

# BUFORA NEWSFILE

ISSUE NO 51

## Lights fantastic

"QUITE simply, there are phantom lights which appear at the top end of Woodhead - there's no doubt they exist but what they are I haven't a clue."

Sean Wood was pointing towards Shining Clough, a mountain ridge which dominates the southern horizon outside his Peak District home. He first saw the baffling Longdendale Lights there at Hallowe'en in 1982, the year he moved to live in Bleak House, a which stands just yards from the busy Woodhead Pass.

"It was about 9.30pm when I walked into one of the front rooms to chastise someone for shining a torch through our window," Sean explained. "Then I realised we live nearly 1,000 foot above sea level."

"When I went outside to investigate I was staggered to see large pulsing ball of light directly above the house, and not too far from the aptly named Shining Clough. "With the hair on the back of my neck bristling I went to telephone my near neighbours at the Crowden Youth Hostel. Guess what? They were outside watching the light in the sky too."

### What is the secret of the Dark Peak?

"In all I've seen these lights more than 30 times over the 16 years I've been here."

"Sometimes the lights are very, very big, and between 50 and 70 ft from the ridge, pulsing and moving back and forth and up and down. I've also seen three lights together, much smaller and together, like in a string, moving in an arch."

#### Ghostly

Sean Wood is just one of dozens of people who have spotted the phantom lights which haunt Bleaklow mountain and the Woodhead pass which runs below it. Wright Cooper, whose family have farmed in the valley for four centuries, says he remembers his grandfather talking about them early this century.

Back then he said they were thought to

be the work of the devil, but more recently times they have been linked with a yarn about ghostly Roman soldiers.

But for Glossop mum-of-three Laverne Marshall, it is no laughing matter.

Laverne has never forgotten the night last year when she claims she was chased across Woodhead moor by strange lights - which appeared inside her car!

The housewife said she was driving back to Glossop with daughter Stacey, 20, and her baby late one night when four or five balls of light appeared on the dashboard.

"They were really bright and dancing up and down just like they were being controlled by a juggler," she claimed.

"Stacey panicked and locked the central locking and slid the cover over the sunroof but then they split up into two groups and we sat speechless as they moved onto the back window."

"Then each moved back in single file to the dashboard where they regrouped, - almost as if they were marching in order."

The Marshalls are the latest to join a long list of people who have described seeing strings of moving lights, single balls of light and searchlight beams.

The lights have been seen right along the 15-mile ridge, from Torside Castle and Bramah Edge on the west, to Shining Clough at the head of the valley.

The local Mountain Rescue Team have turned out from their Glossop base on many occasions when lights and "flares" have been spotted.

The rescue team's commander, engineer Phil Shaw, has become fascinated by the lights since he saw a mystery searchlight beam 15 years ago, and logs sightings.

"Between them, the seven mountain rescue teams in the Peak are called out once a year by people who see lights in the hills and assume someone is in trouble," he told me. The reports have become so regular that the police no longer pass on reports of mystery lights to us unless they feel it is a genuine sighting of a red distress flare."

## Nature's own UFOs

SCIENTISTS have brought out-of-this-world theories about Peakland's UFOs down to earth with a bump.

For a TV documentary this weekend reveals how lights similar to those seen at Woodhead have been reported across the world for hundreds of years.

But instead of pointing to visitors from outer

space, scientists believe the lights are caused by natural electric fields produced by our own planet.

Experts believe the lights could be caused by electrical discharges from the earth's crust which are released into the air by mini earth tremors.

Experiments by the Geological Survey Office in the USA have even created mini UFO lights

when granite rocks have been crushed.

Ball lightning, freak weather and sparks from the electricity pylons which run through the valley have been ruled out by investigators.

■ The Mystery of Dark Peak - Strange But True Encounters on ITV, Friday night; Earthlights is screened by Channel 4 Equinox on Sunday night.

● The searcher. . . Patrick Leonard of the Northants UFO Research Association. (Ref: 96/9/456/20).

# Was weird light in sky a UFO?

AN OFFICE worker is reopening the X-files on Tandridge after spotting a strange light in the night sky.

South Godstone man Alex Godden wants to know if anyone else caught a glimpse of the unidentified object he and a friend saw as they walked home one night.

Alex is the latest in a line of people who say they have seen strange lights in Tandridge's sky.

Last year, a Hurst Green pensioner claimed to have spotted a UFO from his bedroom window and a number of similar sightings have been reported in Smallfield.

Alex, of Eastbourne Road, said he and a friend were walking across fields from Crowhurst to South Godstone last Wednesday when they had their strange encounter.

Sometime between 10.30 and 11pm, he said, they saw a bright light in the sky.

"I looked and looked away and looked back and I thought it was very strange.

"It appeared to be hanging there. I thought it might be a plane then the light went out and a little light started blinking. This light zoomed, I mean literally zoomed, across the

sky towards Gatwick.

"The only thing I've seen move that fast is a jet, but there was no sound.

Alex described the first light as oblong-shaped and brilliant white in colour. He said the second light alternated between blue and yellow.

"I believe in the existence of extra-terrestrials," he added. "The thought of us being the only life in the universe is ridiculous and arrogant."

The 23-year-old said his pal was also flabbergasted by what he saw. "He's always kept an open mind but it's the first time he's seen anything he couldn't explain," said Alex. "We were both blown away."

## SWANSEA SOUTH WALES EVENING POST

25 OCT 96

Page 21

## Pensioner in UFO claim

A SWANSEA pensioner claims to have seen a UFO hovering over a city church.

Anthony White, aged 72, of Dyfatty, claims he saw blue flashes come out of the sky above St Thomas Church.

After seeing the strange light, Mr White went to bed but woke up at 1.30am to see the flashes again.

He said: "It was on October 13 and the sky was blue and there was a white puff of cloud over the church. The cloud got larger and thicker.

"Blue discharge shot out of the left side of the cloud two or three times and then the cloud gradually receded and faded away. There was no sound.

"It must have been an energy source hidden in the condensation to create that kind of phenomenon."

## COTSWOLD STANDARD

29 OCT 96

Page 27

## Was it the 'wave rider'?

A UFO researcher claims the recent spate of sightings in the Cirencester and Cotswold area could be explained by a revolutionary new American aircraft.

