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British UFO Research Association



Face on Mars – Just a pile of old rubble?

Photo: NASA

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EDITORIAL

Face on Mars -- Parallels to UFO Reports

Steve Gamble

Amongst the earliest explanations offered up by researchers for UFO reports was that they were the activities of extraterrestrial visitors, the so-called ETH. Over the years a number of different alternate theories of explanation have been put forward, probably in excess of 40 or 50 main theories, and the ETH waned in popularity. My personal opinion is that if there are more than two or three possible answers to a question then we do not really know what the answer should be. The other way of looking at it might be, if there are more than two answers are we asking the right question.

In recent years the idea of life on Mars, so long popular with science fiction writers and many of the early UFO contactees, received a boost with the discovery of the Face on Mars. The Face on Mars was discovered by applying various computerised image enhancement techniques to small parts of pictures taken by the orbiter craft associated with the Mars Viking lander missions. The Face has been controversial ever since it was discovered with its supporters claiming it to be a 'man made' structure whilst the non-supporters have claimed it to be an artefact of the image processing.

This spring the debate took a new twist with the latest Mars orbiter taking new higher resolution photographs of the area. Instead of the whole city of buildings that the supporters reported to have discovered around the face all that the new photographs show is a pile of old rocks. So it looks as if the No camp were right all along.

What lesson is there here for UFOlogists? Well, maybe it is that like many UFO cases the Face on Mars at first looked attractive. But when you look deeper and go to do the research it just crumbles away. Also like the Face on Mars the ETH looks attractive at first, but most of the evidence just crumbles. And of course like UFOs, there are people out there now claiming that the new Mars photos are a cover up, that NASA have the real photographs of the Face but are not showing them. And because there is no evidence of this, to their mind, it proves there is a cover up!

INVESTIGATIONS DIARY

Gloria Dixon, Director of Investigations

To start this issue of the Diary, I would like to give readers some insight as to the nature of sighting reports that are coming into BUFORA. To create some sort of order, I will give some facts and figures as of 1st October 1996 to March 1997. During this time October BUFORA received 237 sighting reports. Approximately 10% of these are reports of triangular objects, which are coming in from areas in Scotland, the North East, the North West, Wales Wiltshire, Northants, Berkshire, Somerset and Devon. In fact they are being observed in many areas now and not just in the North West. Some witnesses describe them as being as low as fifty feet, hovering and silent with various light formations, but often red lights at each tip and sometimes a central underside white light. There appears to be little doubt that there are possibly several new prototypes of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) operating from British Aerospace at Warton, that may account for some of these sightings as well as possible black projects where there is secret military testing of other prototype aircraft possibly using stealth technology. However, even with the dramatic increase in Flying Triangle reports, twenty per cent of reports coming into BUFORA are still described as disc, globe circular or saucer shaped, and the cigar shapes have generated only about three per cent of reports since last October.

What is rather interesting is that close encounter reports have certainly increased. Out of 237 reports 24 of these fall into this category, so we are looking at ten per cent of reports being perceived as a close encounter experience of some kind, some of these involving interaction with unknown objects at close range and entities, which, in some cases, appear to produce physical effects which witnesses perceive to be linked to this experience. Even so and with 43% encompassing the above reports, we are still looking at 57% as falling into the category of lights in the sky (LITS), the major culprit here being aircraft seen at odd angles or distances involving unusual weather conditions. Secret military testing of new prototypes using Stealth technology need to be taken into consideration as well. The next culprit for misidentification are laser light displays which are generating an enormous amount of UFO reports to BUFORA and other organisations. These displays can actually be observed within a thirty mile radius and in some cases a sixty mile radius from where the display is being

shown and with the right atmospheric conditions can look very strange in our skies as they bounce off and illuminate the clouds with circles of many lights. They are certainly technologically very advanced now and consequently many shapes can be seen revolving within the cloud. Witnesses often have no frame of reference for the distance from where these may be emanating and consequently they totally misidentify what they are seeing and describe solid objects as the brain completes the picture to give some frame of reference as to what they are observing. Bright stars and planets still generate many reports also, although as some people are becoming more familiar with astronomy, particularly with the media coverage on the Hale-Bopp comet, they are realising that they are actually observing meteors, bright stars and planets. The above three explanations cover a large percentage of the LITS reports. As I do not wish to bore readers with too many statistics, I hope this gives some idea as to the facts and figures of sighting reports to BUFORA over a six month period.

