

BUFORA BULLETIN

Journal of the British UFO Research Association

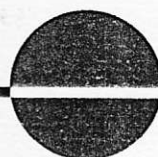


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**Close Encounter in Oxfordshire?
A Case for Ball Lightning
Hypnotic Recall**

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Officers and Council Members 1999-2000

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EDITORIAL

Scientific Vandalism

As I started to write this editorial the last of the summer crops were being harvested from the local fields. As the last of what we call summer disappeared my thoughts turned to our colleagues in the study of crop circles and how they would now be turning their efforts to trying to find something significant from the vast amount of data they collected over the season.

And my thoughts then turned to regret. Since near the beginning the serious researchers have known that some crop circles were fakes. They just disagreed over what proportion were hoaxes. But as news of the phenomena spread the number of fakes appeared to increase.

So what does this have to do with UFOs? Well, crop circles were an interesting phenomenon about which it may have been possible to find something significant. Nowadays, I believe the 'genuine' phenomenon, if there is one, is totally swamped by all the hoaxes. The stupid vandalism of the hoaxers has ruined most chances at scientific study.

My big worry is that new technology like cheap advanced video, digital photography and computers will allow the hoaxers to invade and ruin our subject too. And will the 'experts' be able to spot these fakes? Or will UFO experts be fooled like many crop circle experts have in recent years?

FROM HERE AND THERE

Philip & Sue Mantle

We are pleased to announce that Philip and Sue Mantle have accepted the offer of joint honorary life membership of BUFORA. The Council made this offer in recognition of their work on behalf of the Association.

Both Philip and Sue were members of the Council for a number of years. In addition Philip was Director of Investigations for several years as well as acting as Publicity Officer. Sue also ran the BUFORA Central Office for two years. As if this was not enough, they jointly undertook the organisation of several very successful conferences.

As many members will know, recently Philip has suffered a period of ill health. He has now got over the worst of that and seems to be making a continuing recovery, although this will take some time. Philip and Sue would like to express their thanks to all those people who sent get well messages.

Kate Taylor

Having announced in issue 14 that Kate Taylor and Brian James have joined the Council, I now have to announce that Kate has decided not to continue her membership of the Council.

She felt being a member of the Council in addition to her already heavy commit-

ment to investigation and research would mean spreading her available time too thinly. She continues to be involved in R&I.

Cover Design

Older members may recognise the design on the front cover of this Bulletin. It is a design that was used on the BUFORA Journal in the mid-1970s, when Richard Beet was the editor. It is planned to use this as the default image on the front cover of the Bulletin from now on. However, should a particularly interesting illustration come to hand which relates to the content of a particular issue then that illustration will be used on the cover for that one issue.

Readers Letters

There has been a very health flow of material for this feature. Indeed, recent weeks have seen enough letters come in to fill a complete issue of the Bulletin. Therefore, regrettably it has been necessary to hold some over until at least the next issue, and some may have to wait for the issue after that. But keep writing.

Christmas and New Year Greetings

The Council and Officers of BUFORA send seasons greetings to all members. Have a happy and safe festive season.

Strange Experience from Oxfordshire

Brian James

CK, a 50 year-old engineer, has recently related a number of experiences to our investigators.

Recently we have had the opportunity to work with an 'experiencer', who we'll call CK. Here, his experiences are recalled, and for the benefit of the reader, those in the astral realms are noted by parenthesis, i.e. [CK]

In recent years, CK has had increasing apparent experiences in astral realms, and these have included encounters with ET visitors. CK is keen to emphasise that his accounts should not be taken as those of publicised 'abductees' or 'contactees', but then where is the line to be drawn between a true contactee, and the abductee? It is becoming increasingly clear that 'alien abductions' do occur, but a significant number of occurrences will not be of the physical body. It should be said that CK is not happy with the emotive term 'abduction', since it is highly probable that while astral bodies are 'taken' by other beings, it is not abduction against the person's will - the 'monitoring' by other beings is with that spirit's consent before they came into their physical incarnation, it is just that the conscious mind has forgotten its purpose here. I have yet to come up with a suitable term to describe these encounters, as 'monitoree'

sounds silly. I realise that this type of encounter is a very deeply spiritual area, and the concepts will be very uncomfortable for many people, not least for the 'abductees'. These descriptions may also be uncomfortable for the researchers, but all concepts must be explored. We cannot move forward if we keep restricting our concepts and beliefs to extremely narrow paths. If there are differences between actual physical encounters and astral encounters, do the simple terms of CE3K to CE5K suffice to cover these potential important differences?

Before we try to cover areas of CK's experiences, we must first provide some background thoughts. CK was brought up with the normal religious 'indoctrination' that was part of the education system in this country, but never accepted the ideas of Christian teachings, so was not, in the conventional sense, a religious person. That is not to say that he was an atheist, but more of an agnostic, and explored his own path(s). Therefore, when he became consciously aware of aspects of his astral encounters, he did not find it easy to come to terms with the deep spiritual implications. It was not until he started to become aware of his past, and future incarnations, that the whole picture slowly began to emerge. One fact that should be considered by the readers at this early point is that a being's 'spirit' is truly universal. It is wrong to describe it as the 'human spirit' - many spirits may be 'earth-bound', but they will not always have human incarnations. CK is becoming

AGM NOTICE

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BUFORA LTD

Sat. 1st April, 2000.

The TWENTY-FIFTH Annual General Meeting of BUFORA Ltd. will be held at the UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER, 35 MARYLEBONE ROAD, LONDON, NW1 in the LECTURE THEATRE at 1.00pm on SATURDAY 1st APRIL 2000 to receive the Chairman's Report, the Report of the Council of Management, the Accounts of the Treasurer, and to appoint the Auditor according to the Articles of the Association.

Signed on behalf of the Council of Management
S.J.Gamble,, Chairman

5th September 1999.

Please Note early start time

more and more aware that few of his past lives have been here on Earth, and he still feels apart from the 'earth-bound' spirits here. [CK] is, in the strictest sense, a visitor here. [CK] also knows that he is not alone in being a 'spiritual visitor', there are others here as temporary residents, and they are drawn together in their human forms. It may be of interest for readers to consider why some spiritual visitors here are regarded as 'alien' while others are regarded as 'angels' - what is the difference, perhaps it is down to people's basic beliefs?