Ron Barrett, who investigates UFO sightings in the Cotswolds, said: "I would put money on it being a new type of craft the Americans are developing called the 'wave rider'.

"Apparently the craft

rides on a cushion of air and can travel at speeds of up to 4,500 mph. They are highly manoeuvrable and can operate without a pilot using a very sophisticated computer."

There have been several UFO sightings in the area in recent weeks.

Ron Bassett, a retired air gunner, spotted a brightly-lit craft hovering above his home in Fosse Close, Cirencester, three weeks ago.

There were several other sightings in the Gloucestershire area around the same time.

Mr Barrett said the 'wave rider' would be able to perform the sort of manoeuvre Mr Bassett had seen.

But he would not rule out the possibility of it being an extra-terrestrial spacecraft.

No-one from the American airforce was available for comment.

## THE SUN (SCOTTISH)

11 NOV 96

Page 8

## SPACE SPY PROBE

AMERICAN space spy scientists are probing a mystery mid-air explosion off the Outer Hebrides.

A major search and investigations, including one by a UFO expert, have so far failed to explain what caused the blast seen by locals on Lewis two weeks ago.

Now US military boffins from a spy satellite base in New Mexico have been in touch with UK scientists.

They hope to pinpoint the time of the explosion and try to find it on their satellite photos.

## 'UFO' at Horne

A MYSTERIOUS object has appeared in Horne Court Wood and there is speculation about its identity and origin. Looking rather like two halves of an aluminium football which were once taped together with yellow plastic tape, it remains a mystery. One theory is that it is part of an aircraft which dropped off near Gatwick, but bits just do not drop off aircraft, do they? Another thought is that it may have been a piece of meteorological equipment which has plummeted to earth after releasing its instruments by parachute. It could also have been an unexploded bomb, but where is the explosive? The most likely solution is a UFO. Certainly it remains unidentified, surely it must have flown to get there and there is no doubt that it is an object. So that's it, - a UFO.

## Edith's X-File

■ A STARTLED woman rubbed her eyes in disbelief when she thought she saw UFOs flying over her home.

Edith Bigg, of Victor Road, Windsor, claims she spotted the extra-terrestrial lookalikes as she stood in her garden at 7pm on Sunday night.

A laser light and firework display was decorating the skies over Legoland in Winkfield Road at the same time, but Mrs Bigg is convinced the objects she saw were not fireworks or lasers.

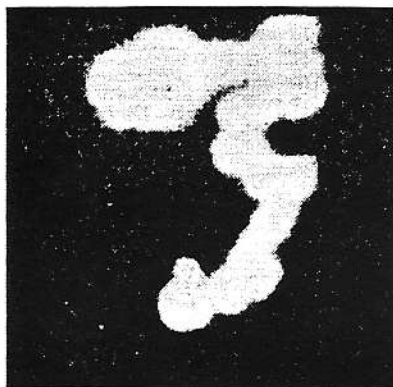
She is also adamant they were not aeroplanes.

She contacted the Express and said: "They were very small objects which I saw - they were positioned close together before they darted away from each other and then joined together again.

"The speed at which they were moving was phenomenal."



# Merseyside's own X-files probed



● Real or imagined ... a UFO

THE truth is out there ... and in Liverpool, according to the British UFO Research Association.

Investigators have declared Merseyside a "UFO Window" because of the high and regular number of sightings in the region.

## Experiences

More are certain to come to light when the association holds its fourth Merseyside UFO conference at The Hague, in Maryland Street, Liverpool City Centre, on Saturday, November 30.

Speakers will be revealing their own X-files on subjects

By Keith Gladdis

ranging from alien abduction to an alleged cover-up by the British government.

Anthony Eccles, from Halewood, is an accredited investigator with BUFORA and expects there to be plenty of revelations at the event.

He said: "The UFO phenomenon is real. At the conference we take people seriously and they are more willing to share their experiences."

Anthony and his fellow investigator Mark Glover, from Bootle, can be heard regularly on radio and are becoming familiar names on Merseyside.

## OXFORD MAIL

24 OCT 96

Page 3

# Mystery deepens after UFO reports

UFO experts are investigating the sighting of a bagel-shaped flying saucer with red flashing lights.

Dozens of people around Oxfordshire reported seeing the pale, oval craft hovering in the sky on Tuesday night.

The object was spotted close to RAF Benson, Cowley and Bicester before travelling north to Banbury. Police insisted that it was an airship.

A spokesman said: "We had been notified before. It travelled from Reading to Warwick."



But the sighting excited UFO organisation Contact International.

Michael Soper, the group's spokesman, said: "The reports seem to

indicate a luminous white object with a cluster of lights underneath.

"It was such a clear night we hope someone may have got a photo of it."

He said the group would be investigating the sightings despite the police statement.

One eyewitness, Helen Knight, 29, of Crowmarsh, said: "It looked like a big space ship."

"My sister Emma was with me and also witnessed it."

"At first we thought it was going in to land at Benson."

## RUTLAND & STAMFORD MERCURY

01 NOV 96

Page 3

## Flying object is spotted

AN UNIDENTIFIED flying object has been spotted in the skies over Uffington.

The witness was out walking his dog at 6.15am when a round, orange object appeared on the horizon.

"It suddenly stopped motionless, and then the ball exploded into a bright light. Then it got smaller and smaller, and just disappeared. There was a 'gigorous' brightness. It was amazing," he explained.

An RAF Wittering spokesman said there were no planes flying in the area at the time. If you can offer any further information, or a possible explanation, please write to Letters, Rutland and Stamford Mercury, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 2QZ.

# Phones ring hot as 'UFO' crosses Oxon

IT WAS a busy evening for UFO spotters on Tuesday night.

All over the county people were reporting a low-flying object with red flashing lights.

Local media and the police received dozens of detailed sightings.

The object was spotted close to RAF Benson, Cowley and Bicester before travelling north to Banbury.

One of the first callers Helen Knight, 29, of Crowmarsh, said: "It looked like a big space ship. My sister Emma was with me and also witnessed it."

