers, and so on. These are the poisons which, say the writs, killed Bill Frost, and are killing or crippling scores, if not hundreds, of others.

The government retorted that Turley's clients could not sue, since Area 51 did not exist, and because their allegations affected national security.

In the hearings, a solitary Turley is ranged against teams of government lawyers. 'The argument, he summarises, is that these men cannot have a lawyer since any discussion of their work at Area 51 violates security laws. The government has used national security as a legal defence, to stifle the case, gag the media and retaliate.'

Turley won the first round. The court ruled that national security did not trump environmental laws under which the plaintiffs were suing. Then the government alleged that the case papers contained classified information about the construction site. It demanded that Turley hand over the documents, despatching air force personnel to his office.

When he refused, it called for a sealed hearing, assuring the public that it had only sought to ask him to hand the papers over voluntarily. This was a lie: it later emerged that the authorities were seeking to close hearings to compel Turley to hand them over on pain of contempt and imprisonment.

Judge Philip Pro in Nevada ruled earlier this year that a civil court was not the appropriate place for an order resulting in the incarceration of an attorney over an issue of national security. But he expressly cleared the way for the government to initiate criminal proceedings against Turley for retention of classified material, punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

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Aliens Land in Brazil In Desperate Need Of a Good Shower

Tale of Stinky Extraterrestrials
Stirs Up the UFO Crowd,
Which Smells a Conspiracy

By MATT MOFFETT
Staff Reporter

VARGINHA, Brazil—The incident that made this town a hot spot in the intergalactic search for intelligent life started quite innocently, on a Saturday afternoon stroll in January, a trio of young women decided to take a shortcut home through a vacant lot. In a clump of weeds, the three said, they encountered a creature like nothing they had seen before.

"It wasn't a man or an animal—it was something different," said one of the women, Katia Anoráde. The being had olive brown skin and rubbery limbs, she said. Three rounded protrusions sprouted from its oversized head. Standing out in a different way was the creature's odor: One gnastily whiff weakened the knees. As for the stranger's demeanor, the women unanimously, if tactlessly, agreed: It was "muddle-headed." When the creature wagged its big noggin dizzily in their direction, the three women ran off.

Other Strange Happenings

Word of this encounter, spreading rapidly through the coffee bars where Varginha's 120,000 inhabitants trade gossip, would soon meld in the public imagination with other unusual occurrences: sightings of a strange, cigar-shaped flying object, a mustering of troops and vehicles at a nearby infantry base and a peculiar bustle at the municipal hospital. Goaded by self-styled UFO savants and a ravenous national media, residents rather matter-of-factly embraced a stupefying conclusion: Several aliens from a wayward space ship had been captured and brutalized by troops from the Brazilian army.

Bristling denials from the military, which once compiled a lengthy record of abuses against the terrestrial population, have only served to inflame public suspicion. The upshot: The army and the now-famous space aliens find themselves locked in a pitched battle for the hearts and minds of this provincial community. Doltish and malodorous though these space celebrities might be, mere men in uniform are proving no match for the first creatures of any kind from Varginha to land on a national magazine cover.

"For extraterrestrials they may not be much, but they are the biggest thing we've ever had in Varginha," says a young woman named Nilda, scanning the nighttime sky from a downtown park bench. Had the armed forces not interfered, she says, locals might have scrubbed the visitors up, taught them the language, in sum, made something of them. "But they never had a chance," Nilda says with a sigh. Her anger at the military's alleged inhumanity sparked a tiff with her boyfriend, a private in the infantry.

Mystic Point

The army finds itself besieged on several fronts. A local mystic predicts that Varginha will suffer some kind of cataclysm this September as retribution for its blitzkrieg on the interplanetary visitors. An armed-forces news conference marking "Victory Day" in World War II degenerated into a shouting match between a general and a television reporter pressing him about the extraterrestrials. An official briefing to debunk UFO conspiracies was overshadowed by an auto-mechanic's claim to have seen yet another weird cylindrical aircraft, a cosmic encounter he re-enacted with the aid of an aluminum coffee thermos.

To some extent the army is paying for past sins. During an oppressive 20-year dictatorship ending in 1965, the Brazilian military eliminated any number of earthbound political enemies by "disappearing" them. If the army was capable of liquidating human beings without a trace, locals ask, why couldn't it carry such a "dirty war" to outer space?

In truth, the current, cash-strapped incarnation of Brazil's army poses little threat to anyone, least of all an enemy that might have ray guns. In some training exercises Brazilian troops have been reduced to pointing their rifles and shouting "bang" in order to save ammo.

At the army base near Varginha, an inquiry concerning the extraterrestrials is

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Brazil—and Need a Shower

in camouflage fatigues hunted down the visitors, poked and prodded the corpses at the municipal hospital, and then shipped them off to parts unknown. "It's very straightforward," he says.

Mr. Pacareini's brand of hucksterism is characteristic of the frontier atmosphere in a town where the architecture is of the Quonset-hut school and the newspaper is staffed by a lone reporter. Since the initial sighting, Mr. Pacareini, a longtime UFO buff, has essentially abandoned his job as a business consultant to provide one-stop shopping for visiting journalists.

To date, Brazil's leading television magazine has done three programs here. A two-hour nationally televised documentary on Varginha pulled in so many viewers on a recent Saturday night that it was repeated in its entirety the following weekend. Two of the women who made the initial sighting now demand \$200 for each interview.

Alien Playground

With an eye toward promoting Varginha, city fathers are thinking of building a park in the creature's honor. Deputy Mayor Paulo Vitor Freire says: "We would never have imagined that so many international organizations take interest in cases like ours."

He's talking about such organization as a support group called Abductees Anonymous and a research organization called Operation

Right to Know. Stanton Friedman, a Canada-based UFO expert, says Varginha has the makings of a "rescue Watergate."

If anything, the case may be suffering from eyewitness overkill. By now there have been so many sightings of the creature—seven at last count—that it is unclear how all of those beings could have fit into the minivan-sized spacecraft that was spotted here in January. "Lots of us got into cars with five or six other passengers in them," Mr. Pacareini retorts, drawing a down-to-earth analogy. True, but usually on short trips; seldom when driving to another galaxy.

Mr. Pacareini's most tantalizing proofs are videotaped statements by two young men in civilian clothes who claim to be members of the military detail that disposed of the alien visitors. It is impossible to determine the tapes' authenticity, however, since Mr. Pacareini won't reveal the men's names. He says they fear reprisals.

There is also a troubling lack of physical evidence, unless you count descriptions of a paw print seen by one witness. The print is said to resemble what a human hand would look like with the palm flat, and a space opened up between the ring and pinky fingers and the other three digits. Fans of the old Star Trek series may sense a stirring of recognition. It looks remarkably like Mr. Spock's Vulcan salute.