Another aspect of the spiritual realm is that mankind's conceptions of time are totally inappropriate, if not false. They serve as a barrier to mankind's development, but whether this barrier is self-imposed, or imposed by higher beings for mankind's own protection right now is not clear - perhaps more information will come, I was going to say "In the future", but that too is a

human misconception of linear time. The spirit has the ability to transcend any point of 'time' or space. Therefore the spirit has the ability to have a 'past' physical incarnation here on Earth, or anywhere else in the universe, in the past, present or future, equally its 'future' can be in the past, present or future - it should be remembered that since the spirit can span time, it can also have multiple, or concurrent incarnations in any part of mankind's 'linear timeline'.

We should also consider the different forms of 'astral being', or at least those used by the spirit. As any of you who travels as the astral self will know, there are many levels of astral being that we can attain, sometimes referred to as being between 'light' and 'heavy', but perhaps 'density' might be a better term. These range from the light, almost ghostly, ethereal forms, right through to the densest, when the astral body is as solid as the physical one.

While it is in this densest form, the astral body can suffer injuries and traumas, which are then reflected, or mimicked, back on the physical body - perhaps the two bodies are almost symbiotically connected? These mimicked injuries and marks are a very important point to remember when we consider bodily marks suffered by 'abductees'. However, in these forms, the astral body still retains the shape and form of its 'host', whether that is animal, human, or of course 'alien'. When the spirit transcends these lower astral realms, it sheds any connection to a physical form, and becomes a true 'free spirit', which is amorphous, and the feeling is totally different - as one fellow traveller puts it "like just being a pair of eyeballs moving through space..". It might be worth considering the concepts of astral realms. To most people, these conjure up images of spiritual realms, with higher beings. However, current science is already working with concepts of other dimensions, and even now speculates on at least ten other dimensions to our own - could these be the same as astral realms? Since 'we' are able to travel to other astral realms in time and space, then we must accept that other beings will have mastered this technique, and could be travelling here with just as much regularity. Perhaps they have simply taken a different route of technological evolution, or perhaps they just didn't take the 'nuts and bolts' technological approach at all, and mastered full psychic and telekinetic abilities?

Having briefly looked at backgrounds to experiences, where to start with accounts? CK was aware of certain experiences with other beings at an early age, and openly talked about them to his parents, but they were dismissed as 'dreams' or 'nightmares' that children have - how many of you have had similar experiences that were dismissed in the same way? One recurring 'dream' from early childhood, and indeed one that carried on through to CK's mid-twenties, was what might now be termed as part of the classic abduction scenario. This is where he was consciously aware of being in a room of bright light, lying on his back, unable to move, with a deep pulsing noise/feeling coming from behind. Breathing was also difficult, and perhaps was best likened to having a mask over the nose and mouth. This dream sometimes occurred two or three times a week, but it was always very similar. Sometimes the room would look slightly different, but the one common factor was the appearance in the room of beings - of varying heights, but all with enlarged heads, and they were all grey! This recurring dream did finally stop, but then was superseded with the other encounters with other beings, but by now [CK] had free will in these encounters, and was not in any sense subjected to examination.

During his childhood years, CK had frequent 'dreams' of what he would now term as alien beings - many of these were before the advent of the modern sci-fi type of TV show, which

really began in this country with Dr Who. No-one else in CK's family had any interest in space or sci-fi, so where did these images come from? CK even now can recall quite clearly looking out of his bedroom windows at night, and seeing various lights and 'flying saucers'. It should be emphasised that CK's 'dreams' of this type when a child are not uncommon, especially today, but back in the early 1960s, sci-fi images didn't exist in such numbers in all sorts of mediums.

It has been perhaps since 1992 that CK has had more conscious recollection of 'dreams' and astral travels, and this conscious awareness of other realms is increasing at an accelerating rate, so much so that in the past couple of years, the real memories of astral travels and encounters are being 'held' in conscious memory as soon as they occur. This acceleration seems to have happened after one very peculiar 'dream', in which CK clearly recalls sitting on the settee at home, reading a book on sci-fi TV shows, while the TV was playing in the corner of the room, with Lenny Henry doing a comedy sketch, and the time was obviously during a late summer evening. For no good reason, [CK] felt compelled to look out of the window, and when he did so a shining metallic domed disc was sitting in the sky above the houses opposite, glinting in the evening sun. An intense blue-white beam of light came out of the dome of the craft, came straight through the window, and hit [CK] in the forehead, in his 'Third Eye' - the pain was truly intense,

and he thinks he screamed. The next thing CK recalls is sitting bolt-upright in bed, and as he clutched his head, his first thoughts were "...my head hasn't been blown off..." CK was drenched in sweat, and had a severe headache for the next two days. Just what was all that about? CK still does not know, and I am not going to speculate here.

On a visit to Avebury in December 1997, CK was with a friend, who we'll call John. Both were aware of strange lights and sounds, even to the point of of a distinct "Hello" twice being spoken, apparently coming from one of the stones. A further occurrence happened later that night, when [CK] astrally travelled back to Avebury, as if drawn back for some reason, and even more curiously, yet another close friend was there in her astral self. [CK] recalls very clearly standing within the main ring of stones in the night, looking towards the Avenue, with the banks of the henge silhouetted against the sky, the clump of trees on the bank adjacent to the West Kennett road seemed to be standing guard. A bright red ball of light appeared above the Avenue, and it moved slowly around in the sky, sometimes pulsing, occasionally flashing. After about a minute, it flashed brightly and then vanished. Is a sighting like this while in the astral self classifiable as a UFO sighting? How does one investigate it - we know the place, and an apparent time, as long as the astral self didn't have a temporal shift. It is hard enough to check out sighting details for this 'reality continuum'. This type

of energy form UFO has now been seen very regularly by [CK]. Four of these were seen recently in an early morning at one of the Oxfordshire iron-age hillforts. These four balls of energy were darting and almost dancing around above the fort, but occasionally they would stop and 'hover' though while stationary they tended to bob up and down. [CK] was also aware that on this occasion he was not in a physical form, and he too was seeing everything as if he too were slowly bobbing up and down, though he never seemed to take notice of whether he was also a pulsating ball of energy in this form. After this event, [CK] was convinced that the four other forms were almost playing, and kept stopping to see if he would join them, and he now regrets not taking up the apparent invitation. On two other occasions [CK] has seen these pulsating balls of energy creating crop circles, and another very probable creation - the 'Beltane Ring' near Silbury Hill. This formation was found on May 4th, although [CK] saw its apparent creation while travelling at Avebury in the early hours of May 2nd - did he shift in time, or was the circle somehow 'primed' to appear some hours later? It should be noted that this is the only crop circle that as yet matches the location that [CK] has astrally witnessed.