And so on to the sighting reports and to begin I have selected several reports of the Flying triangles, which are gaining momentum, statistics referred to above.

Location: M54, Near Wolverhampton
Date: 4th December 1996
Inv. David Pointon (RIC Staffs/Shropshire)

On Wednesday 4th December 1996 at 8.45pm two friends MM and CL were travelling on the M54 from Telford towards Wolverhampton. As they reached the junction with the A44, they noticed from their left several lights moving erratically around a stationary, bright white rectangular shaped light with two pencil thick lines which appeared to divide it into three sections. They described the object as possibly being brighter than a full moon, but only appeared to illuminate itself, rather than the surrounding area. They describe these lights and object as appearing to be above RAF Cosford. At the same time they then noticed another object which appeared to be approaching them from a north easterly direction and travelling in a south westerly direction. They described this object as matt black and triangular in shape with green lights around its perimeter travelling at a moderate speed. As it came overhead it stopped and hovered above them where they then observed a bright white light at the centre of its undercarriage which appeared to extinguish and then re-illuminate. MM slowed down to approximately 10 mph and the object remained directly over their car for

possibly 2 minutes, where the two men observed several green lights, one at each point and one in the centre of each side. They estimate the size of the object as similar to a 747 jumbo jet and no noise was heard at all. The white light in the centre appeared to be in a transparent dome and it flashed on and off in a ratio of 4 and 10 seconds. MM remarked that he felt it was so low he could have reached out and touched it claiming that it was only about 50feet high (height is always difficult to judge without a proper frame of reference). It then moved off with its flat edge forward and did not turn or rotate, travelling at a maximum of 3 or 4 mph, towards the rectangular light. The two men then proceeded on their journey noticing a cluster of white lights to their right and behind them.

On their return journey at 1.45am driving again along the M54 towards Telford they observed a beam of light which appeared to shoot down from the sky in front of them and without hitting the ground it shot off to the right. This had such an impact on CL that he felt he could not drive because his 'legs felt like jelly'. Later on that night CL woke at 5am and felt as though he was 'being choked' and was then violently sick, the same thing happening a few days later. MM also awoke on the same night due to being violently sick and feels very tired since their sighting in that he is sleeping much longer than normal. MM also claims that since the incident he has been experiencing a recurring dream which involves a crash of a triangular craft. This dream seems to be traumatic for him and he has asked that details of this to be checked in case they occur or have occurred.

ON Thursday 5th December MM rang RAF Cosford where he says the receptionist informed him that she observed the same object six months prior to this. He then talked with the military police who took details of his sighting and he had the impression that they were aware of what he was reporting. He was told that RAF Cosford's control tower shut down at 5.30pm and there would be no aircraft present there after this time. Several days later Mr. M received two telephone calls within an hour of each other from people he assumed to be from RAF Cosford but who did not identify themselves, requesting further details about his sighting

David has attempted to establish whether there were any other witnesses to this sighting via the Shropshire Star and the Wolverhampton police. Following from this a number of reports have been received from witnesses in the Shropshire area, some corresponding to the date of the sighting, but not to the characteristics of the sighting itself. He feels it is probable there

may be an explanation for the rectangular and other erratic lights, possibly in the form a promotional event using an illuminated balloon and laser light display. Please inform BUFORA if you are aware of any such events on this date and at this time. With regard to the triangular object he has reached a preliminary conclusion that it is unidentified, but hopes that details of this investigation have helped collate some additional information regarding the construction, flight patterns etc. of the Flying Triangles. This case is still on-going and any definitive assessment will be documented in a future issue of UT.

Location: Warrington, Cheshire

Date: 4th November 1996

At 7.45am SP was observing the southeastern sky when he observed a large jet aircraft flying south and banking round to the southwest. It was travelling at a moderate speed when he noticed a small black triangular object very close to the aircraft's tail moving independently, shifting its position between the tail and the starboard wing. His observation time was about two minutes, and although he did consider the possibility of a mid air refueling, he dismissed this due to the fact that the jet aircraft was banking to change direction.

Location: A19, Near Northallerton

Date: 27th February 1997

At 7.25pm, MB, a long distance driver was travelling on the A19 southbound when he observed what he describes as a black triangle, which was illuminated by the streetlights of the A19/A168 junction and appeared to fly through the top of the streetlight glow over the Northallerton/Thirsk road junction on a northbound course along the A19. He describes the height as approximately 250feet high, moving fast, no navigation lights visible and no sound at all audible.