IT WAS dawn when Bruce Burgess and war photographer Sebastian Rich struck out for the 7,000ft summit in the Nevada desert to spy on the world's most secret military base.

Bruce, a British TV producer, had been asked to assemble a crack team to explode the mystery surrounding the US base known geographically as Area 51 but more poetically by residents as Dreamland.

He says: "We climbed for hours in the heat carrying our secret weapon — a 9-mile zoom camera lens, the most powerful in the world."

"We were told about aliens and saucers, sightings and contact but I approached the project with enormous scepticism. I did, however, very quickly appreciate from previous research that something was definitely going on in Area 51 but what I learned there dumfounded me."

"We could see in the hazy distance a ramshackle collection of hangars baking in the desert sun. It didn't look like much more than a small landing base."

The team then decided to get a closer look at what was hidden within the 26-mile exclusion zone.

"Walking across was out of the question, we would be detected instantly as the base was guarded by attack helicopters, armed guards and sensors triggered by

motion, microwave and perspiration. Studied at 100-yard intervals on the colossal perimeter fence are 'No Entry' signs, which explain matter-of-factly: 'Warning — Use Of Deadly Force Authorised'."

Bruce's next plan was more daring, although it could have cost them their lives.

"We could only find one pilot bold enough to fly into the forbidden territory," he says. "By the time we had got within a mile of the hangars in our crop-spraying Cessna, two F16 fighter jets screamed past on both sides. Any nearer and the jet wash would have sent us spinning down. We had no option but to fly out of there — fast."

"But we had our mission to complete and so we spent months observing the base. We quickly discovered that there was more to it than just a few hangars. Every morning, a dozen Boeing 737s depart from Las Vegas, 70 miles away, for Area 51's runway. They disgorge almost 2,000 personnel."

"The men only reappear for their transport home but we were told that none of what we saw existed and were harassed, rebuffed and redirected at every turn."

It eventually became clear to the observers that the troops were not working in the hangars but in a subterranean operations centre which would make James Bond movies look positively low-budget. "Best of all," adds Bruce:

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UFO visits led to Gremlins

Mum Katrina Ketch is convinced flying saucers are responsible for interference on her hi-fi and video equipment.

Mrs Ketch, of Unwin Road, The Reddings, saw a bright object in the sky while she was driving home with her nine-year-old son Craig.

After the object disappeared, she found the tape of Baby D's dance music in her car stereo had been wiped off.

"As we turned into our road, Craig spotted something up in the sky. At first he was excited because he thought it was a shooting star but it definitely wasn't because it was hovering," said Mrs Ketch. "Its top was an orangey misty oblong but the bottom was brighter orange-yellow and round."

"It moved very slowly towards the M5. We watched it for ages."

After finding the tape was blank, she showed it to her friend Deborah Brown of Reddings Road who pointed out a bizarre coincidence.

"When Deborah tried to turn on her satellite TV system, at the same time on the same night that Mrs Ketch and Craig were watching the mystery object, she found all the channels needed reprogramming."

Deborah's mother-in-law Isobel Hopson saw a similar bright object two weeks ago and at the same time one of her video tape was erased.

Mrs Hopson, who lives at Chelmstord Avenue, Warden Hill, said: "I don't sleep too well and at

by Dave Higgins

about 2.20 in the morning there was a terrific noise outside my window. There was this bright orange thing over towards Leckhampton Hill. It was the shape of a full moon but it wasn't a full circle.

"It wasn't a helicopter. In fact, it was as loud as 20 helicopters and lasted about five minutes."

"I'm also used to planes coming over and I'm sure it wasn't one of those, because it made me remember I pulled the curtains and went back to bed."

"The next day, I found a video tape which I had been taping a film on overnight had been wiped clean. It just played back a blue screen."

Gloucestershire Airport at Staverton was closed on the Wednesday at 9.30pm and a police spokesman said the force helicopter was not in use.

Mr Arnold West of the British UFO Research Association said: "In the 1950s and 60s, there were many reports of UFO activity affecting electrical equipment."

"This has become more rare recently but it still happens."

UFO buffs told of captured aliens

NORTH Staffordshire, Chelmsford, have become the first in Western Europe to be told of the intergalactic capture of two 'ETs'.

The alien 'prisoners' were reported to have been taken in a Brazilian town in 1965. A letter from the British UFO Research Association has been sent to the military authorities in the north.

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It's a letter, copy on a piece of paper, the size of a fly, and it's expected in Britain tonight on the one thing we're not all doing," he said.

The conference was also addressed by Tom Black, another respected UFO researcher and Director of Research for Channel 4.

Mr. Black has been a member of the British UFO Research Association since 1965, and he was a member of the first UFO conference in the UK in 1965.

He said that the case was the most significant and that it had been held for the first time in the UK.

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Why would aliens want to come to our town?

It's not immediately clear why aliens should want to come to Bonnybridge. A small, windswept town just north of Glasgow, it sits in a muddy valley, framed by electric pylons and low hills. There's a bridge (not remotely bonny), a Chinese takeaway, two pubs and 5,450 people.

There's also plenty of sky — and from the window of their seventh-floor flat, pensioners Bill and Mabel Bestall can see most of it. If they are preoccupied with the view, few can blame them. From their windows, they have witnessed UFO activity on no less than three occasions.

Bizarrely, perhaps, this small, close-knit community has become the scene of Scotland's real-life X-Files — a town where, with startling regularity, residents report evidence of alien activity.

The most dramatic of these sightings took place in the early hours of the morning last January. 'It was about a quarter to five, and I'd got up in the night,' remembers Bill. 'Suddenly, I spotted a large circular light hovering over Bonnybridge and realised it was heading towards our flats.'

'Next, two smaller circular objects came into view, spinning around the larger one. I was intrigued and called the wife to come and look. However, as it got nearer, we became scared. It was huge and it was heading straight for us. But then it suddenly rose up and over the top of the flats.'

Perhaps it was a plane. Or a helicopter. Or perhaps Mr Bestall is completely batty, and so is his wife — who, incidentally, confirms every detail. All these are possibilities. But when you look at the sheer statistical mass of sightings by people in the Bonnybridge area, then the greater likelihood is that the Bestalls are telling the truth.

For some reason, this corridor of countryside between Glasgow and Edinburgh is a UFO hotspot. Of all sightings in Scotland, two-thirds occur within it. 'To my knowledge, 3,000 people have seen something unusual in our skies during the past few years,' says Bonnybridge councillor Bill Buchanan. 'And there must be many more who have been afraid to come forward.'

Walk down the main street, and everyone knows someone who's seen a UFO. At the electrical goods shop, it's Anne Stewart's daughter, Carol, who had a night encounter with bright, flying objects while driving home. 'We were at the pub when she rang us, terrified,' says her mother. 'The whole bar pited outside to have a look, but whatever it was had gone.'