One very vivid recollection of [CK] in 1995 was a long 'flight' he had over Wiltshire and parts of Salisbury Plain, a region with a history of UFOs and more recently crop-circles. The experi-

ence commenced with [CK] circling over Stonehenge, his view seemed to be as if he were in a small aircraft circling over the site, but on this occasion [CK] had no physical body, and certainly was not in any aircraft. That is not to say that [CK] did not have the sense of having a much bigger structure with and around him, which felt as if it were banking as an aircraft would. Perhaps an analogy would be that of a pilot flying an aircraft by modern telepresence technology, though surely such an analogy is poor in these terms. [CK] was able to clearly see the tourists at the monument, though none seemed aware of anything untoward 'flying' above them. After a few minutes, [CK] felt like going and looking at the local areas where crop-circles tended to occur, and towards the Vale of Pewsey. What makes this experience strange, was that in doing so, his 'course' took him near Netheravon airfield, an Army Air Corps (AAC) base. [CK] could see two helicopters coming up from the airfield, and CK is an aviation enthusiast, so [CK] had no difficulty recognising these two helicopters as Lynx AH-7's. [CK's] flight and that of the helicopters were going to cross, almost to the point of collision. The helicopters didn't deviate, so presumably were not aware of another aircraft in such close proximity, but [CK], in his flight, felt obliged to fly up over the two Lynx's, almost 'buzzing' them, though he felt no turbulence from their rotors. An intriguing point is that [CK] could see the copilot of the nearest Lynx looking at where [CK] was, and afterwards won-

dered if that pilot was looking at what he would have thought was a UFO? [CK] did eventually 'visit' five crop formations during this 'flight', though none have been seen in what might be termed our current 'reality continuum'. Another curious aspect within this experience was that at times, [CK] was able to 'jump' across parts of the countryside to get to places he wished to be, though perhaps a 'zoom' might be a better term. Is there a possibility that in this instance, [CK] was flying a craft that went where he willed it? He felt that many of his manoeuvres were similar to the almost erratic flight associated with so many UFOs, from the simple 'balls of light' (BOLs), through to apparent structured craft.

It is time to mention some of the aspects of ET encounters. [CK] has been clearly aware of being on spaceships with various other beings. These ships are obviously physical and solid, but [CK] is sure he was not there physically, so was his presence in an astral world more easily definable as another dimension? [CK] is also very aware of flying some of these craft - flight control is done by the simple power of thought, the ship goes where the 'pilot' wills it, though [CK] is not sure how these ships are propelled. The beings themselves range from five or six different humanoid types, to two reptilian species, and several different types of 'greys'. The greys seem to fall into quite distinct categories. There are the taller types, with smaller heads, but these taller ones are the living beings. The smaller type, with the familiar

huge head - the archetypal 'Grey', are, as most of us suspect, genetically cloned and created drones, and these seem to be used as 'workers' by all the other living types of being. All of these other species seem to be working together, the ships have mixed crews, and without trying to trivialise the subject, it doesn't seem so different to the scenes in sci-fi shows such as *Babylon 5*, or the *Star Trek* spin off series such as *Next Generation* or *Deep Space 9*. Perhaps this closeness to sci-fi imagery is a considerable note of caution to be kept in mind in all CK's experiences? CK stresses it should be emphasised that in no sense is he there as an 'old-style contactee', with all manner of dire warnings on mankind's future being given to him. If anything, he seems to be sitting in on briefings, all done telepathically. Visual images are 'beamed' at him, rather like looking at a rapid piece of video footage, the process seems something akin to a flash download of computer information. The information being given is rarely comprehensible at the time, and very little seems to refer to CK's current physical life. It seems as if the other beings are trying to get CK to 'remember' other worlds and other lives, and the information is more like accumulated knowledge, and perhaps the best term for the whole process would be 'enlightenment'.

CK does have some of these memories triggered when in this physical world, particularly when with like-minded people, and especially fellow spiritual visitors. Channelling has also trig-

gered memories, none more so than the presence of 'children' on the ships. At first [CK] thought they were 'abducted' human children. He was quite disturbed when the realisation came that these 'children' are the hybrid results of the long-suspected alien/human breeding programme. He was more disturbed to be told that he was to play a role in the future of these hybrid children - the full implications of this have yet to unfold.

I hope that you will appreciate that the above just scratches the surface of experiences for one person. There is a vast range of material still to be uncovered...

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READERS LETTERS

Dear Sir,

RE: Request for viewpoints on the Research and Investigation Review

1. I believe BUFORA is right to maintain its moratorium on Hypnotic Regression, as various experiments have indicated that the unreliability of this technique, in some cases to the extent of suggesting subjects under hypnosis are prone to fantasy, which could embellish the facts of a case, and distort memory recall with images from popular culture and the collective unconscious.

On a similar point, I agree with the decision to present data to new investigators, in order that they might have the information to pursue which supports the original decision to impose a moratorium.

2. Alternative to ETH project:

This is also a good idea. Many UFOlogists condemn sceptics for relentlessly sticking to their viewpoint, in some cases in the face of overwhelming evidence. We should learn from this stubborn perspective the importance of an open mind, which applies both ways – ‘Believers’ should not automatically assume without evidence that the ETH hypothesis is the right one. Should evidence to the contrary present itself, they should be prepared to accept it. In view of the nature of evidence in this area of research, a reasoned and balanced document laying

out the arguments of each alternative is a good idea, allowing readers to decide for themselves which solution is the most likely one.

3. “Censorship” project

I do not believe BUFORA should support the more irrational side of UFOlogy, by providing a forum for individuals (in the form of official lectures) whose beliefs are based fundamentally on junk science and speculation. To do so suggests to the world that BUFORA endorses the views of these individuals and serves to reinforce the image of UFOlogists as paranoid conspiracy theorists rather than hard scientists.