Location: M1, near Kirkhamgate, West Yorkshire

Date: 16th March 1997

Invs. John Heptonstall/Tony Dickinson

LB and her son were travelling home to Wakefield at 1am, when they observed a large black object which she describes as the size of three double decker buses, hovering low in the sky. It appeared to be just above

treetop height and they pulled over on to the hard shoulder to observe it in more detail.. They observed other traffic slowing down to look at the object and describe it has having 3 or 4 green lights on the bottom with a red light at the top. They could see it very clearly outlined against the sky as it was a clear night, and it appeared to near the top of a hill overlooking a housing estate at Kirkhamgate. There was no sound and it then started moving toward the motorway very slowly and LB estimates it was no more than ¼ mile away. Suddenly it appeared to move very fast over the hill and they speculated the only place it could have gone was down into the fields below. This investigation is being followed up by the investigators.

Location: Charlton Park, Charlton, London
Date: Mid 1960s

DS contacted BUFORA to relate an interesting daylight sighting report from the sixties. According to him, during the Sixties his Mother used walk in Charlton Park and one summer day she was walking through the park when she observed a triangular object, which appeared to be spheres joined by tubes (see drawing). At the same time she became aware of a silence and could not hear any familiar sounds at all. As she came out of the park she saw the object again, heard a whooshing sound and then it disappeared. An unusual footnote here is that DS told me that in the seventies his secretary told him that she knew someone who had seen exactly the same object in that particular park. He asked her to get a drawing from this person and found that this was identical to the drawing his mother had sketched many years ago. I would be interested if any readers know of other sightings around this area.

Location: Chester, Cheshire
Date: September 1980/81

As a fifteen year old GW was out cycling in his home village of Mollington, just outside Chester, when he noticed an intense bright orange glow, circular in shape at an estimated height of 3,000 ft in the dark night sky. It was about 9pm and the light seemed to slowly descend and as it did it became clearer and larger in size. It appeared like a round orange fireball and it seemed to descend slowly in three stages hovering briefly for a couple of minutes at each stage before landing in a field which was about two fields directly in front of him. As soon as it landed the orange glow

disappeared and it seemed to adopt a triangular shape which took on a green violet colour with the odd red light. It then appeared as though some sort of hatch opened revealing a well lit interior and after a minute or two closed. The total time GW observed this object was about 30 minutes and he describes it as rather like a triangular shaped fluorescent road sign.

Location: Sheffield, South Yorkshire

Date: Summer 1972

Still on the subject of unusual light phenomena, a letter came to BUFORA in 1996, in which CD told us of a very strange experience during the summer of 1972, many years ago, I realise, but important all the same.

CD was staying a friend's house one August night for a get together with some friends. She was in the kitchen when there was a knock at the door. Upon opening the door there was no-one there, but she could plainly hear footsteps going around to the back of the house and followed them around the house ending up back at the front door. There was no-one there. She looked around and then for some reason up at the sky where she observed two huge bright lights, a long way off in the distance. The two lights then separated and one veered off and disappeared. The other one came to the other side of the road where she was standing and appeared to position itself above a tree. CD describes the ground and everything around it, trees, flowers and bushes as *shimmering* as though there was lots of heat, but the weather was not hot. She felt a vibration in the pit of her stomach and felt very light and things seemed to be distant and *dreamlike* and her skin felt *tickly*. She called to her friends to come and have a look, some were already at the front door. She describes them all as being *very quiet*. CD goes on and I would like to quote from her letter.

'I felt so very drawn to the light, I can't explain it. I was not in the slightest bit afraid. I felt so at ease, peaceful, happy. Then I started to walk towards the light. I cannot explain the strength of the need to get closer to the light, but someone behind me, held me back, and I felt so disappointed!'

A short while later the light moved upwards above the tree and then followed the same direction of the other light. They all went back into the house. CD felt a bit strange and light headed, but that is all. The following day. The Sheffield Star reported countless sightings of UFOs all over

Sheffield.

An interesting footnote here is that CD says that after this sighting she developed *abilities* which she never had before and she is unable to explain. She describes these as *dreams, feelings, things she can sense with her hands and over which she has no control*, which appeared to begin after her encounter.