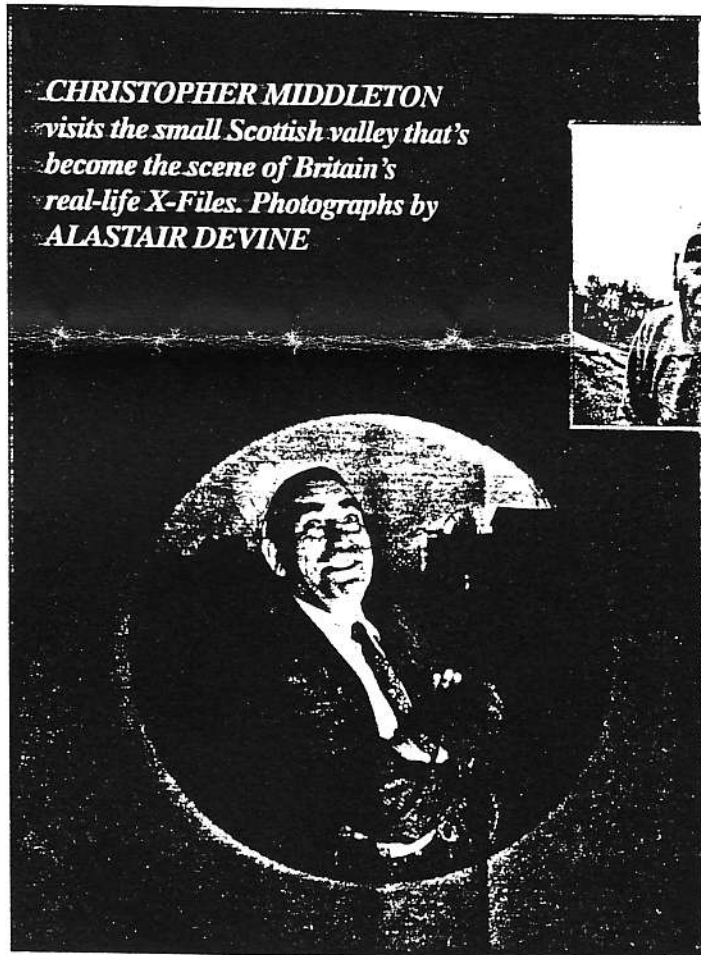
Meanwhile, at the post office, Mariene Fleming has been keeping a secret for years. It concerns an elderly friend who went fishing one night at nearby St Helen's Loch, and saw a bright light in the sky. 'The thing started moving back and forth across the water,' says Mariene. 'Then it started following my friend, who decided to head back home. By the time he reached the house, he was running for all he was worth.'

Marlene's friend never made his ordeal public, and many others feel the same way. There is, however, someone they can turn to. And that's John Jenkins. A 60-year-old piano tuner from nearby Penicuik, John was a spaceship sceptic until one morning in 1992, when he saw an 'orange-golden ball' in the sky just outside Edinburgh.

'It was travelling in an absolute straight line and at great speed,' recalls John. 'I thought the whole city would be in an uproar, but although there was an article about it in The Scotsman, it was quickly forgotten.'

But not by him. Before long, he was seeking out others who had experienced close encounters. One was Andy Swan, a 27-year-old electric

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON
visits the small Scottish valley that's become the scene of Britain's real-life X-Files. Photographs by ALASTAIR DEVINE



Close encounters: Bill and Mabel Bestall, below, have had three UFO sightings, while John Jenkins, main picture, is convinced they exist. Front cover: Andy Swan, who 'lost' an hour of his life



concerns what has been Bonnybridge's most distressing case so far, involving two young men who have become so upset by their experience that they no longer talk about it publicly. It happened one night in 1992, as Colin Wright and Garry Wood were taking a satellite dish to be repaired at a friend's house. Ordinary working people, they had no previous interest or belief in UFOs. Colin was a painter and decorator, Garry worked for the ambulance service.

As they drove alone the A70, near the Harperrig Reservoir, they suddenly saw a jet-black, disc-shaped object 20 feet above the road. They came to a halt directly underneath the thing, upon which it released a shimmering curtain of light over them — 'like confetti', one of them described it.

Both men were catapulted into inky blackness, and remember only that there was a huge shudder. Then they found themselves still in the car, the blackness gone. Shaken, they drove on — but found when they reached their destination that the journey had taken two hours longer than the 35 minutes it should have done.

To find out what happened in those two missing hours, Colin and Garry independently underwent a dozen sessions of hypnotherapy, during which they provided accounts that not only matched each other's, but also those of previous 'abductees'.

Both claim they were transported out of the car by a beam of light, then stripped and subjected to an inspection by creatures with translucent, child-like bodies and pear-shaped heads. Both saw other men and women being examined, but not each other.

And the official response to all this? Don't panic, Captain Mainwaring, would seem to be the answer. 'If we conclude that no threat to the security of the UK has occurred, we do not attempt to investigate,' says the Ministry of Defence. And in none of the Bonnybridge cases is any such threat thought to have occurred.

In the case of Andy Swan, for example, they wonder if he had mistaken his Tonierone bar for a Harrier Jump Jet, of which there were three in the area that night.

Nevertheless, local MP Dennis Canavan and Bill Buchanan still want the Bonnybridge phenomenon investigated. 'It's a disgrace that no one has come here to look into what's going on,' says Councillor Buchanan. 'I have this feeling that something really dramatic is going to happen here. I'm just hoping that I and all these other law-abiding people will eventually be vindicated — and preferably in our own lifetime.'

cable layer from nearby Armadale. 'I'd been to Cowdenbeath,' recalls Andy. 'When I got home, around 11.45pm, there was a lightning storm, and as I was sitting in the car watching it, I saw this large object come crashing down from the sky — about 35 to 40 foot long, the size of a lorry trailer. I decided to drive in the direction it had been travelling.'

A mile along the road, the object suddenly came flying low over the hedgerows, straight at his car. 'I thought I was going to run into it, but it passed over the bonnet and came to a halt in a field. It just sat there, hovering silently, about 15 feet off the ground. I got out of the car and pointed my halogen lamp at it to get a better look. Immediately, the bulb blew. Then my headlights went out. I tried the car ignition, but it wouldn't start. Suddenly, the thing leapt up and reversed at incredible speed back over the top of the car.'

The police were called, as was an AA patrolman, who was unable to find any visible fault in Andy's car. No sooner had it been towed back home, however, than the electrics came back to life. In a police statement, Andy described the object as looking like a giant, black Toblerone bar.