"At first we thought it was going in to land at Benson. We telephoned the base and learnt that the police had already been informed."

But police revealed that it was an airship.

## BORDON TIMES & MAIL

22 OCT 96

Page 1

## The Headley X-files!

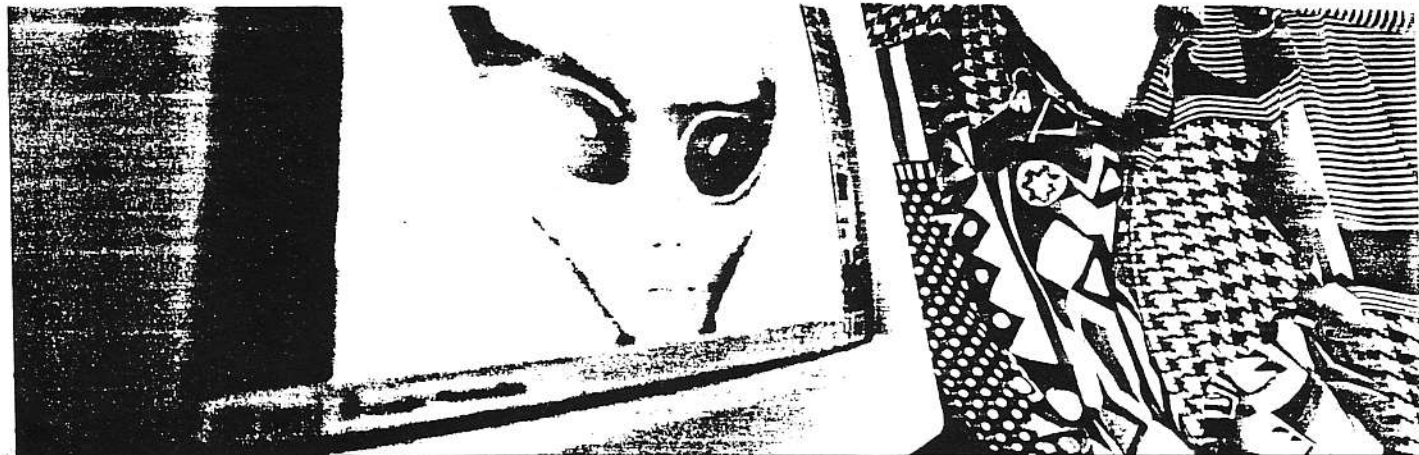
A FAST-moving unidentified flying object was seen in the night sky above Headley Down last Tuesday.

The UFO was seen by a 24-year-old woman who said the object was about the size of a house, shaped like a cross, and brightly illuminated.

"It was the way the craft moved that was really strange - it appeared from the north and sped off east at high speed, turned a full-circle and then dropped out of sight."

"I am not saying it was aliens, but it was not a normal aircraft."

A local UFO group has said that it will look into the woman's sighting.



ANOTHER WORLD: Matthew Williams at his home in Ton Pentre where he produces his own UFO magazine

Picture: ROB NORMAN

# Spaced out on aliens, flying saucers and army bunkers

FROM his parents' house in Ton Pentre, Rhondda, Matthew Williams masterminds a non-stop investigation into the possibility of an alien presence in Wales.

This amateur but rather impressive operation is beamed from his bedroom, involving a photo-copied bi-monthly magazine, various jaunts around the country looking for secret bunkers, overhead-projection lectures and liaison with like-minded UFO enthusiasts in Britain.

Matthew even travelled to the Nevada desert in May 1993 to check out a secret air base, known as Area 51, where the US Government is supposed to be building UFO-like craft.

Life for the 24-year-old former civil servant apparently revolves around his computer (always handy for creating front-page images for the magazine *Truth Seekers Review*), video recorder with accompanying library (titles include *Ozric Tentacles* and, of course, the telephone).

The *Big Breakfast* and a BBC programme call within half-an-hour of each other, although because it is not a direct line, one or other of Matthew's parents downstairs pick it up as quickly as he does.

The parents – his father is a retired industrial chemist – don't really get involved. "I don't discuss it with them, to be honest," he says. "They have got used to me."

His room is so full of files and correspondence that he does not allow the family's lively Labrador Oliver in as he is likely to send everything flying.

If it wasn't for the mention of a girlfriend (the pair share weird experiences) it would be easy to believe Matthew, like some intrepid BBC children's drama hero, is obsessed with the idea we are not alone in South Wales.

CATHERINE JONES

He first became interested in 1990 when he saw what he calls a UFO near Bwlch Mountain as he travelled to work one evening.

Very large, yellow and sitting on the side of the mountain is how he describes the vision. "It must have been 300 feet high."

Although his friend, travelling in the passenger seat, didn't see it, the experience set Matthew thinking.

"This was the weird thing about having my sighting – I didn't think, 'hey what was that weird thing?' until four or five days later. It was the thought of seeing something that strange and not being able to realise you're seeing something strange that perplexed me."

He was recommended a book, *Above Top Secret, the Worldwide UFO Cover-up*, by Timothy Good. "What an explosive book – UFOs being seen a lot more than we think and the military knowing about it. Sightings which cannot be explained by natural means and the fact the British Government, by the end of 1945, had departments in place looking into stuff in the skies which had affected their craft."

Matthew cites the Roswell incident which allegedly occurred in 1947 in New Mexico in the USA. "People did see little aliens – there are plenty of witnesses – it's a very intriguing case because so many people came up with the same description of what was seen."

After reading many books – "to acquaint myself with what we are dealing with" – he became an investigator in his spare time.

"I spoke to people. I took reports. I looked into cover-ups. I became involved in carrying out hypnosis on

## Flaps, lights and balls

CARDIFF has had quite a few sightings over the last few years, according to Matthew, and the South Wales valleys are also a hotbed – several coming from Pontypridd, Abercynon and Quaker's Yard.

In the seventies there was "a lot of activity" in West Wales – one area became known as the Welsh Triangle.

"People in Pembroke were seeing unusual lights in the sky and the RAF reported that they were not doing any strange manoeuvres

which could have caused these.

"In North Wales, there are tales of triangular UFO craft. Near Liverpool in November 1994 there was a flap – the term for a large set of sightings."