This is NOT censorship, after all, such individuals would be free to present their views elsewhere.

Yours

H. Reynolds,

Cardiff.

P.S. I was interested recently by an “Equinox” documentary on space junk which seemed to suggest a few candidates for explanations for some sightings, for instance the infamous ‘angels’ seen by astronauts, and the recent film footage that some claim depicts ‘star wars’ weaponry in use against alleged alien spacecraft. To what degree does this phenomenon serve as an explanation for such sightings and does it deserve a larger focus within the postal training course? (which I completed approx. two years ago)

Dear Sir,

Having just received the most recent is-

sue of the BUFORA Bulletin, number 14 the October/November 1999 issue, I am compelled to write to you. You see there are several articles and quotations that seem to be in the same spirit as the way most serious UFO research is going. When I say serious UFO research I mean as opposed to the commercially and science fiction motivated "hype".

I appreciate that the views expressed in Bulletin are not necessarily those of BUFORA or the Council, but it seems to me that they are worthy of serious consideration as they strike at the core of what BUFORA is about and its long term purpose.

Firstly, Kate Taylor acknowledges a "downturn of public interest in the UFO phenomenon". This is true despite the ever increasing number of people who, when asked, say they believe that there is extraterrestrial life and despite the success of the SETI@HOME project. Why is this then? She goes on to express her belief that hypnagogia and other sleep states are responsible for the vast number of bed based abductions, not ET's. Now, I know I said that Kate's views are not those of BUFORA but she is a member of the Council!

Another senior member of BUFORA indeed the Chair adds, "there is no hard evidence of Ets visiting our planet". These are not just the views of ordinary punters and ordinary members like me but people who are able to draw on vast amounts of information from their own work and the ar-

chives of BUFORA.

Therefore, I would suggest that its time for a serious debate about the future of BUFORA, about its focus and its methods of working. The end of the 2nd millennium seems to be a rather convenient time to conduct such a review. It needs to be open and, unlike most of BUFORA's activities, accessible to all members where ever they live, we are the "British" UFO Research Association.

Yours faithfully,
Keith Cowan

Edinburgh

Thank you for this contribution Keith. In the penultimate paragraph of your letter you state that contributors to the Bulletin have used information from their own work. In both the cases you quote the authors have used their own resources.

It is stated generally twice in each Bulletin that contributions do not represent the views of BUFORA. Indeed the paragraph you quote from my SETI article starts "In my opinion". The ETH is only one of about forty major theories to explain UFO reports. BUFORA supports no particular theory over any other.

However, the other main point you raise about discussing the future direction of BUFORA is very important. Clearly some of this can be discussed through the pages of the Bulletin. However, the Council is considering holding a planning meeting at a central location in the near future to discuss this. Watch this space

A CASE FOR BALL LIGHTNING?

Gloria Dixon

Ball lightning is an interesting and somewhat controversial phenomenon. The following case was reported to BUFORA in 1997 and even though it was observed in the fifties, I thought it was interesting with regard to the study of natural phenomena that are reported as UFOs, and wrote to Peter suggesting this was possibly ball lightning. He responded with a copy of a Daily Telegraph article and also a copy of some correspondence from Dr. John Hardwick, both referred to below. The following case certainly appeared to have some of the characteristics of the phenomenon.

Leigh, Lancashire

In the winter of 1952 Peter aged twelve and his brother aged seven were at home alone for a short period whilst their parents were out. It was early evening and raining and they were upstairs in their parents' bedroom awaiting their return. Peter then became aware of a 'presence' or feeling that there was someone beyond the bedroom door. There was no noise or any indication other than this. He went over to the door, which was at the head of the stairs and about half-

way up the stairs he observed two spherical objects both about 250mm in diameter. They were bright orange in colour and had an almost fiery consistency. The objects were about 1 metre above the stairs one slightly ahead and above the other about 400mm apart, and were moving up the stairs at around one foot per second. Both objects exploded almost simultaneously, the lead one first, and the noise was similar in sound to a toy balloon popping.

Peter's brother appeared at the top of the stairs after hearing the sound of an explosion and they searched the stairs for any sign of debris. There was no trace of ash burning or any residual smell. The doors to the downstairs rooms were closed as was the front door.

Upon his parents return, his father, an electrical engineer, searched the house and inspected the electrical installations for faults. He could find nothing wrong that could have been responsible for the spherical objects that his sons had observed.

Jenny Randles discussed **ball lightning** in the BUFORA postal training course and I quote from her description within the course

It is usually ball-shaped, but sometimes oval. It is rarely larger than tennis ball size, but some researchers believe that very rare bigger forms are unrecognised by science as they are dismissed as UFOs. It can float freely in the atmosphere, often follows

power lines, has been known to effect electrical equipment (e.g. Causing neon tubes to light without power or blowing electrical circuits) and can create tingling symptoms with witnesses. It tends to be short lived but has been reliably reported as being visible for several minutes. Theories to explain it are varied but one proposes nuclear reactions, which generate an intense localised radiation field, which may provoke serious illness in a witness. Despite its name it does not require a thunderstorm to form and has appeared day and night, inside and outdoors, in hot, cold, dry and wet weather.

In many senses this is a real UFO, even if we identify a case as being so formed. Scientists still do not fully understand what it is or how it occurs and as recently as the 1960's it was widely rejected alongside UFOs! Since then it has been well described by a physicist witness, so most scientists now accept it! But there is little doubt that many cases get reported as UFOs and never come near scientists. In an equinox programme on lightning presented by channel 4 in November 1994 there was a segment devoted to the ball lightning hypothesis and some first hand reports of people who had witnessed these balls of light.

An article from a September 1998 issue of the *New Scientist* gives more information on ball lightning when the crew of an Air UK jet struck by lightning saw 'fireballs in the cabin'. According to this article

there have been observations of similar mysterious fireballs throughout history and Spanish physicist Antonio Ranada gives a theory to explain what they are. This was recorded in a September issue of the *Journal of Geophysical Research* where he and his colleagues believe that linked magnetic loops might explain how fireballs could last so long. I quote from this article:

Lightning strikes normally create horizontal magnetic fields all around them, but vertical fields may sometimes form. Under certain circumstances vertical and horizontal loops might link together and form a ball. Glowing plasma could be trapped inside the magnetic field lines. If there was just one magnetic field, it would expand with the plasma, and the plasma ball would explode instantly. But the two fields are constrained by the link between them – they and the plasma cannot expand and the flowing fireball effect lasts until the plasma cools. "It's perfectly clear that it can last for ten or fifteen seconds" says Ranada. In the cooling plasma, electrons become bound to their atoms. This increases electrical resistance, killing the current within the plasma and weakening the surrounding magnetic fields.