What still troubles him now, though, is that. 'Somehow, an hour of my life can't be

accounted for,' Falkirk police confirm that they received a distress call on Andy's mobile phone at 1.20am. Yet he is sure he made it at around 12.15. So what happened in that lost time? At this point, one makes a significant leap from the world of visible, recordable fact — into the black hole of sci-fi speculation.

Suddenly, X-Files theories loom large. One theory gaining ground in UFO circles is that humankind is being infiltrated by a race of creatures often referred to as The Greys. Those who have experienced such contact tell their 'true life' stories in glossy 'paranormal' magazines such as Encounters and Alien Encounters.

Others, however, are more sceptical. One explanation for the whirling lights seen by the Bestalls is that they are fireballs — pieces of matter burning up on entering the earth's atmosphere. Other possible culprits include aircraft lights or aircraft seen from unusual angles, kites, helium balloons, weather balloons and unusual cloud formations — not to mention lightning and meteorites.

Yet there is one rather disquieting detail which may yet prove the sceptics wrong. It



by JANE KELLY

OUT of the winter darkness, on January 6 last year, BA flight 5061 from Milan began its descent into Manchester's Ringway Airport, flying into a strong north-westerly wind. Visibility was good, stretching over six miles, and the crew and passengers were looking forward to touching down.

At 6.48pm, as the Boeing 737 cruised over the Pennines, just above the rugged cumulus cloud cover, the pilot, Captain Roger Willis, and First Officer Mark Stuart, saw something which stunned them.

They ducked instinctively as a triangular, silver-coloured object with a dark stripe down one side hurtled towards them from the opposite direction. It disappeared down the right-hand side of the aircraft, only feet from Officer Stuart's cockpit seat.

For two to three seconds the two men were able to track the object through the cockpit windscreen and a side window. It was one of the most reliable sightings of an unidentified flying object ever to have taken place in Britain. Both men are sensible, well-trained pilots with thousands of air miles between them.

Since that mysterious incident above the Pennines, neither pilot has spoken in public about their encounter. They have spent months being teased mercilessly by their colleagues. Should they keep quiet and forget the incident, or reveal publicly what they saw?

Eventually, Officer Stuart decided that it was, indeed, time to talk about the extraordinary encounter above Manchester, and to set the record straight once and for all.

Tomorrow evening, in a television documentary, Officer Stuart vividly recreates the moment when he thought his aircraft was about to collide with a strange and fast-moving flying object.

"We were coming back from Milan and were on the last stages of approach, at about 4,000ft," recalls Stuart. "We were on a northerly course direction heading towards the airfield, just in the tops of the clouds."

"The captain was flying the aircraft. I was monitoring what was going on; my job was to keep an eye on the settings."

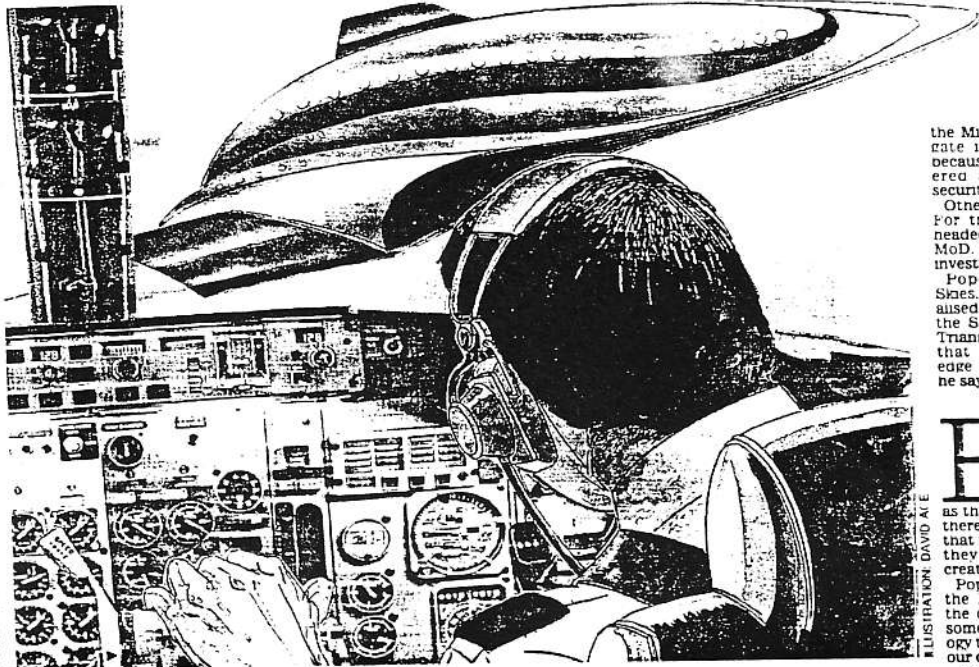


ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ALE

Is this the proof that UFOs exist?



Shocked: Pilot Mark Stuart

quickly, so there wasn't much that could be done."

On landing, both pilots discussed what they had seen. "I suggested to the captain that it would be a good idea to draw what we had seen. We both did so."

"The objects we drew were the same shape, but they differed in texture — mine was a solid object which I believed had black or grey stripes down the side."

"I didn't see any windows or anything like that. The captain drew a similar shape, but his was made up of lots of different little lights."

"I felt his drawing could be explained by a reflection from our landing lights as the object went down our right-hand side."

"We then phoned air traffic control and decided that we would file an air miss, which meant that all the traces from radar would have to be examined in further detail."

By filing that report, the two men launched themselves on to the treadmill of rumour

and mystery that accompanies all such unexplained sightings.

Many airline pilots talk anecdotally of seeing UFOs. But very few actually report what they have seen, fearful of a sceptical response from their colleagues. And, until now, no pilot of a commercial British aircraft has ever spoken publicly about such an incident.

Although Officer Stuart still cannot explain what he and his captain saw, there are a number of possibilities.

Could it have been a craft that has become known as the Silent Vulcan, a supposedly top-secret American military aircraft, so called because its shape resembles an old Vulcan bomber?

THE Silent Vulcan, a similar shape to the Stealth bomber, has allegedly been seen over Europe and North America, and was first sighted over the Hudson Valley in upstate New York in 1983.

In Britain, many of the sightings since have taken place in the Pennine Corridor, which runs from the Midlands to Yorkshire.

In 1990, an object similar to the one seen by Officer Stuart and his captain was spotted in Belgium; the Belgian air force scrambled fighter planes to try to intercept it, but it vanished without leaving radar or radiation readings.

Conspiracy theorists, who have welcomed the BA incident with glee, point to the

fact that the American F-117 Stealth bomber flew for five years before the U.S. government confirmed its existence.

Like the Silent Vulcan, it is triangular in shape, and was designed not to show up on radar screens.