He has investigated sightings in Brecon – "ghost lights" seen in the distance which followed people home. More recently three people claim to have seen a UFO – "a large ball of glowing light was seen to rise into the sky" – near a military base in Brecon.

people to look into their memories of missing time."

Around 18 months ago with Cardiff researcher Chris Fowler ("He was instrumental in getting the Government to admit Rudloe Manor in Wiltshire dealt with UFO information") and Paul Damon ("He has moved to South America and is carrying on his research there") Matthew started printing *Truth Seekers Review*, a 40-odd page non-profit-making publication, priced at £1.70, which now has 50 subscribers.

"I feel strongly about this subject because I have experienced something."

Since losing his job with Customs and Excise he has been working while he is on the dole.

Particularly interested in military bunkers, he has travelled to investigate them in Scotland, Wiltshire and Wales – "The level of security at these bases is incredible, generals and admirals working round the clock" – although the bunkers' connections with other-worldly presences is never

quite clear.

In the latest edition of *Truth Seekers Review*, he writes about bunker spotting. (Other articles include *The Knill Files*, *What is Aurora?* and *Ley Lines in South Glamorgan* and in the March/April copy readers can choose from *Mutilations in Puerto Rico*, *Mass Murders in White Coats* and *Brecon UFO incident*).

Recently he took the BBC to film at a bunker site and the MOD police escorted them.

"They let us carry on, not showing their aggressive hand in front of the cameras, but one of the interesting things was, he did say he knew my name. They all know what we're up to."

In his lectures, he tells people about the abduction research he has been doing, interviewing people under hypnosis. He concludes that with all his video evidence – "I have some very impressive footage" – something must be going on.

If anyone thinks this is all madness, Matthew, a founder member of the South Wales UFO Group, would disagree.

"They obviously haven't studied the available information. Unfortunately some sceptics prefer to ignore the evidence even though it's stamping them in the face."

"You can't get through to some people. The one thing that changes people's minds is when it happens to them."

In Britain, there are some 2,000 sightings a year. A survey in 1992 showed 50 per cent of Americans believed in UFOs.

Inevitably, he comes in for joking from the kind of people who believe *The X-Files* is a television programme and no more.

Matthew points out the enormous popularity of the programme and one-off television specials on the paranormal such as *Strange But True*. "A lot of the sightings I hear through word of mouth," he says. "Nearly everyone has had some sort of unusual experience. Some have seen disc-shaped crafts, some have seen rocket-shapes with big plumes leaving a massive smoke trail."

"Most people wouldn't make it up to be malicious – I think the majority are genuine. Quite honestly, I don't think they'd have the imagination to think these things up."

"People don't talk about it because of the fear of ridicule."

"There are women who have met aliens and maybe been on board their craft. There are stories about how aliens have come into their rooms at night and surrounded the bed, how these creatures with almond-shaped eyes have just stood there looking at them."

There is, says Matthew, a lot going on we don't know about.

● *Truth Seekers Review* can be contacted on 01443 437853.

EASTERN DAILY PRESS

05 NOV 96

Page 18

## Strange light in the sky

Mrs JEANETTE HACKETT, Mayton Avenue, Frettenham.

On January 31 this year at 4am, I saw a strange phenomenon in the clear night sky. This was a large red/orange stationary ball of light, on a north-west heading, making no sound and not pulsating. After a few seconds it just "blinked out" like a light being switched off.

Since then, extensive inquiries and investigations by the Norfolk UFO Society (NUFOS) have revealed no explanation for this. I know, however, that it was not the famous Boston Stump!

If any readers can offer an explanation, or have had any sightings of unusual phenomena, they can contact NUFOS (which is handling this case) on 01508 489762. We would like this mystery cleared up.

**EXCLUSIVE**

**BAFFLED** Government chiefs have been sitting on a real-life X-File that would send TV sleuths Scully and Mulder into orbit.

Alien corpses were secretly recovered from a Welsh mountainside in the Seventies and transported to the country's most secret defence base, say UFO investigators.

The claims by a retired serviceman have been revealed on the eve of a new series of Britain's favourite sci-fi programme.

**Shocked**

Dead aliens were found on the slopes of the Berwyn mountain range and then transported to the hush-hush weapons research establishment at Porton Down, Wilts. In his statement, the serviceman told how his unit responded to a major alert in January 1974.

*He said he was present when bodies of aliens were loaded on to an Army transporter after a flying saucer crash.*

The incident allegedly happened near the remote communities of Llandderfel and Llan-irillo after locals reported a ball of light streaking across the skies and falling to Earth with 'an enormous bang'.

The Army officer said he and our other soldiers were sent to

**THE X Files heart-throb David Duchovny may have won the Most Popular Actor award at this week's National Television Awards but there's little time to celebrate.**

Ace alien spotters Duchovny, alias Agent Mulder, and Gillian Anderson, Agent Scully, ought to be heading for the Clapham home of Zigi Kikymoski.

There, according to Zigi, they will detect an upsurge in UFO activity in the skies over the capital.

He is so confident of his findings that he's made a bold prediction. "I think by the middle of 1997 face to face contact will be made with aliens."

The 54-year-old from Prideaux Road insists he and his four colleagues from the Alien Technology and UFO research group have not

by **SHUJAU AZAM**

crossed the final frontier of sanity. The former Army vehicle and weapons technician, who watches the skies through powerful binoculars from a platform on his roof, said, "I'm not eccentric or paranoid we are all taking this very seriously."

He said, "We have spotted crafts which are rugby ball shaped in profile and disc over- all. They're about 10ft in diam-

eter and moves in a positive linear mode. They're also self-illuminating and very bright."

He believes the increased number of UFOs is linked to man's conquest of space.

"I think there is a lot of extra-terrestrial interest because we have conquered space travel."

"That's what has prompted them to start taking a closer interest in our activities."

**IAN BRANDES**

the scene and ordered to load two boxes on to their vehicles then drive to Porton Down.

He claimed: "The boxes were opened by staff at the facility in our presence. We were shocked to see two creatures, which had been placed inside decontamination suits."