Location: Hethersgill, Cumbria

Date: 1st January 1993

Invs. Gloria Dixon/Paul Cabby

Taxi driver Liz H. had just dropped off some passengers at their home near Hethersgill village between Longtown and Brampton. It was 1.30am and she turned the taxi around and was heading back towards the main road to Brampton, when her car CB became really crackly, and she was unable to hear her sister 'Helena' on the radio. Suddenly the car just came to a standstill and the lights went out and the CB radio went dead. She felt very angry that on the busiest night of the year the taxi had broken down, and got out of the car to walk back towards the house where she had dropped off her passengers. Liz describes the weather as clear and she was able to see without the use of a torch, when without warning a brilliant ball of white light appeared to come up from the rear of the taxi. Liz describes it as about one foot in diameter. It hovered in front of her about and then moved upwards above the roof of the taxi and hovered there. She did not feel frightened, but said she felt fascinated and drawn to this light *as though she was being observed in some way*. It then just shot away extremely fast and moved towards Longtown. Feeling totally amazed, Liz go back into the taxi and tried the ignition, but the car suddenly jumped forward and the lights came back on and she really had a shock when the CB radio boomed out to her, because she had fully turned up the volume, when it had become crackly, prior to her sighting. Liz's sister was shouting her name and asked where Liz had been for the last half an hour. Liz was surprised by this as she felt she had only been out of her car for five to ten minutes. She told her sister that she had seen a 'shooting star', her only frame of reference for this sighting, and because they were so busy she didn't discuss it any further until New Year's Day when Helena told Liz that there had been a reported sighting of a UFO near Dumfries. Liz was very definite that she could not explain this ball of light at all and is convinced that it was responsible for her car malfunctioning.

convinced that it was responsible for her car malfunctioning.

Location: Hallbankgate, Near Brampton, Cumbria

Date: 23rd November 1996

David L, a taxi driver from Brampton and the father of the above lady was making several journeys from a local pub in Talkin Village picking up passengers to take them home. At approximately lam he was driving three passengers home from the pub to Hallbankgate, when at they observed a large green ball of light with a white light around it which appeared to drop from the sky and hover within some trees at a nearby farm. After DL had dropped his passengers off he returned to the pub for some more passengers and was taking the same route as before. It was approximately 1.40am by this time and as they came up the hill towards Hallbank Gate (a very remote area, see photographs), DL observed a tall figure emerging from a field gate on his right hand side. He described the figure as being in a silver suit with 'something' on his head, and what appeared to be a 'white sheet' in front of him which he was not holding, but seemed to be stuck to his hands. Both DL and his two passengers were extremely frightened and did not stop, but drove straight on up the hill. They observed this figure about 100 yards past the area where DL had observed the light on his previous trip. According to two people, this light had been observed before and apparently there have been some strange sightings and incidents around the area witnessed by local people.

Geographical features around this area are Spadeadam, where the land is owned by MOD and although now inactive, a fence surrounds the area and guards patrol it. This investigation is on-going and will be updated in future issues, as it appears there have been many events within a small radius of this area encompassing unusual sightings and paranormal incidents. I shall be following this up with another BUFORA investigator over the coming months

Location: Edinburgh

Date: October 1991

Inv. George Niedzwiedz (RIC Scottish Borders)

This a report of some extraordinary events which occurred during a 'dreamlike' experience to CD and his wife in their flat in Edinburgh during the early hours of the morning in October 1991. They are a professional

couple, who are genuinely puzzled about their experiences. George Niedzwiedz conducted an interview with them on 23rd February 1997. The following report emerged from this interview. They have since become members of BUFORA and were most appreciative of the support they have received.

Husband (CD)'s Statement from his interview with George Niedzwiedz

The first thing I remember was lying on my bed face down and being woken up by someone in the room standing at the back of the bed just to my right hand side and reaching down straight away with something held in a hand touching it against my left shoulder. This brought a tingling sensation and I was aware of the words *'You won't be taking part in this one or you won't be allowed to take part in this one'*. I can remember those words although I am sure I didn't actually hear anything. I can't remember the nature of the voice, only my thoughts about what I heard. I couldn't move. The object that was held in this thing's hand was small, about the size of a tennis ball perhaps, cone shaped with a light at the tip. The room was dark, I don't know what woke me up but I woke up to be paralysed with this device held against my left shoulder. At that time my wife was in the bed beside me and I can remember her leaving, I knew I couldn't do anything about it. I could not move. I do not know what happened after that. I knew that something was happening with her and involved her and not me. I was deliberately being restrained on the bed. There was no suggestion of menace and I was not scared although it was a bit disturbing the next day when we remembered this. The incident happened some time after 02.00 hours because we don't go to bed till about that time anyway. The alarm would have gone off around 07.00hours am. When we got up, I can't remember who said it first, but one of us said *'I had a really weird dream'*. Oh, that's the other thing, I got the impression that this 'thing' (entity) was like my Grandfather or was my Grandfather. I don't remember it being my Grandfather, it seemed like my Grandfather the next day and I can only suppose that happened because it was so weird, that's the sort of interpretation my brain has put on the memory of what happened. I got the impression that the 'thing' was very old, I don't know what height it was, it was dark and I am sure I didn't see it so I can't describe what it was like, but I got the impression it was old