Radar experts, however, do not believe that the BA sighting could have been a Stealth bomber. It is not allowed to fly in controlled airspace without being identifiable to ground control.

And even the Stealth bomber cannot explain the speed, agility and rapid acceleration displayed by the object the BA pilots saw.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) spent months investigating the pilots' claims. They talked to all the flight crews and air staff involved. They examined recordings and radar tapes which would tell them whether any other aircraft was in the vicinity of BA flight 5061. They found nothing.

In April this year, the CAA agreed that the crew on board the flight had seen an unidentified flying object — or, as it preferred to term it, an 'unassessable' object.

The CAA decided that in the absence of any firm evidence or explanation for the object, it was not possible to assess either the cause of the near miss or the risk of the encounter.

It concluded that the incident didn't fit any of the normal criteria applicable to air-miss reports.

Officer Stuart was not happy with the result. "We did not get the answers we were hoping for," he says. "If I can't explain it and I was there, I cannot hope that anyone else can ever explain it away."

Despite Stuart's reservations, the CAA's response — in conducting such a thorough investigation — has been seen as a milestone in the official recognition of the UFO phenomenon.

The Ministry of Defence is still reluctant to discuss the issue of UFOs at all. Officially,

the Ministry does not investigate inexplicable sightings, because they are not considered a threat to national security.

Others tell a different story. For three years, Nick Pope headed Air Staff 2a, within the MoD. Part of his work was to investigate UFO reports.

Pope, whose book *Open Skies, Closed Minds*, was serialized by the Daily Mail, calls the Silent Vulcan "the Flying Triangle". It behaves in a way that is beyond the cutting edge of our own technology," he says.

BUT could the BA pilots have seen the mysterious "official" craft known as the Silent Vulcan? Or must there be another explanation, that the versatility of the craft they saw simply cannot be created by humans?

Pope says of sightings like the BA one: "Aren't craft are the only logical conclusion of some sightings. The technology they display is way beyond our own."

Although the MoD denies any special research, insiders who have worked within the Ministry claim that the Ministry base at Rufford Manor, in Wiltshire, is being used as a centre for secret investigations into aerial phenomena.

The Public Records Office in Kew, South-West London, sheds even more intriguing light on just how seriously incidents like the BA one are being taken by the Government.

From the mid-Fifties onwards, the MoD has accumulated more than 8,000 UFO sightings, and has withheld the information under the 30-year secrecy rule. While many of these accounts are now available at Kew, others will remain sealed for decades to come.

Officer Stuart knows what he saw. He has kept the drawing of that mysterious triangular object, and he and his captain have never changed their story. They also, of course, cannot explain it.

■ *OUT OF THE WORLD* is on BBC1, tomorrow, 8.30pm.

FOR those who are preoccupied with the possibility of alien abduction, an Enfield man has come up with the perfect solution — insurance.

Joe Tagliarini, of Ingersoll Road, Enfield Wash, claims to be the first man in Europe to offer a policy against just this eventuality.

For an annual premium of just £17.99, or a special discount rate of £9.99 for residents of

Enfield, you can be assured that your family, mortgage, car repayments and any subsequent medical and legal bills will be taken care of in the event of your unmetamorphosed, temporary or permanent.

The obvious catch is establishing firm proof and, as we all know, getting money out of an insurance company is as hard as getting green blood out of a moonrock.

But Joe has come up with the perfect solution: confirmation by the United Nations.

"If you go to the books and put a bet on for aliens to land they say that the proof required is that the UN officially accepts it," said Joe.

"So for me to pay out on a policy I need the UN to officially accept that the person covered has been abducted."

Simple.

And rumours that the UN will confirm the existence of extra-terrestrials in the next few years are on the increase in the paranormal press.

Joe, who is offering this policy independently of the insurance company for whom he works, has taken out advertisements in several magazines specialising in UFOs and the unexplained, including the *Fortean Times*, and in the American tabloid the *National Enquirer*.

With a combined global readership of more than 15 million people, he is hoping that the business will come flooding in when the ads appear next month.

Lionel Beer, founder of the British UFO Research Association, said: "There is a lot of argument about whether this is something real or whether it is something that goes on in people's heads," he said.

"It would be very difficult to prove."

UFO spotted

A STENHOUSEMUIR family claimed this week that they had seen a UFO near their home.

The strange object was seen by the Bachelor family in Park Avenue, Stenhousemuir, last Thursday. Twenty-year-old Audrey Bachelor said: "I looked up at the sky and saw this thing hovering. I know for a fact it wasn't a helicopter or an aeroplane. I just can't explain it." The UFO appeared for only five minutes before vanishing.

MID DEVON GAZETTE

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Experts are enthusiastic — 'This is a very good sighting'

Alan claims he's snapped a UFO

PHOTOGRAPHY student Alan Mitchell is convinced we are not alone in the universe after capturing an Unidentified Flying Object on film.

Alan, 17, was out taking pictures for a college project on the banks of the Great Western Canal at Halberton when he spotted the mys-

By **NICK BEER**

tery craft darting across the sky.

And he managed to catch the fast-flying saucer-shaped object on camera before it soared off towards Tiverton.

"It was a UFO beyond a doubt," said Alan, who lives in Halberton.

"It was just after nine o'clock in the evening when I saw it out of the corner of my eye.

"It wasn't going particularly fast, but it was going faster than a plane would be.

"It was going straight down towards the ground. I watched it for about half a minute and then carried on with what I was doing."

Alan says he and his family have spotted four UFOs in the skies above Halberton over the past two years and firmly believes we are being watched by alien life-forms.

And he has been in touch with Doug Cooper, regional investigator for the British UFO Research Association, who has been examining the teenager's photograph.

"We are taking it seriously, it's a very good sighting from our point of view," said Mr Cooper.

"We think it was quite some considerable distance away and probably quite large — between 100 and 150 feet in diameter.

"I think it was so far away that he lost it over the horizon."

Mr Cooper said his research demonstrated the object could not have been an aircraft, a weather balloon or any natural phenomenon.

And he claims his computer enhancement of the photograph showed the craft was leaving a vapour trail behind it as it travelled across the heavens.

"We never say that they are alien spaceships but we don't know what it is which makes it an Unidentified Flying Object," said the investigator.

●The photograph taken by Alan Mitchell showed a white shape so tiny and distant that it would be impossible to reproduce in the paper without computer enhancement.

THE SUN (SCOTTISH)

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UFO TEAM PROBE 'FLYING TRIANGLES'

UFO experts are probing sightings of a mysterious triangular-shaped craft all over Scotland.

The latest was from a man in Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire—dubbed Britain's UFO capital—who watched terrified as the huge, black object repeatedly dived and circled above him.

Last night Scotland's top UFO expert admitted the claims were baffling.

Billy Devlin of Scottish Paranormal Investigations said: "We are taking the reports seriously and hoping to look at more evidence.