"When the suits were fully opened, it was obvious that the creatures were not of this world. The bodies were about five to

six feet tall, humanoid in shape, but so thin they looked almost skeletal with covered skin."

*The witness claims to have met other servicemen with even more sensational information.*

They told him they had also transported aliens to Porton Down — but their cargo was still **ALIVE**.

A spokesman for UFO magazine said he was certain that the retired officer was genuine.

Despite the time lapse of 22 years, there seems to be increas-

ing evidence that something mysterious happened in the Berwyn mountain range in late January 1974.

**Armed**

In a separate investigation, top UFO expert Jenny Randles also claims a flying saucer crashed in the area.

She says a local nurse saw armed soldiers guarding the wreckage of the space craft.

But the Defence Ministry has "no knowledge" of the incident.

**AYRSHIRE POST**

10 MAY 96

Page 18

**UFO FEVER!**

**A UFO appeared from under the mist and passed over Mauchline at low level, a local woman claims.**

"If I had been in my neighbour's house, I could have practically reached up and touched it," she told the Post.

The woman called her son to witness groups of white, red and green lights in the sky.

The lights then dis-

appeared, and the woman and her son saw a dark green shell-like shape pass over their neighbour's house.

The incident occurred just after 8 pm on March 24 — a wet and miserable Sunday evening.

But the Mauchline woman has only just plucked up the courage to tell the Post — and the West of Scotland UFO Group.

"I don't want people to poke fun and ask me how many little green men I've seen today," she said.

"This was something I genuinely saw, and I'm trying to find out if anyone else saw it."

A spokesman for the West of Scotland UFO Group said: "We are currently carrying out research into this case."



**A FAMOUS SIGHTING ... this picture was taken in Switzerland in 1976**

**RAF log sightings as meteor showers**

THE RAF and Air Traffic Control at Prestwick have been inundated with reports of UFOs.

A spokesman at Air Traffic Control in Prestwick said this week: "People have been seeing this green or orange thing with a tail flying across the sky."

"We received a number of calls last week."

There were similar reports to RAF Kinloss and Lossiemouth.

RAF staff at the Aerial Control Centre at Atlantic House, Prestwick, believe the UFO sighters had seen aquarids or meteor showers.

The spokesman said: "These occur predominately in early May."

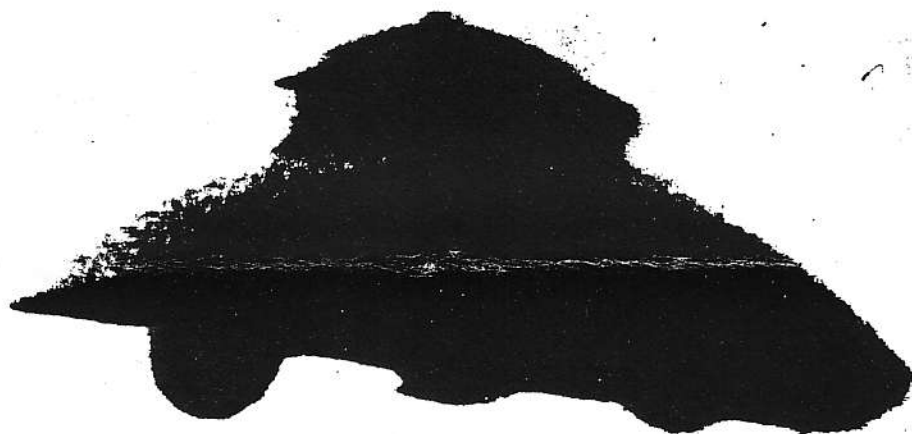
"They are caused by specks of dust burning up at 100 kilometres high and leaving a trail of hot gas."

The 'UFOs' can be seen on any clear night just now in the western sky.



# THE REAL X-FILES ?

**TIM COLEMAN** MEETS **NICK POPE**, AUTHOR OF *OPEN SKIES*, *CLOSED MINDS* AND ONE-TIME DESK OFFICER AT SEC(AS)2A, THE UFO INFORMATION-GATHERING DEPARTMENT AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.



Alleged space craft photographed at Silver Springs, Maryland by Madeleine Rodeffer in 1965

**O**ver the last few years something extraordinary has been happening in Britain. The trickle of interest in UFOs and paranormal phenomena, which has traditionally been investigated by a collection of so-called 'fringe' groups, and normally fills the columns of a small number of specialist magazines, has suddenly become a raging torrent. It appears that what was once considered the domain of a few enthusiastic amateurs has now become a subject of major public fascination, increasingly fuelled by the mainstream media who are falling over themselves in a competitive frenzy to feed this exponential growth in all things weird, wonderful and certainly extraterrestrial.

The reasons behind this explosion of interest are complex and multifaceted. Perhaps part of the reason lies in the fact that many old paradigms are collapsing like

houses made of straw. Revolutionary new theories are hammering at the doors of an endless list of scientific theories in physics, medicine and archaeology, to name but a few. A climate of uncertainty has thus been created which provokes both demands for change and an infectious, all-pervading curiosity at all levels of our society.

It could also be that due to the vast increase in interest in the UFO phenomenon, whether in the form of science fiction or in documentaries or media investigations, a more open atmosphere has been created in which people feel more confident about discussing the phenomenon, without fear of ridicule. With more and more scientists admitting just how limited their knowledge is, being agnostic about UFOs seems an ever more reasonable position. One thing is certain though: the actual number of reported sightings has increased enormously over the last few years.

One of the most significant changes to have occurred in the field of UFO research has been the increase in the number of respected academics who have been prepared to risk their reputations by becoming involved. This has occurred in the political arena as well, especially in America, where interest in the UFO phenomenon has become a public obsession.