Anyway next day one of us said we had a really weird dream and it involved

'things' coming into the room and either I or my wife said 'so did I' and after a few words we realised that something very strange happened to us together and we decided to write it down before we said any more to each other. After we had written it down and compared reports we remembered that they were very similar, although looking back now on what we had written, they were not as similar as we thought and also I cannot believe what I had written down because there are lots of things I had missed out, like the 'thing' in the creature's hand. I never mentioned that, but I could clearly remember it after the event but obviously not that morning. I can remember it quite clearly now and could remember it clearly several weeks afterwards as well and that must have been five or six years ago. For some reason I did not think of it on that day.

What made us investigate it further after all this time was a Sightings TV programme in which two chaps from Edinburgh claimed that they had been involved in what I would call a typical type UFO abduction. Whereas what happened to me and CA (his wife) was all subliminal, it was weird. It was translated into the memory of a dream, which is why it was so strange. I am sure some of it actually took place and I am quite convinced that whatever it was involved some kind of physiological and psychological control, because I was definitely prevented from moving. I am sure it was not one of these hypnogogic state things that people go into, because the memories are distinctly different from anything I have ever experienced in my life and very, very strange. Up to that point I thought that abductions were big spinning saucers with bright lights taking people up and doing genetic experiments because that is what I have read in the *New Scientist*. I never imagined it would be as weird and disturbing as we experienced.

Wife (CA)'s Statement from her interview with George Niedzwiedz

The event started definitely to the end of the dream and CD (husband) and I standing talking in a hall of a friend's house originally and then during the dream. I said something about the lights have gone out and that I needed to get a new light bulb and it was in the cupboard. Then it (*the dream*) changed to being our old house and I went into the cupboard feeling that something was drawing me up. At the time I thought that it was a dream and then I woke up but I didn't open my eyes, as I was scared, it was weird and I was aware of there being a really bright light, very intense light inside or just outside the bedroom window. It was as if someone had turned on a huge spotlight outside and it was shining into the room and it was that grey/

bluey intense light, huge shadows, because it was so bright. There's no way, if there was something outside the window you would see it. Then I was aware of 'things' entering the room, some sort of beings, I had an impression of something tall and some small wrinkly creatures dressed in a dark cape or cloak. I tried to reach over or call out to David and I knew that he was awake as well but I couldn't move and I couldn't make any noise. I had the feeling that he was in the same position. I knew he was there and he knew something was happening, but obviously couldn't do anything about it. 'It' came over and I felt as if 'they' touched or did something to my forehead and then I was picked up and was carried out of the room.

When I woke up later on in the morning in my bed, that's what I actually remembered of what had happened. In the morning we wrote down an account of the dream of whatever had been and when we looked at it again last week, it didn't correspond to what I remember. Nothing was wrong to what we wrote down, but it was in a different order and I remembered events which I didn't write down at the time. It was un-nerving, really unsettling the next day or so and left me with a fear of the cupboard in the living room in the flat that we lived in at the time, which went on for ages, but got slightly less after a year or so, but I was always a bit wary of that area of the house after that. It was as if the thing in the cupboard happened a good bit before the part in the bedroom.

Some Comments from George Niedzwiedz Concluding Summary Report.

I found CD and CA to be intelligent, coherent and helpful individuals. The encounter has not left them with any adverse effects, although it has caused them to think a great deal about their dream. However, at the time of the incident they were left confused and unsettled. CA (wife), in a state of apprehension regarding the cupboard and CD (husband) a bit disturbed in that he thought he had been in the presence of his Grandfather, who had died twenty years previously. Prior to the interview CD and I visited the old address where the incident took place. The old address was a flat on the upper level of a block of four and the area about two miles distant from the flat is criss-crossed with high voltage power lines

By reporting this case CD and CA were clearly expecting some answers, but unfortunately I could not give them any because I do not feel anyone

Rather, it is wide open to speculation and conjecture. Both husband and wife believe their shared dream took place, but do not know why they should explain it in this way. This is not an isolated instance as well we know and if abductions are happening then it is my opinion that their example is a classic.