"There has been a wave of sightings of black triangles across Britain and in Europe.

"The man said the object, which had lights on its side and centre panels, buzzed him for several minutes. He is sure

By **JOHN BYNORTH**

he couldn't have confused it with a plane as the shape was so distinctive."

A similar object is said to have been seen above Campbeltown, Argyll, and by workers on a North Sea oil rig last year.

Health

Alien victims 'just dreamers'

PEOPLE who believe they have been kidnapped by aliens have simply been dreaming, a leading researcher into the paranormal said yesterday.

However real the experience might have seemed - and it may involve space travel or sexual encounters with extraterrestrials - it is most likely to be caused by borderline sleep, according to Dr Susan Blackmore.

Dr Blackmore, of the University of the West of England, Bristol, has identified "sleep paralysis" as the likely culprit for most alien kidnap experiences.

Although only a few people report alien encounters, she has

found that sleep paralysis is a common, if unnerving experience shared by up to three-out-of-ten people.

In the near-sleep state the dreamer slips consciously into paralysis because something has gone wrong with the normal sleep process, possibly due to exhaustion, excitement or worry.

The dreamer hears strange whining or roaring noises, sees flashing lights or stars and senses shaking or juddering. Some feel they have been turned in their beds, while others report sexual encounters.

Dr Blackmore says: "Sleep paralysis happens to perfectly normal people. It can be confusing and dis-

treasing. The more you fight it the worse it gets. Some people are frightened and seek medical help.

"But it is perfectly normal. The next line of my research is to try and find a scientific explanation for what is happening physiologically."

Dr Blackmore says that sleep paralysis has been little researched.

Many cultures have myths based on the phenomenon, she adds.

In medieval Britain night demons seduced innocent people. In Newfoundland there are tales of an "old hag" night visitor and in Vietnam it is a "grey ghost".

She adds: "Nowadays people are

more likely to report that a four-foot tall alien with big, slanty black eyes took them from their room at night and whisked them off in a space ship where they were operated on, or sexually manipulated, and returned to bed with an hour or two of missing time."

Some people could induce sleep paralysis in order to enjoy out-of-body, floating or flying sensations.

Dr Blackmore adds: "If you want to explore your own inner worlds, this is a drug-free, painless and fascinating way to do it."

Details of Dr Blackmore's latest research will be given in a paper to the British Association Annual Festival of Science in Birmingham in September.

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Sky-high hopes for UFO vigil

THOUSANDS of UFO spotters will line Scotland's spaceship hotspots this weekend in the biggest all-night vigil ever held.

UFO experts expect to be joined by crowds of would-be alien spotters during a 12-hour sky watch on Saturday night.

And they are banking on the current wave of spaceship fever, sparked by US hit movie Independence Day to bring amateur UFO spotters out in their thousands.

The Scottish Earth Mysteries Research organisation is holding vigils across the country on Saturday night in a bid to make some valid sightings.

Scotland's number one UFO site, Bonnybridge, will be covered, as well as Linlithgow, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Fife and the west coast.

Organiser Ron Halliday

said, "The bigger the area we concentrate on at the one time the higher a chance we have of spotting something."

"We expect thousands to come out in Scotland, helped by the huge success of Independence Day and the enthusiasm it has triggered, to help us record some sightings."

"It is the right time of year, the sky is clear and by watching the sky across the country all night we have a good chance of finding something out of the ordinary."

Bonnybridge, near Falkirk, has already been dubbed the UFO capital of Europe with the population of only 5450 reporting thousands of unexplained sightings in recent years.

The largest vigil will be held there, with another giant sky watch arranged at Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh.

Riddle of county's silver-suited visitors

DID extra-terrestrials find themselves in the sights of a Herefordshire farmer's gun as they took turf from his land?

This scenario, as unlikely as it may seem, is the subject of a probe by two UFO-ologists who claim the contact could be among the most significant of the "flying saucer" phenomenon.

True to form "the authorities" are accused of covering up the county's very own alien X-file, but this doesn't deter Rob and Marilyn Aldworth, of Birmingham UFO Society, from taking on a task that would test Mulder and Scully.

The tale Rob and Marilyn relate takes place in late 1947 when, in the early hours of the morning, a "dome shaped disc-like object" is said to have landed in an orchard adjacent to a farmhouse in a village nine miles from Hereford.

The farmer watched with his housekeeper as three 'small silver-suited beings' alighted from the craft and took up samples of turf, but before he could draw a bead on them with his gun they were re-boarded and heading for the heavens as swiftly and silently as their arrival. Only a circle burnt into the ground at the landing site was evidence the "aliens" were ever there.

According to a "close relative" of the farmer, from whom Rob and Marilyn take their details, the police were called to the scene the following morning, they, in turn, alerted the Ministry of Defence who took soil samples and declared the landing circle radioactive. The two witnesses were then warned to "forget" what they had seen and never to discuss it with anyone.

Subsequent inquiries into what occurred met

with silence and no known records exist, but Marilyn hopes fresh questions some 50 years later may meet with answers.

"Our informant is elderly and, at this stage, unspecific on some details such as an exact location, however if what has been described took place it could be among the most important contacts in the history of UFO investigation," she said.

The year of the landing is significant in UFO-lore, it was in 1947 that a "spaceship" supposedly crashed at Roswell in the US state of New Mexico. Marilyn says the 'aliens' allegedly found after this event are 'remarkably similar' to those who may have come to earth in Herefordshire.

Anyone able to assist Rob and Marilyn in proving "the truth is out there" can contact the couple on 0121 681 6344.



ANOTHER eagle-eyed star-gazer has spotted the mysterious bright white light hovering in the skies above Lincoln.

Keen astronomer Howard Wensley said he saw the light above RAF Waddington.

"I was out walking my dog when I saw the light in the sky. I thought it was the planet Venus which is usually visible at this time but it looked too big," he said.

Planets

"I've never seen a UFO before but I would like to think we are not alone. It would be dreadfully lonely.

"Scientists have discovered other planets with water on them so anything could be possible," he said.

SALISBURY JOURNAL

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Did you see this UFO?

I AM helping BUFORA (British UFO Research Association) write a book on sightings/experiences in the Wiltshire area.

In 1982 I had a clear sighting of a UFO and find it incredible that no-one else saw what I and my husband and five-year-old daughter saw on such a busy night in Pewsey.

It was the Friday night, around 9.15pm, in September, the night before Pewsey Carnival on the Saturday. We had just been to the fair and were walking home up

Wilton Road.

If anyone saw anything different and unexplainable that night or at any other time, would they please write to me in complete confidence through this newspaper.

They will not be identified by me or the researcher who may wish to talk to them and will remain anonymous at all times.