The article in *New Scientist* goes on to say that this theory would also explain why the fireball radiates little or not heat, yet its touch can burn. Most of the ball is cold, but along the field lines. The loops and a few

streamers coming off the fireball reach temperatures of 16 000 Centigrade or more.

A press cutting from the Telegraph in 1996 gives a further interesting look at the ball lightning phenomenon. Three of the staff at a print works received electric shocks when a sphere the size of a tennis ball few around their factory in Tewksbury Glos. A forklift truck driver saw a dazzling blue /white ball bounce along the roof and then pass through netting into the building. Once inside, it roared along girders and hit printing machinery sending sparks flying everywhere. It finally hit a window and exploded with an orange flash, blowing out the telephone switchboard and lighting up the whole place with sparks everywhere. Apparently the fireball raced around the building and the bang was so loud that it was even heard by a deaf employee. The staff claimed it was like something out of Star Wars. Three people received electric shocks and one lady was hit in the shoulder and felt as though 'Frank Bruno had punched her'. One worker claimed that the lightning ball was unleashed when a jet plane passed through a cloud overhead. Scientists have been sceptical about the existence of such a phenomenon, but it has been reported so often and so consistently that most are convinced that ball lightning is real and often sighted during thundery and humid weather, where it appears as a free floating globe of glowing gas usually between the size of an orange and a grapefruit.

After contacting BUFORA and receiving my response, Peter wrote to Dr. John Hardwick at the Lightning Test Technology Group in Abingdon, Oxfordshire and kindly sent me Dr. Hardwick's response where he writes:

'We are a commercial group, mainly concerned with effects of lightning on aircraft and unfortunately have little time to pursue the subject to its widest boundaries.

Ball lightning is a controversial issue. It is clear that such phenomena do occur, but there may be different types and some observations might have a more conventional explanation. For example, molten balls of burning metal are sometimes observed at contact breakers. Moreover, photographic and visual records do not provide suitable quantitative information.'

Dr. Harwick suggests reading the chapter on ball lightning by Singer in *The Physics of Lightning*. Singer also wrote a whole book on the subject '*The nature of Ball Lightning*' (Plenum Press 1971). He also states that there are many theories as to what causes ball lightning.

To illustrate this unusual phenomenon even further, during the summer of this year I received a phone call from a lady, who reported an unusual event, which occurred in her home in July of 1995 whilst sitting on the settee with her boyfriend. They both noticed a ball of light outside the window and were astonished and very apprehensive

when this ball of light passed through the closed window glass. She described it as a blue/green spinning light, the size of a football. It moved in a downward trajectory at speed past the settee on which they were sitting and then shot out though the patio window pane at the other end of their lounge. This event took place within several seconds. The couple involved had no idea what they had observed and were very puzzled. I suggested that it might have been ball lightning and explained a little bit about the characteristics of this unusual phenomenon.

There is certainly no doubt that ball lightning and other reports of balls of light observed at close range are reported more frequently than realised. This is most worthy of continued investigation when we are looking at the field of UFO study.

POSTAL TRAINING COURSE

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How Perception Works; How Recall Works

*CONTRIBUTION TO THE BUFORA
R + I HYPNOSIS PROJECT*

John Spencer

A UFO report is not the documentation of a set of facts relating to an incident. It is the result of the witness' attempt to understand an unknown experience.

But just what is behind the witness' own understanding? If we are to understand how close encounter reporters perceive their experiences we must first understand how people perceive anything.

From childhood, a person's beliefs, attitudes, opinions and values are developed by the influence of parents, grandparents, siblings, other relatives, teachers, clergy, friends, neighbours and people in authority. People are influenced and shaped by the law, by society, by the arts, by the media, by advertising and by a host of subliminal messages received through day-to-day dealing with others even in brief encounters; on trains and buses for example. Influence can be direct or subtle: repeated suggestion; reward and punishment; related experiences; censored views; guilt; and fear.

Interaction with the world consists of applying the result of all those influences – i.e. your beliefs – to any stimulus that you are forced to respond to. Interaction with it becomes, first and foremost, a personal experience owned by the witness. These are the phases we go through:

Phase One

Firstly, people have a natural tendency to personify or attribute intelligent direction to any unknown event, until proven otherwise. This is a product of measuring the potential threat of a stimulus; survival is the most basic response of all creatures. If something is seen that has luminosity, or is visible in some way then it may be perceived as a ghost or an alien. The choice may not be made by the object, but rather by the prevailing mood or beliefs of the witness. If the witness is walking through an old monastery ruin they may be thinking of ghosts, if in a road or bedroom situation they may think of alien encounters.

Phase Two

We seek out further clues to confirm that 'we weren't just imagining it'. Part of that is a selective process known as 'the ratchet effect'. Like a ratchet screwdriver, turns in one direction have effect, turns in the other direction do nothing; evidence for is added to the pile, evidence against is ignored as irrelevant. So the initial impressions, based on personal views, are strengthened. For example, UFO ground traces are often found 'after the event'. First,

the witness experiences or sees something and then looks for clues.

Phase Three

There is then a checking of the event itself against expectations, with the unfortunate effect of creating false memories of what really happened in line with those expectations. This is not a factor of close encounters, it is a normal way by which we deal with the world and would therefore be abnormal if it were not part of the close encounter experience. There is evidence from some multiple-sighting reports that the differences in description of objects depends a lot on what each person thought they would be seeing, once they had 'decided' what they were seeing.

Phase Four

Because close encounters may involve some loss of accuracy of memory, or if some researchers are to be believed, whole time lapses of memory, then a process of uncovering the lost information is undertaken. In ufology, this usually involves using hypnosis. Unfortunately this often puts the detail of the experience more in control of the researcher than the witness who may end up 'experiencing', and believing in, something that actually did not happen. If the witness believes their experience to have been an essentially bad thing, reinforced by prejudicial beliefs about aliens and UFOs derived from science fiction imagery and perhaps reinforced by the writings of prominent UFO researchers and the media, then the encounter will become a bad thing.