So at the end of it all what does this leave us with and what does it all prove? I don't know. Perhaps in the near future all of this enigma will fall into place and we will be faced with overwhelming answers.

Comments from Gloria Dixon

I would like to extend my thanks to George for this report and assistance in conducting investigation into this case.

It may be possible here that electromagnetic effects have some relevance and this will be looked into by George and myself. The location where they experienced these events has many high voltage power lines. Both husband and wife experienced electric shocks when they were young. CD experienced his at age nine or ten in the form of putting his wet hands in front of an old electric fire to warm them and as he held his hands close he received a shock, which was not especially serious. However, at fourteen years old his wife was plugging in an electrical radiator and her fingers accidentally touched two of the pins as she put it in the socket. She remembers that the shock was quite strong and threw her backwards. She thinks she blacked out for a few seconds and had a blister on the end of her finger. She was very shaken by this for a while afterwards. I shall be forwarding further Questionnaires to both witnesses in order to establish whether electrical hypersensitivity could possibly have some relevance to their intriguing experiences.

I would also like to extend my deep appreciation and thanks to all RICs Investigators, and Consultants for your invaluable help and support and for your vital role at the cutting edge of Ufology.... **Investigation**. Particular thanks go to David Pointon John Heptonstall, David Sankey and Dave Newton for their humour and pragmatism in a hectic and important year of changes within our Association and Ufology in general.

To bring this issue of the Investigations Diary to a close I would like to give you the words of **John Spencer** from his thought provoking book **Gift of the Gods?**

'As to solving the UFO mystery of close encounters, perhaps there is no 'solution' simply because there is no question. Perhaps the phenomenon is there, like wind and rain and sunshine, to be used as appropriate. If so, then a positive attitude and open and receptive mind will let us all use it to make us all better people, to build better relationships and ultimately let us all build a better world

And that may be why the toy is there to be played with.

READERS LETTERS *edited by Dave Newton*

I had the good fortune of viewing an Open University programme recently involving spectroscopy, the observation of optical spectra and the atomic elements there within. My reason for writing is to ask if anyone has photographed a UFO via a spectrograph, and therefore analysed the atomic elements emanating from it. I understand the difficulties involved, cost is always a primary concern and UFOs do not appear to order, however could we (BUFORA) borrow a spectrograph from a university? Someone must have the contacts and transport needed. If so, could we set up a field station in a window area such as the Pennines, and keep our fingers crossed? To the best of my knowledge the UFO Studies Information Services in Birmingham were looking into a spectrographic programme in 1979, does anyone know the outcome?

Mr. S.W. McLaren, Gosport, Hampshire

Editors comment: *In answer to your question, I'm afraid I don't know. The only times this may have been possible was during Project Hessdalen or Project Starlight based in the States some years ago, although I haven't got any specific details. The point you make is a good one, although a laboratory spectroscope wouldn't be portable or flexible enough for photographing UFOs in the field. More useful would be an objective prism or grating spectrograph to go over the front lens of a 35mm camera. I know amateur meteor astronomers use these to try to catch meteor spectra. If you are interested in trying this please write in and perhaps we can organise a project*

BECOMING A UFOLOGIST.

Robert Moore

A common question often asked of **BUFORA** is "How do you become a **professional** Ufologist?". Unfortunately there is **NO** professionally-accepted qualification in ufology at either GCSE, "A" or degree-level. Unfortunately, this subject is currently not accepted as a bona-fide field of serious study, at least in itself. This is largely due to the scepticism this subject is viewed with in mainstream academic and scientific circles. However, it has been known for students to base a doctoral thesis on a ufological topic in the "soft" sciences (such as sociology, media studies and philosophy). But this practice is a much less accepted one in the "hard" sciences; a physics student submitting a thesis on possible UFO propulsion systems is likely to get a frosty reception from his university superiors!