Any small incident or major experience will be dealt with sympathetically. Thankyou.

NAME & ADDRESS SUPPLIED.

WORTHING HERALD

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That was no UFO!

Sky puzzler thought to be lights from night club

THE MYSTERY surrounding UFO sightings in Worthing appears to have been solved.

Several callers contacted both the Herald and Worthing police last Thursday and Friday, claiming they had seen UFOs.

Police had also reported a large increase in the number of calls they had received with regard to possible UFO sightings.

But one of the eyewitnesses believes she has found the cause of the mystery - lights from a Worthing nightclub.

By Darren Lammias

Mrs Jennifer Brown, of East Worthing, claims that her investigations had led her to the lights at Ruthford's nightclub on Worthing pier.

Mrs Heidi Brown, of St Anselms Road, Worthing, told how she had stayed in her garden for two hours, between 9.30pm and 11.30pm last Thursday night, watching a 'craft'.

She called both her neighbours out to look at the lights she said were above their houses and

described flashing lights spinning round, slowing down and then speeding up again.

Mrs Brown said the lights appeared to be beaming down on the three houses.

Mrs Allison Podesta, of Inleside Crescent Lancing, said she had seen two spinning discs in the sky at about 10.20pm on the same night. She said they looked 'quite lovely'.

Mr Dale Sullivan said he had seen three disks in the sky as he drove home from work from Lancing to Worthing at 5.20pm.

The discs were spinning round slowly before heading off to sea and

disappearing from view.

"I'm glad that I was the only one who saw something," Mr Sullivan added.

Something similar happened last year when residents thought they had seen a UFO, only to find they had seen the searchlights from the Mansion House nightclub at Hrenstown.

Mystery craft in city sky

A NEW Swansea UFO group has been inundated with sightings of mysterious craft, organisers have claimed.

Swansea-based members of the Global UFO Investigation System say they have received more than 20 reports in the last month.

A branch office has recently opened in Bishopston.

Organiser Neil Spring said: "We have been amazed by the response from the people of Swansea.

"We are trying to investigate the reports to see if they can be explained in any way.

THE MERCURY (LEWISHAM BOROUGH)

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THE SHINING: Forest Hill reader Denise Rounds, from Honor Oak Road, wonders if anyone else saw the "white ball with the tail" that zipped across the sky in silence for two seconds at 4am on Monday. She thinks it was a UFO.

BUFORA UFO NEWSFILE ISSUE 43 SEPTEMBER 1996

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Aliens drop in on carnival country

by Jack Epstein
Rio de Janeiro

THEY have never seen anything like it. The people of Varginha, a small town 180 miles north of Rio, are being besieged by enthusiasts desperate to catch a glimpse of aliens who are reputed to have crash-landed from space.

Varginha is claiming the title of UFO (Unidentified Flying Object) capital of the Americas after locals reported strange encounters with aliens who flew over the town and crash-landed in a grey object the size of a minibus.

In an episode that could have been written for the popular television show *The X-Files*, some residents assert that the Brazilian army is involved in a cover-up similar to one claimed by American conspiracy theorists about an alleged UFO landing in 1947.

Even by the exotic standards set by UFO devotees around the world, the incident recounted in the dusty streets of Varginha is extremely bizarre. Three women told investigators of a 3ft visitor from space with chocolate-coloured skin, no nose or mouth, rubbery limbs, bulging red eyes and horns protruding from a massive forehead. They also reported a strong stench oozing from its oily skin. A second alien was spot-

ted later huddling against a wall. The first creature was rounded up by the army.

"It's what we call circumstantial proof, but it is very compelling," said Irene Granchi, founder of a Brazilian UFO research group. However, not everybody is so sure. The town is becoming a laughing stock for the rest of Brazil. A satirical television programme has invented a character called ET Varginha who speaks with the slow drawl for which the locals are renowned, likes pretty women and is followed everywhere by huddling soldiers.

Even so, Aloysio Ribeiro de Almeida, the mayor, sees rich potential in the affair. He plans to host an international UFO conference and turn Varginha into a centre for extraterrestrial studies. There is even a plan to build a park in honour of the alien visitors.

This is good news for Brazilian UFO enthusiasts. They are convinced that Varginha is the most significant extraterrestrial event since the Roswell, New Mexico, "landing" five decades ago. They claim one of the aliens was handed over to military officials at a local army base, where it died. The military took the corpse to the city's hospital, where it was examined by doctors. The UFO enthusiasts refuse to be put off by denials from the army and hospital.

New light on UFO sighting

STARTLING new evidence about one of the North's most famous UFO cases is to be revealed later this month.

The sighting happened more than 30 years ago when a fireman took a photograph of his daughter on Burgh Marsh, Cumbria.

When the photo was developed the family were startled to find a man standing in the background wearing a silver spacesuit.

Now Jenny Randles, Britain's leading researcher into UFOs, has uncovered new data which links the case with a sighting in Australia.

She has found previously classified documents which reveal that a similar spaceman was spotted during a ballistic missile test on the other side of the world - on the same day as the Cumbrian picture was taken.

The UFO author, who has written more than 30 books on the subject, has also delved into a more recent North-East case of a couple who claimed to have spotted a flying saucer land near the Menwith Hill airbase, near Harrogate.

She will present her findings at a UFO conference to be held at the University of Northumbria on Saturday, 27 July.

"There have been some classic encounters in the North-East," she said. "This will be my first lecture in Newcastle and we'll have plenty to discuss, including lots of new evidence."

Also taking part is Lynda Jones, a Manchester woman who claims to have undergone a close encounter with an alien spaceship.

The lecture has been organised by Gloria Dixon, head of investigations for the British UFO Research Association, who said: "We are very lucky to have Jenny Randles who is undoubtedly the UK's premier Ufologist and investigator."

● Admission to the event, which starts at 2pm, costs £4 for adults and £2.50 for concessions. Seats can be reserved by calling 0191-236 8375.

DAILY MIRROR

15 JUL 96



BELIEVER: UFO investigator Nick

I'm the real-life Mulder..

INTERVIEW Nick Pope

NICK POPE could teach a thing or two to Fox "Spooky" Mulder, the FBI agent in *The X-Files*.

For just like the character in the hit BBC series, he knows all about investigating UFOs.

Nick, 30, has spent five years doing just that while working for a hush-hush department at the Ministry of Defence.

Now he's gone public with mysteries from the secret files in a new

book which is set to be a publishing sensation.

Nick joined the MoD 11 years ago and was assigned to Secretariat (Air SMD) 2a - better known to insiders as the UFO desk - in 1991.

"I came into the department as a sceptic" he says. "But as I investigated more cases, my position gradually changed.

"There is a hardcore of sightings which defy rigorous investigation and

I think it is entirely logical that some of these are extra-terrestrial craft.