Or those believing it to be a good thing may then 'experience' it as a good thing. Worse still, the witness may seek out a UFO researcher who is known to share the same prejudicial views, with the result that both researcher and witness suffer from the ratchet effect, both seemingly gaining additional evidence to support their beliefs.

Standard UFO investigation arguably takes the view that the witness has stored in his or her mind a 'photograph' of the event that is objective. In other words, the witness has seen, heard and perhaps experienced something that happened outside of them and that any witness standing where they had stood would have seen, heard and felt the same thing. The investigator then has to ask the right questions to re-build that snapshot, perhaps use hypnotic regression to take that witness 'back in time' to remember the incident more clearly, and then it can be related factually and accurately. That is simply not the way the mind works, not the way the memory works. The witness has perceived an event for which they have no 'card index' in their memory; they are struggling to understand it. They have formed opinions and prejudices towards a likely explanation - that is normal, it is the process that keeps us safe throughout our lives - and, in the case of close encounters particularly, they are deciding how to deal with their emotions towards the event. Then the investigator arrives and asks for the 'photograph' to be related to them. The

witness has to work out what the experience meant through a lifetime of beliefs, attitudes, experiences, comments of friends and relatives, TV programmes and films, religious teachings, having been told what is right and what is wrong, fears of being laughed at or disbelieved, prejudices and cravings, likes and dislikes and so on, and so on. The witness then has to decide what the message is that must be communicated to the investigator. It is not just a question of 'the facts'; life is just not like that. Firstly, the witness must decide if they believe the experience was an essentially good or bad one. That decision - and it is a decision, not just a fact - will determine a lot about how the experience is related to another person. Then the witness will select the facts that he or she believes are significant, and this process of filtering is also done through personal belief systems. If the witness believes they have been abducted by aliens from another planet then they will automatically seek out and bring to the fore those details from 'memory' that confirm and strengthen that belief. Those areas which, if not contradictory are at least unsupportive, will be downgraded or ignored. Again this is not a factor of UFO experiences, this is normal and the way we operate in our lives every minute of the day. It is the basis of a simple decision to cross the road here or a hundred yards further down the road, to eat an apple or an orange, to save or to spend. In any decision the facts are outweighed by subjective aspects nine-to-one. If the witness has another belief (he or she

does not like science fiction but does think God and Satan are the only forces in the Universe, for example) then they will go through a similar process, but come forward with a different priority of what 'facts' are important to 'get across' to the investigator.

On top of all this is the fact that the receiver of the information (the investigator) receives a report through his or her series of lifetime experiences, and also has a set of subjective criteria, that takes more account of 'desired' aspects of the report than those that run contrary to his or her personal beliefs about the subject.

This has serious implication for hypnotic regression because the input of data from the researcher to the witness is not just misleading, but hypnosis leads to reinforcement of the false image. What researchers also seem to fail to take account of is the very little communication that takes place through words in an interactive situation. In a normal conversation only approximately twenty percent of the meaning is expressed through words; eighty percent is expressed through eye contact, vocal shifts, body language and so on. Even researchers questioning witnesses who are diligent to avoid leading questions often fail to avoid leading in these other ways. I was once sent a tape by a researcher to defend against my suggestion that the witness had been led. The tape was supposed to prove otherwise, but in my view proved me correct. The witness, under hypnosis, said he could see

small people around him. The researcher asked for further information by asking: 'Do you mean people about three or four feet tall?' The witness agreed he did. But did the implied command under hypnosis re-direct the thinking of the witness?

Like it or not, we have no world wide consensus as to what a UFO experience is or means. We do not really know what a UFO abduction is. Given all the stages from initial sighting or experience, through coming to terms with it, seeking out an investigator and trying to explain an experience there are many, many filters and barriers to true comprehension. Without a consensus as to what we are all involved with any understanding is fatally flawed.

Of course some witnesses are traumatised by their experiences and they seek help and it is right that structures should exist to offer that help. But the question is still one of the quality and type of help offered.

Experiments conducted:

Some years ago a team of researchers from ASSAP, including myself, conducted experiments to test the reliability of hypnosis. We used, I must stress, only researchers who had volunteered for the experiment and no actual experiencers.

The first subject was T. He was in a very light trance state, just enough to let his imagination be creative. T had been part of a team that had 'learned'

the totally fabricated details of a race of tall aliens from Jupiter. Under hypnosis he was able to recall an abduction by these aliens, with graphic details of their encounter at Canary Wharf, on the River Thames, and a medical investigation by the aliens. Many of the details were not part of the original learning but were generated by fantasy during the recall. Impressions from the room also seemed to affect him. The aliens he described turned out to be wearing cowboy boots; one of the people in the room was wearing cowboy boots. T would not have been able to see that person, but could presumably have heard the 'leather creaking' of the boots, and he knew that this particular researcher was due to join us, and knew that he habitually wore cowboy boots. But somehow that knowledge or those impressions became incorporated into the recall.

A second experiment was designed to test how easily a witness could be 'turned around' in their recall. Again, the 'witness' - A - had learned the details of a false race of aliens, created to be very evil and unpleasant. She described them as evil, doing bad things. She had been asked to learn that she had suffered a very unpleasant rape-like trauma at the hands of the aliens. With slight suggestions, at my written prompts A could not see, the hypnotist indicated a religious overtone to the event, and a benign reason for the alien intervention. He used words such as 'cathedral-like' to indicate size etc, gradually creating a spiritual and pleas-

ant atmosphere. Very easily A began to recall the aliens as friendly and became quite comfortable with the abduction. In further parts of the experiment, which were admittedly less clearly successful, it seemed that A was able to be influenced by body language and gestures even without words being used. For example, she became more attracted to ideas that 'pleased' the 'investigator' - expressed by open hand gestures and moving forwards, than to ideas that 'offended' the investigator, demonstrated by closed gestures and moving away during recall.

All of this seemed to indicate that the attitude and beliefs of the researchers could affect a great deal about even the witness' own understanding of the experience.

Case Study: My own 'suppressed memory'.