It is true there **are** scientists who show an active interest in UFO's. However, such individuals initially acquire a degree (and, following their graduation) continue to work in a conventional, long-established area of academic study such as physics, chemistry, etc. It is fair to say such people are not so much Ufological scientists but scientists who happen to be Ufologists! They often have to tread carefully, aware that important funding at their university could be jeopardized by them making reckless statements to the media concerning UFO's! And, for the academic community, the boundary between "reckless" and "sensible" is a **very** tenuous one.

With this in mind, someone who is enthusiastic about studying UFO's should pursue a **conventional** academic subject at degree level, which has some relevance to this field. Fortunately, the disciplines useful in the study of UFO's is **very** broad! To begin with, the ability to legibly and competently present your ideas in writing is a valued and much utilized skill in Ufology; hence some form of English qualification is useful! The investigation of UFO reports involve a considerable number of subjects, covering such wide areas of expertise that **no** one person could possibly be qualified in them all! The most important of these subjects include Astronomy, Chemistry, Engineering, Geophysics, Meteorology, Physics and Statistics. Archeological, Medical (or Veterinarian) skills also occasionally come into play. On a more general level, Administration, Information Technology and Research skills are also equally important to any would-be Ufologist.

However, the term "professional Ufologist" can also be taken to mean someone who is **paid** to investigate and research UFO's. As a career, this is possible, but **very** difficult. The only people able to pursue such a calling are writers and journalists. It is **very** difficult to become an established writer; many hundreds try, but few ever get their work published by a mass-circulation publisher! Being paid to write about UFO's obviously requires a large quantity of people interested in buying such material. Interest in UFO's is fickle, and a mass audience often tire of this subject for long periods of time (UFO's only enjoying fairly short and sporadic periods of public interest). Furthermore, for a writer's work to be acceptable to a mass audience, it often means him or her having to author material conforming to the mind-set of casual UFO buffs; i.e. producing "copy" that implies (usually uncritically) that UFO's are extraterrestrial spacecraft! As a result, articles dealing with UFO's from a critical, non-extraterrestrial perspective rarely ever sees print. Whilst it is true that there is a market for "serious" UFO material among "serious" Ufologists, they are insufficient in number to sustain one reasonably prolific author, let alone several!!

In the real world, a Ufologist-cum writer/journalist usually writes about UFO's only occasionally, and usually **has** to branch out into other areas (such as the paranormal or more "conventional" topics) to make **any** kind of reasonable living. Finally, there is also the remote chance of acquiring a paid administration job with a UFO group (or magazine). This itself involves fairly mundane tasks (i.e. keeping membership records, banking subscription dues and answering enquiry letters from the general public, etc.). However, such positions are **very** few and far between. In the case of UFO groups they are usually only available on a part-time basis, such bodies lacking the resources to employ clerical staff on a permanent basis.

OFFICIAL JOBS ASSOCIATED WITH UFO's.

Are there **any** official governmental jobs associated with UFO's? Sadly (in the real world) there is no real "X-files" like paranormal/UFO investigations department connected with either the **FBI**, **M15** or any other official body! Even in the T.V series, the "X-Files" is a one-man (and one woman) operation - albeit with access to FBI resources - which enjoys a tenuous existence at the best of times! In actuality, this setup is merely a plot device, allowing the characters to investigate "paranormal" events on a regular basis. In the **real** world, most taxpayers would be unhappy (to say the least)

over "their" money being spent on chasing aliens and phantoms, when real crimes require solving and vital public services are often subject to severe budget cuts!

Currently, there is no official dedicated UFO study-projects in the UK. In America the USAF administered such a program during the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's , but this effort has now been inactive for many decades. In the U.K (and most other countries), what official work that is done regarding UFO's is conducted through standard intelligence channels, involving air-force personnel (and also the police in some rare instances). Of those likely to be officially allocated such work, it is probable that UFO-related matters only comprise a minor (and uncommon) proportion of their duties.

That said, there is **one** official full-time Military/Civil-Service position associated with UFOs in the U.K; the MOD "UFO department" **AS (2a) Air**. However, this post also deals (in equal measure) with complaints relating to low flying aircraft! This position is strictly an office-bound job, in which UFO events are accorded a very low priority. The MOD are primarily concerned with the "defense implications" of a given UFO sighting. Once it is evident it has none, investigation into that event ceases! The availability of this post is very rare, being allotted (by rotation) every three years to a randomly-selected civil servant.