Roy Lake, who heads a UFO study group in London and has been investigating the phenomenon for 43 years, states: 'There is no doubt that interest in UFOs and alien visitors is at an all-time high.' He believes part of the reason for this is to do with the flood of material coming from America. There has been a massive growth of interest in subjects such as Area 51, the notorious US military installation at Groom Lake, Nevada, where 'black budget' operations are carried out - the building of the Stealth bomber and 'Star Wars' technology research for example. Various witnesses who

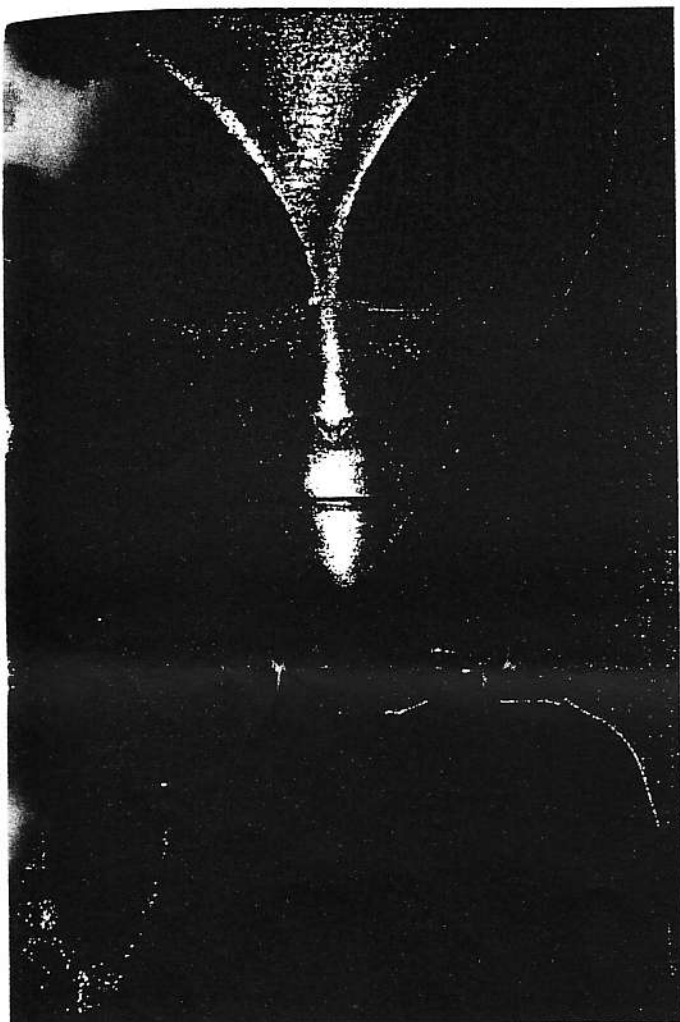
claim to have worked there say the underground base is home to extraterrestrial discs, which are supposedly being 'back-engineered' for military use.

Lake also believes that: '*The X-Files* has had a remarkable effect on the British public. This programme has acted as a catalyst for many people who originally were not interested in UFOs but have now begun to get more involved.'

## Nick Pope: the maverick at the MoD

When *The X-Files* was first screened on BBC 2, its viewing figures of 6.2 million made it the channel's most popular programme. Its success has been such that it has since transferred to BBC 1 and is now showing twice every week. If you believe the characters in *The X-Files* to be pure fiction, then think again.

Although quite clearly not in the same league as the television character, Nick Pope often refers to himself as 'the real Fox Mulder'. From 1991 to 1994, Pope ran a special department at



A model of a 'grey' alien by Steve Neill.

the Ministry of Defence, called Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a. This innocuous-sounding branch of the Civil Service was more commonly known as the 'UFO desk'. As its manager, Nick Pope was the government's top expert on the subject. It is possible that Nick had more access to UFO-related information than anyone else in the whole country.

Pope says he horrified his colleagues at the MoD (and delighted UFO buffs) by publicly admitting his belief that some UFOs are extraterrestrial space craft. He has published a book, *Open Skies, Closed Minds*, which contains a description of his time on the UFO desk, as well as a detailed look, not only at important UFO cases he investigated, but also the alien abduction phenomenon, and even animal mutilation.

### Is it a bird? Is it a plane?

If anyone reported a UFO sighting in Britain, whether they were airline pilots, military personnel,

radar operators or civilians, the reports would be investigated by Pope. He states: 'The vast majority of the 300 or so cases that arrived on my desk every year could be accounted for. There are, after all, numerous possible explanations, such as misidentification, and a wide range of natural phenomena, but that left a hard core of five per cent which are genuine unknown cases, all of which totally defy rational explanation. Five per cent is a lot, especially when you factor in the hundreds of people who never report their sightings. My best assessment is that they are extraterrestrial in origin.'

When Pope began his job, he echoed the entrenched scepticism of his sober civil servant colleagues. As time went by, though, the number of sightings reported by credible witnesses grew. (these were from men and women who, because of their social position,



Photographs of reportedly alien craft in Australia sent to our offices

were unlikely to fabricate stories of alien spaceships - airline pilots and RAF officers for example). He started to develop a genuine passion for the subject, and began to read the literature and meet all the top UFO researchers. 'The more I thought about it, the more I realised how much there was to this subject. I came to the conclusion that there must definitely be something going on'.

### 'Spooky' Pope

Not long after *The X-Files* was released his colleagues began to draw parallels between the UFO-obsessed Fox Mulder and his real-life counterpart at the MoD. He says he even acquired Mulder's nick name, 'Spooky'. 'I would walk down the corridors and people would start whistling the theme tune from *The Twilight Zone* and say "there goes Spooky Pope". I suppose like Mulder I am a maverick and my views were considered outrageous.'

Regardless of any 'evidence' to the contrary, the MoD still claim that all UFOs can be explained in terrestrial terms. Since the 1950s the MoD has accumulated information on more than 8000 UFO sightings, much of which is still withheld under the 30-year secrecy rule.

It is clear that there are still plenty of files sitting in vaults that the public will not see for a very long time, if ever.

### Issues of National Security?

The MoD's official line is: 'Our only concern is to establish whether or not they pose a threat to the security of the United Kingdom. Unless we judge that they do, and this has not been the case so far, we do not attempt to investigate further.'

Ironically, it is exactly the issue of national security that worries Pope so much, and it is one of the reasons he gives for speaking out. Cases like the Rendlesham forest incident, where a UFO landed inside a US Air Force base in Suffolk (which happened before Pope took up his post), are of the sort that he has investigated and which are a source of great concern to him: 'We have a highly sophisticated array of air defence measures including ground-based and airborne radar. If the system has failed it is a very serious matter indeed. If structured craft of unknown origins are routinely viewed over the UK, it's a clear implication that they have



reached our defence system. In my opinion that poses a definite threat to the security of this country.