During my teenage I was a passionate, if somewhat reckless, cyclist. I travelled all over the United Kingdom alone or with friends. Like most teenagers I had little regard for personal safety and no thought of danger. I was once stopped by the police near Marnhull in Salisbury after speeding down a one-in-three hill; they assured me they had 'clocked' me at sixty miles an hour and threatened to arrest me.

When I was sixteen I, inevitably, came unstuck. I was cycling from my then home in Kenton in Middlesex to Willesden to visit my grandmother. Cy-

clinging through Kingsbury, in north London, I was - according to a witness - going far too fast down Church Lane when suddenly I seemed to be distracted by a multi-note car horn (probably directed at me!). I turned at just the wrong split second. Apparently at full speed I hit the back of a parked car, flew over the handlebars, cleared two cars and finally landed face first on the pavement and unconscious. I was taken to Edgware General Hospital where I spent three days under observation for concussion. I had been lucky. I had suffered a few physical injuries, several deep cuts around the eyes and on one ear, the skin on half my face scraped off and damage to the nerves around my mouth that, even today, mean that when I talk there is less mobility to the left side of my mouth. When I woke up in hospital I had little memory of anything. In fact I didn't recognise my parents in the first few hours after the crash, and it was several days before I could remember any of the journey that had led to the accident.

In the years since, mostly in the months immediately after the accident, I remembered details of the journey that day; they came back in stages. Firstly I could remember leaving the house, but not much more. Then I could remember some of the early part of the journey, but not the last roads. Finally I could remember turning into the road where I had the crash. Since that day to now I cannot remember further. The last minute or so before the crash is a memory I cannot access.

However I have been told what happened by a witness and I have a fairly vivid picture of it. The problem is that if I were regressed and recalled the crash I would be uncertain whether I was remembering (a) the reality, (b) the description given to me by the witness or (c) some image of the whole thing that suits me. I feel it is at least probable that I would remember the basic incident as described to me but coloured by my own images of what I must have looked like that day. The reality is that there is probably no way that I could ever be certain now, and that is the problem for close encounter witnesses. How do they 'check up on' their own memories?

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ASTRONOMICAL MISIDENTIFICA- TIONS*

BRIAN P JAMES

*This is, of course misidentifications of astronomical objects, not misidentifications of a large magnitude!

In this (hopefully) regular series, I plan to take a look at various astronomical objects and apparitions that may cause spurious UFO reports during the two-month publication span of the BUFORA Bulletin. As I write these notes in late October, we only have to think of the past few weeks, when the planets Jupiter and Venus have caused some excited claims, particularly on early morning TV, of bright lights that "must be aliens"... It is worth noting that the planets have been low to southwestern and eastern horizons respectively in the mornings. Perhaps these type of misidentifications are more frequent in our winter months, with the longer hours of darkness?

Realistically, only four planets may give cause for perceived BoL's - Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. I have left Mercury from this list, since although it can get as bright as -1 magnitude here in the UK, it rarely gets high enough above the horizon, and indeed out of the general murky skyline haze, to be easily seen. Even keen astronomers and stargazers who are deliberately looking for Mercury, are

often are frustrated in efforts to find this at times elusive little planet! If any investigators are phoned by excited observers, perhaps a quick question to ask would be whether the light/object was/is twinkling or pulsating? Planets, due to them reflecting the Sun's light, do not 'twinkle', but are a steady light source. I suggest this from experience, once having made a two-hour round trip to see a witness, who eagerly pointed out Venus as his 'UFO' that flew round the sky every night!

Unless otherwise stated, for these notes, I'll look at the positions the planets will be when people may be 'out and about' in the winter months, so times are for mid evening at 8.00pm, and morning at 6.00pm.

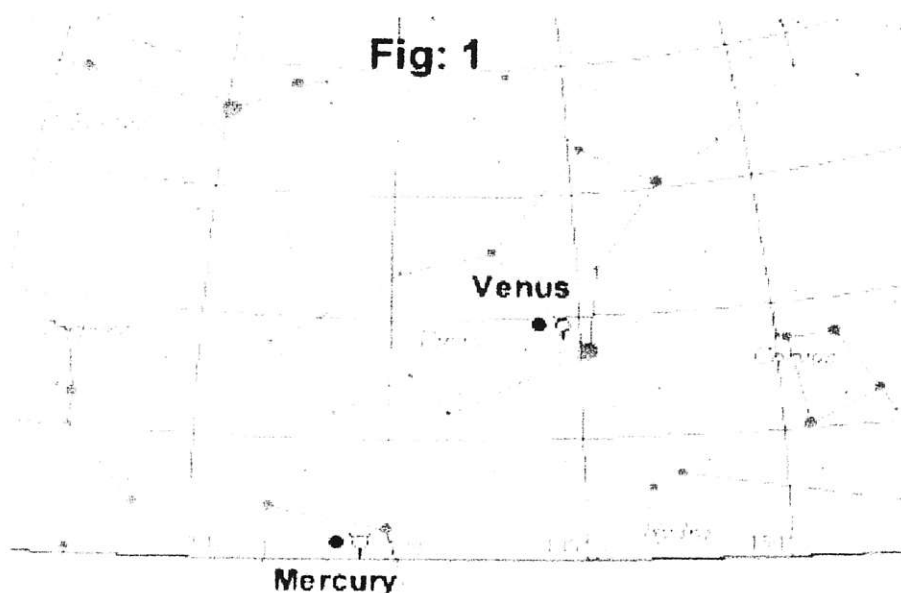
We might as well start off with Venus, since it is so obvious in our morning skies just now. At the start of December (see Fig. 1), it was in the south-eastern sky, and at -4.2 magnitude, twice as bright as Sirius, which itself is setting in the west. Incidentally, Mercury was also above the eastern horizon, but only by two degrees! By the beginning of January, Venus will have 'dimmed' slightly, and it will be moving back towards the Sun, and therefore be appearing ever lower to the horizon in the pre-dawn sky, and even now is less than 10 degrees above the south-eastern skyline. By mid-January, Venus will be all but lost to observers in the UK as a morning object.