"I found as I sent out my reports that in the world of officialdom there are some sceptics and some believers," he explains.

"Many RAF pilots have privately admitted to me that they have seen

UFOs, but are afraid of making official reports for fear of ridicule."

The Government was so sensitive about Nick's views that his book *Open Skies. Closed Minds*, published by Simon & Schuster, had to be vetted by the military.

Nick changed from a sceptic into a believer after investigating a

UFO sighting in March 1993.

There were reports of the mystery craft from all over the country, and the witnesses included policemen and military guards.

The most detailed information came from servicemen at RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury in the Black Country, who saw an enormous craft firing beams of light at the countryside.

"This was one in the

eye for sceptics who say these things only happen to people on their way back from the pub," says Nick.

He questioned scores of people and checked classified records to see if any secret prototype planes - either British or foreign - were flying that night.

"There was no explanation for the strange craft. It had to be a UFO," says Nick.

MARK CHADBOURN

BUFORA UFO NEWSFILE ISSUE 43 SEPTEMBER 1996

UFO reported

UFO sighting has been reported to Monmouth Po-

local motorist was travelling on the A40 near the Alan Services at 8 pm on Monday when he saw a black, flat, ragged-edged object, measuring 15 ft by 10 ft, in the sky. He likened the object to a solar panel from a satellite.

HERALD EXPRESS (TORQUAY)

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Police in dark over riddle of fast lights

MYSTERIOUS lights in the sky are buzzing South Devon police!

The baffling X-Files apparitions, described as a "peaceful glow" and "shooting rings" have baffled members of the area's law and order establishment.

The heavenly show was first spotted by retired Dawlish policeman Roger Gardner on Wednesday.

But since the report of the lights above his Holcombe home appeared in Thursday's Herald Express he has been inundated by calls from other witnesses.

Retired Torquay police inspector Ken Radford was driving between Totnes and Newton Abbot at 11pm on Wednesday night when he saw the lights.

"A big ring of light came towards us followed by maybe half a dozen smaller rings," said the 65-year-old.

1,000mph

The rings were above tree height, he said, but their exact altitude and size was difficult to judge.

"They were moving at terrific speeds — maybe 1,000 miles an hour," he added.

He pulled over on the side of the road, but as his wife Jill and family got out of their car the lights van-

1,000mph 'shooting rings' apparitions

by DAVID WOODTHORPE

ished.

On the same night ex-prison officer Vivien Peters, 50, was sitting on the back doorstep of her Exmouth home when she saw a softly glowing oval-shaped light above the trees at around 10.30pm.

"It hovered then shot across about 500 yards, hovered and then shot back again," she said.

And the mysterious UFOs even put in an appearance over Devon and Cornwall police's Middlemoor HQ when strange green lights were spotted by nearby residents.

A police spokesman said:

"We've enough problems on the ground without dealing with things in the sky!"

Air traffic controllers at Exeter airport said they were not aware of any unusual objects showing up on their radar screens on Wednesday night.

No explanation

A farmer east of Exeter has admitted staging a laser show as part of a party on one night, but there has been no explanation for the other "sightings".

In previous years bizarre evening lights over South Devon have been blamed on local nightclubs, per-end light shows — and even the fluorescent beams installed in a foray man's pond to kill bugs.

'UFO' sighted on mystery photos



Plea for help in solving puzzle

BAFFLED Michael Clipsham is appealing to Echo readers to help solve a UFO mystery.

The 24-year-old thought he was simply taking a photo of his girlfriend's sister and son on a slide outside the Stag's Head pub at Knaith Park, near Gainsborough.

But when he went to pick up his snaps he saw a mystery bright white light glowing in the sky above the tree line.

"I definitely didn't see anything in the sky at the time I took the photographs," said Mr Clipsham, of Stanley Street, Gainsborough.

"I couldn't believe what I was seeing when I looked at them. Up until now, I never really believed in UFOs, but now I don't know what to think."

Mr Clipsham has shown all his friends and family the mystery pictures in the hope of finding an explanation.

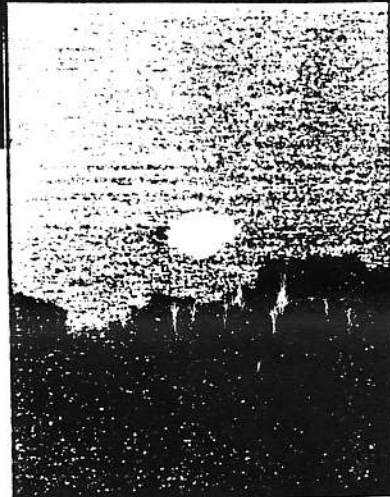
Photograph

"It has really got to me," he said. I even went out and bought a book on UFOs, but nobody can come up with an explanation.

"I'd love to hear from anyone who may have seen this bright white disc in the sky or who can explain it."

The photograph was taken on June 12 outside the Stag's Head pub, looking northwards.

● Does anyone have an explanation? Call the Echo hotline on (01522) 540001.



FOREST OF DEAN & WYE VALLEY REVIEW

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The night Tom's car died...

DOWN to earth Woolaston farmer Tom Gwinnet is about to become known to science fiction and UFO fans the world over as one of the stars of a CD-ROM all about the century's greatest unexplained mysteries.

Mr Gwinnet's story of how he saw a crop circle being formed on his farm, near Lydney, is featured along with eyewitness accounts of alien abductions, strange coincidences, spontaneous combustion and poltergeists on a programme called *The Unexplained*

—but he says it all has nothing to do with little green men in spaceships.

It was about 15 years ago and I was driving my car past a field one July evening when the electric lights went dead. I tried to get the car started again but nothing was happening, but I suddenly heard a whirring noise," said Mr Gwinnet.

"I looked across to the field and saw a red ball, about the size of a soccer ball, made up of a cluster of red sparks. They seemed to be coming from the top of the wheat. I watched for a minute or so and then it suddenly disappeared.

At that moment, my headlights came back on and I was able to drive away.

The next morning I found a 20 foot crop circle in exactly the spot where I had seen the red ball."

Mr Gwinnet was mystified by the events he had witnessed that night, but was sceptical of other reports which claimed the circles were the work of UFOs or alien beings, he contacted a scientist who was researching the subject.

He told me a lot of common-sense, in other words that they are easily explained as being the

result of static electricity and wind forming a vortex. You get them in fields full of all kinds of crops, including swedes, turnips and rape—but of course you see it much more clearly in a field of corn.

Mr Gwinnet's story was included in public records on crop circles and publishers of *The Unexplained*, Flag Tower, say they picked only the best eyewitness accounts for the CD-ROM.

"I've hardly told anyone about it," Mr Gwinnet said. "I was rather surprised to find I was included on this