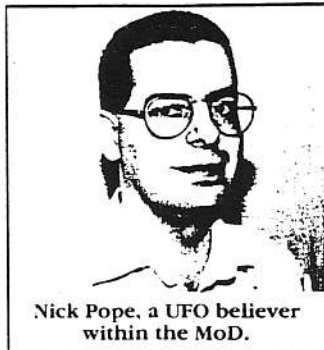
But whether we could actually *do* anything about the aliens' apparent technological superiority is a very open question. Presumably, the fact that these alien beings are able to travel across the Universe and land undetected in our fields, in craft whose method of propulsion we can only wonder at, might be an indication that our technology is, in comparison to theirs, light years behind. Thus being concerned about the risk to our 'national security' might be a simple red herring, a justification for further spending on weapons of war even. All we can do is hope that their intentions are benign, because it is obvious that if they wanted to destroy us they would most likely have the capacity to do so. For them we could be just a diverting anthropological field trip.

Although Pope states that his conversion from sceptic to believer occurred gradually - 'The drip, drip, drip effect', as he describes it - he also asserts that it was particular cases arriving on his desk that were responsible for tipping the balance. 'Were I to name one day in the three years I spent as the ministry's UFO expert which convinced me that extra-terrestrial spacecraft are regularly visiting the Earth, it would have to be March 31st, 1993.'

### March 31st 1993

In the morning Pope received a call from a police constable in Devon who, along with his colleagues, described initially seeing two bright lights, together with a third, fainter one darting across the night sky. The officers were convinced it was like nothing they had ever seen before, and stated in their report that they were three craft flying in tight formation.

Pope then began to be besieged by calls from other witnesses, who described seeing exactly the same objects travelling at extremely high speed, then stopping instantaneously and hovering in mid-air.



Nick Pope, a UFO believer within the MoD.

He co-ordinated the locations of the reports and discovered that the craft had been seen over Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Wales and as far north as the Midlands and Yorkshire. The craft seemed to be zig-zagging at phenomenal speed all across the country. 'By lunchtime', Pope realised, 'it became obvious that I was right in the centre of the biggest wave of UFO sightings ever reported in Britain'.

One of the sightings in Wales was reported by a man with vast experience in aviation and mathematics. Knowing the local terrain extremely well, he had managed to time the UFO's passage between two points on the horizon and, knowing the distance between these landmarks, was able to calculate that the craft were ripping along at about 1,100 mph - roughly equivalent to the top speed of an F-16 jet fighter aircraft.

A group of five people in Staffordshire described seeing a huge diamond-shaped object flying so low over their heads that they could estimate its size to be about 200 metres in diameter - far larger than any man-made flying machine. As it went past them they heard a very low humming sound, so deep it was similar to the bass at a rock concert. The low bass frequency reverberated through their bodies. Utterly amazed, they jumped into their car and screeched down the road in hot pursuit, but the craft had gracefully accelerated away. They had no hope of catching up with it.

So far, the reports had originated from non-military personnel, so when Pope received a call from a meteorological officer stationed at an

**"The more I thought about it, the more I realised how much there was to this subject. I came to the conclusion that there definitely must be something going on."**

RAF base in Shropshire, he became very concerned. 'The officer saw the most astonishing sight of that whole amazing night. An object in the sky, at first stationary, moved erratically towards him at a speed of several hundred miles an hour. At one point it fired a beam of light at the ground, which swept the countryside from left to right as if it was looking for something.' The officer reported seeing the object for a full five minutes - long enough to estimate that it was larger than a jumbo jet and to notice that it was emitting the same low frequency bass hum previously reported.

Pope then conducted a thorough investigation to see if any terrestrial explanation could account for some of the sightings - that was his job, after all. He could find none. He realised that there were too many visual sightings from trustworthy sources to ignore the implications of what he had heard, and wrote a detailed report for his bosses at the Ministry. This, much to his surprise, went straight to the assistant chief of the Air Staff. 'He noted my report, but there was little else he could do.'

Being a loyal Ministry man, what disturbed Pope most, he says, was the fact that whatever had zig-zagged across Britain on the night of the 30th March had invaded British air space and probed military installations without even being picked up by radar early warning systems. Its technical superiority was so great that, should it have proven to be hostile, there could have been no defence against it. If ever there was an issue of national security for the MoD,

surely this one should be given top priority. When Pope pointed this out to his superiors, he claims, they at first laughed the matter off, but when they realised he was serious, they told him to 'drop certain lines of enquiry'.

As Pope points out in his book, the 1976 US Freedom of Information Act allowed the release of many documents in the States that demonstrate the seriousness with which the American establishment views the possible existence and potential threat of UFOs. Most of the work was, and is, however, done undercover by various intelligence agencies. It could just be, therefore, that Pope's concern at his colleagues' cynicism is misplaced - few of them would know if there was top secret research being undertaken in *this* country into UFOs, and while state security agencies would have ready access to all of Pope's files (without his knowledge), Pope himself would be unable to discover the extent - or even the existence - of intelligence databases on all the various UFO phenomena.

### Takeaway food?

Although Pope was sent reports of alleged alien abduction cases, it was not in his brief to deal with them, so he passed details of the cases on to UFO experts. He was also aware of the strange animal mutilations that have been occurring on a large scale since 1967, primarily in America. In 1993 he began to receive the first reports of animal mutilations in Britain. In several places in the south of England it was discovered that horses and family pets had been subjected to an inexplicable method of mutilation where flesh is removed in neat circles, and genitals and other organs bored out. Pope was required to refer these cases on to the police or to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Unsurprisingly, their 'clear up rate' was a little on the low side. Pope is now planning a follow-up book which will cover the 'alien abduction' phenomenon.