Jupiter and Saturn are currently fairly

close in the sky, rising now in the late evening, and setting in the early morning (although not as close as they were 1007 years ago, and in all probability causing a certain sighting over the Middle-east at the time...) In early December, they will be prominent in the southeast, both at about 45 degree elevation. Jupiter is bright at -2.8 magnitude, and will outshine Sirius, rising later in the night. By early January they will be almost due south in the mid-evening, and though both dim-

sort of 'alignment' with Mars (Fig. 2).

At the beginning of December, Mars is low in the southwestern sky in the evening, and will be set by 8.00pm. While it is not as bright as even Saturn, its red colouration may cause some spurious reports. By early January it is still 'hovering' close to the horizon in the early evening. As we move into February, Mars is more obvious from say 6.00pm, being just over 20 degrees elevation in the southwest, and it will



ming slightly, should be obvious to most observers. Jupiter will still be about 45 degrees up in the sky, but now Saturn is just over 50 degrees in elevation. By the beginning of February, the two planets are starting to slide towards the southwestern horizon, and over a few nights, will form a

be setting just after 8.00pm.

The brightest star in the northern skies - Sirius, may cause a number of false reports. It is often seen rising through murky air near the horizon, and due to its brightness, it can appear to 'pulsate' or 'oscillate' quite wildly,

with apparent colour changes involving white, blue, red and green - frequent colour changes for claimed BoL UFO's! During the winter months, the star Vega, also bright, will be seen to run low round the northern horizon during the night, and has been the cause of at least two UFO reports that I have investigated.

Meteor showers, or at least the remnants and after-effects of them, may give rise to reports - remember the summer of 1998? By the time you

tronomy society who were out and about in the early hours trying to get out of the Thames Valley fog, and then find a hole in the cloud. Luckily the cloud parted at 1.30am, and did give us a clearish 'window' for the short Leonid maxima between 01:50 and 02:50 am - the only trouble was by now the main storm had hit some twelve hours earlier on the other side of the planet! The local group did see a few fireballs, though - including two, rather curiously described in a report as resembling "two luminous seagulls

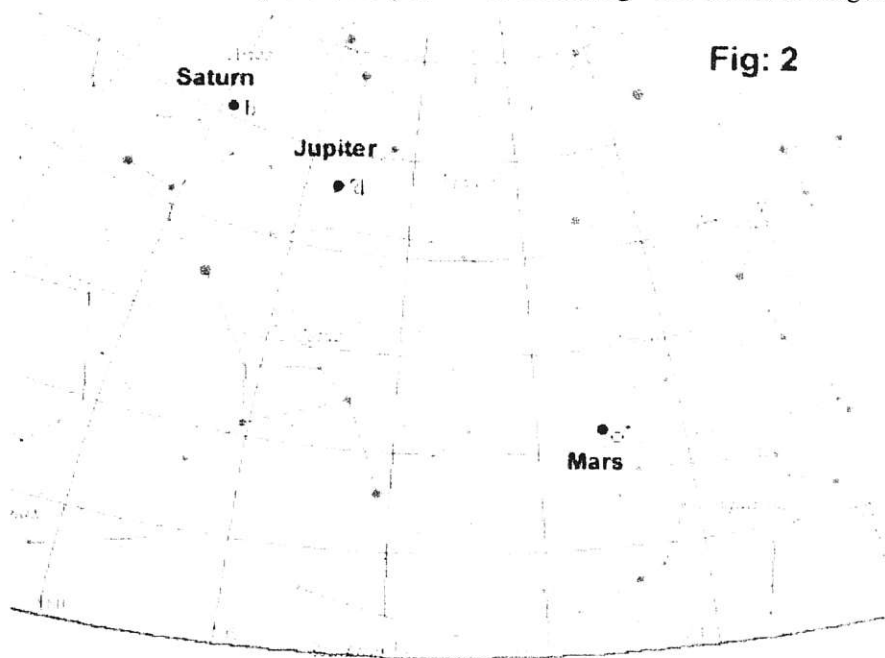


Fig: 2

read these notes, we will have had this year's Leonid shower (or a meteor storm) in the early hours of 18th November. During the anticipated storm in 1998, I was one of a number of keen observers from the Abingdon as-

trundling across the sky" (this did cause me to question just when they'd seen luminous seagulls to allow this comparison.) It was significant though that other observers in the UK were able to record lingering ion trails,

(Continued from page 25)

which were seen to be swept around the sky by high-altitude winds - the general effect is rather like aircraft vapour trails being dissipated in the same manner. One fireball was even videoed coming in 'straight on' to the observer, and the ion trails from this formed something more like a 'smoke ring' - so yes it did form an 'O' in the night sky. Contrary to what I have read in some UFO magazines, by researchers who should know better, meteors can leave trails in the sky that may last for hours, and which may be swept into shapes that we would then 'interpret' as letters and numbers. Over the past few years, there has also been an increase in the number of so-called sporadic meteors, i.e. those outside the predicted shower periods. These 'sporadics' are possibly interstellar in nature, and hit the Earth's atmosphere with a higher velocity, resulting in bigger and brighter fireballs and bolides, as opposed to normal meteor trails.



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BUFORA LECTURES

Meeting are held at the University of Westminster, 35 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5LS starting at 2pm and lasting until approximately 5pm. (We are currently looking at alternative venues, but if nothing suitable can be found it may be necessary to raise admission to £2-50 (members); £4-50 (non-members) from the new season).

Saturday 4th December 1999.

Arthur Tomlinson

Arthur has researched the subject of UFO sightings here in die UK for many years now and has amassed a great amount of detail. Arthur will be presenting many impressive UFO cases, which also includes his work on the famous 'Ilkely Moor Entity case'.

Saturday 5th February 2000.

Professor Arthur J. Ellison

"Altered States of Consciousness".

Arthur will be lecturing on his own first hand encounter into consciousness and 'altered states'. He will also be discussing his own Out Of Body Experiences and lucid dreams and will explain how any scientifically inclined person with a reasonable degree of persistence can learn how to access these states as well. Arthur will also mention his experiences of remote viewing in regards to the U.S. Star espionage programme. This, and much more, will be discussed on the day, a not to be missed event.

Please note : There is no London Lecture during January. Whilst it is not anticipated that meetings will have to be changed or cancelled without prior notice, the Association reserves the right to do so. The views expressed by lecturers are their own views, unless otherwise stated they do not reflect the views of BUFORA, its Council or officers.

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