## The rise of alien chic

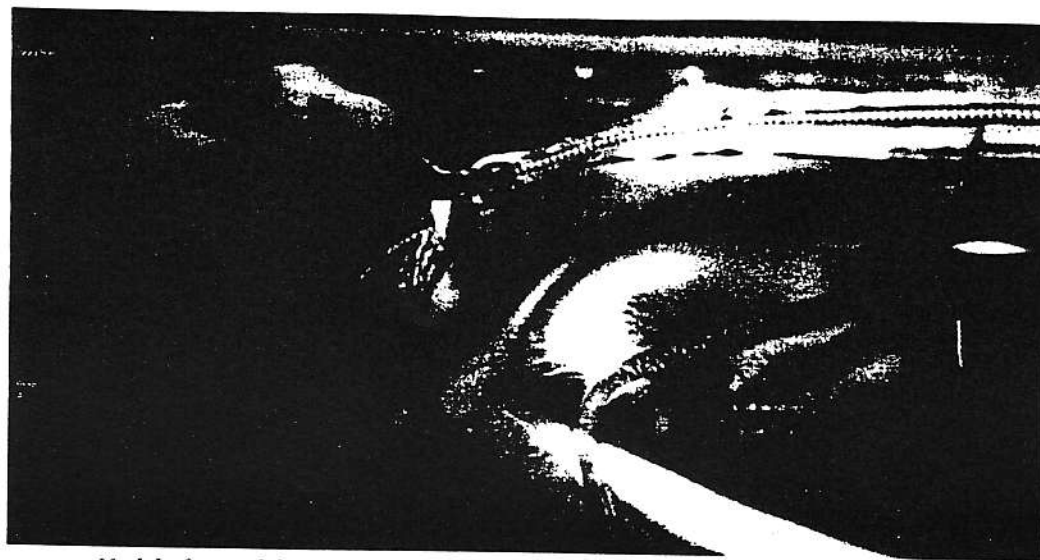
The current wave of interest in UFOs and other strange phenomena seems to go hand in hand with the search amongst young people for alternative belief systems. The younger generation have appropriated UFO imagery, wearing the popular SCHWA T-shirts and other paraphernalia which feature alien heads and UFOs themselves. According to *Fortean Times* editor Bob Eckard, 'It provides them with a belief system, something else to hang on to'. Young people are growing up in a world where old social norms are being undermined almost daily, but couldn't their interest in UFOs also be a manifestation of rebelliousness? After all, what could better demonstrate their disaffection with dogmatic elders than to openly embrace the idea of alien beings whose power far outstrips that of any terrestrial government?

The interest in aliens and UFOs also seems to have infiltrated the rave scene, with the appearance of a number of clubs which cater for these combined interests. Club Alien in London is a good example, where the organisers invite UFO experts to lecture at the club and to hang out with the ravers who can then ask questions about their favourite UFO topics.

## Alien autopsy film gets the thumbs down

Nick Pope has been very busy this year doing the lecture circuit and promoting his book. He recently appeared at the *Fortean Unconvention* held on April 19th and 21st in London. Amongst the plethora of weird subjects under discussion was the 'alien autopsy' film associated with the Roswell incident.

A discussion panel met following a showing of the film in its entirety, including the notorious 'tent sequence'. This involved a similar type of 'alien' body to that seen in the footage first shown to the media back in the summer of 1995. This sequence proved to be even less convincing than the footage shot in the 'autopsy room'. The



Model of one of the alien bodies reputedly recovered at the Roswell UFO crash site

quality of the film was appalling. It was badly underexposed, shot with a single camera that remained fairly stationary, and failed to show any revealing details as the autopsy took place. The story was that this autopsy had been conducted in a tent because of the urgent need to operate on the badly decomposing body.

The footage was presented by Philip Mantle, head of the famous British UFO Research Association (BUFORA), who has received a great deal of criticism from the UFO community for his 'support of and association with' Mr. Santilli, the producer who claims to have bought the footage from the US military cameraman who shot it in 1947. During the discussion on the authenticity of the footage, chaired by Mantle, the overwhelming consensus was that this was an elaborate hoax. When the audience were asked if they thought it was a fake, practically all hands shot up.

The most interesting aspect of the Santilli film is that it is still the centre of so much attention. Despite 99 per cent of the UFO community condemning it as a hoax, it continues to fascinate the public. In fact, if the footage is part of some elaborate disinformation campaign designed to discredit the Roswell crash, it seems to have backfired dramatically. Like Area 51, Nick Pope, and *The X-*

*Files*, the alien autopsy footage has attracted a huge amount of mass media attention and it has therefore succeeded in exposing a vast world-wide audience to the existence of the UFO phenomenon. It has clearly illustrated that the public (and UFO experts) are far less gullible than many expected them to be, and it has clearly been one of the major factors responsible for triggering the exponential growth of interest in many of the more serious aspects of the whole alien and UFO subject in general.

But, as one panel member observed, much of the interest in the footage probably stems from the fact that two main questions still have to be answered: Who made the film and why was it made? He also points out that, although he believes it to be a hoax, 'No one has actually come along with absolute proof that it's a fake. Which leaves the uncomfortable element of possibility that it could yet turn out to be real'.

## Open skies but a lot of closed minds

Pope claims, optimistically, that: 'When people read my book it will change their attitudes in a very profound way. A lot of material in there is very sensational and there are a lot of great cases that will make people look at this in a whole new light.' But he adds that: 'Until we have the start key of an actual UFO you are not going to be

able to convince the sceptics of the reality of the phenomenon, whether they be from the general public or from the ranks of government.'

Pope says that his three years spent investigating UFOs for the government was a real voyage of discovery, and one that has turned his world view completely inside out. He concludes that the implications of the reality of an alien presence on earth are beyond the means of adequate expression: 'It is beyond the scope of any single individual to comprehend or put into words. There's no doubt that if such a presence were 'officially' established it would change the way humanity views itself for ever.'

When I persisted in asking him where he thought the answers to the UFO phenomenon lie, he finally replied: 'If you want to know where the answer is to what is actually going on with the whole UFO and alien subject, the place to find it is almost definitely buried somewhere deep within the American government.'

Given the seemingly unquenchable public thirst for more information, and its need to be given some real answers, perhaps one day those secrets will finally emerge. KS

### MORE INFORMATION

Nick Pope's book *Open Skies, Closed Minds* is published by Simon & Schuster and is available in hardback at £14.99.