Another mid-1990's T V series ("**Poltergeist; the Legacy**") depicted a wealthy and globally-based foundation, who's purpose was to investigate various supernatural happenings. Sadly (in regards to either UFO's or the paranormal), **no** such powerful foundations **actually** exist. There are several examples of research foundations and institutes, but they are fairly low-key in scope and notably under-funded (in comparison to **other** areas of science). The main reason for this is because there is **no** "serious" money to be recouped from such a venture. "Serious" Ufology is mainly concerned with investigating (usually) explicable lights in the sky, and the very occasional (almost always inconclusive) "high strangeness" event. None of these events are exciting enough to be big money-spinners, unless they are "hyped" in a lurid manner (which defeats the objective of such a foundation being a **scientific** endeavor!). The only aspects of Ufology that **does** get generous private funding are one-off enterprises associated with the entertainment industry (such as UFO films and videos).

BECOMING A UFO INVESTIGATOR & RESEARCHER.

The decision to become involved in investigating UFO's is **not** one to be taken lightly. Although not officially accepted by society as a legitimate profession, investigating UFO reports is certainly neither a casual hobby, either! Make **no** mistake about it; "serious" ufology is a **very** demanding, emotionally taxing and unpaid part-time job! Investigators often have to deal with people who have been unsettled (even emotionally traumatized) by their experience. Because UFO investigators are (in effect) "filling in" for science, it is essential they work to the highest possible standards. This entails documenting UFO incidents in considerable detail, and making serious attempts to find rational solutions for specific events. Thus, **all** UFO investigators **must** possess a good working knowledge of the natural causes responsible for false UFO incidents. They must **also** be able to interview a witness **without** (unconsciously) distorting his or her testimony. As sighting reports are utilized in research-projects (and hypothesis formulated upon them), it is essential that UFO investigations are both competent and comprehensive!

There are several books of relevance to those wishing to acquire a **basic** working knowledge of UFO investigation. These are listed below; sadly they are **all** currently out of print! Copies **may** be attainable through secondhand book shops, or via intra-library loans:

- o **Challenge To Science The UFO Enigma Vallee, J. & J. 1966**
- o **Scientific Study Of UFOs (ed. Condon, Dr. E. U.). Bantam Books . 1969.**
- o **The UFO Experience; A scientific Inquiry. Ablard Schulman. 1972.**
- o **The UFO Handbook. Henry, Allan. Sphere Books. 1980.**
- o **UFO Study, . A Handbook For Enthusiasts. Randles, Jenny. Robert Hale. 1981**

UFO investigation (as already stated) is **hard work**. But it **can** also very rewarding! Few subjects today allow non-academics to assist in resolving an important scientific problem and also **perhaps** contribute to human

knowledge. However, I will offer some words of caution. The vast majority of cases are **very** basic sightings of lights, **which (nearly) always have a rational solution**. Even in the more unusual cases **all** you will (usually) have is a witnesses' insistence that "something wonderful" happened. Few Ufologists have had UFO experiences **directly** resulting from their investigatory activities. Ufology mainly involves conversing with witnesses and pen-pushing! It is also a **major** drain on an investigator's financial resources. To become a **BUFORA** investigator, an individual must be aged 18 (or over) and pass it's investigator training course. Those who pass this course then undergo a probationary period of **one year** before they are deemed to be a full (or "accredited") investigator. Additionally, they must also agree to abide by a **Code Of Practice**, which they must conscientiously follow whilst investigating sightings. And, even after passing the training course, there is still much knowledge a new investigator can only realistically learn while "on the job".

BRIEF ITEMS

News Cuttings: Keep those cuttings coming in, please. Thanks go to the following who have sent in contributions: Mr Jean Bastide from Aix en Provence, Mr C. P'Anson who lives near Halifax, Mrs E. Oakensen from Northamptonshire and Mr M. Williamson from Cambridge.

The British Astronomical Association's website reports a bright meteoric fireball being reported over southern England at 7pm on Sunday 15th March. This was a slow moving white object seen to fragment in flight. The BAA had many reports from Bristol, Devon and Cornwall. The fireball was also seen from Derbyshire. This object may have generated some UFO reports.

The "Blackpool Evening Gazette" for Saturday 28th Feb 1998 reports on an object seen by two Blackpool football fans. The two men saw what one of them described as "a large black dome shaped craft hovering over the motorway" as they were heading north on the M11 near Harlow, Essex at 5:45pm on 21st Feb. The witness said "It was hovering about 100 feet off the ground, it was 50ft wide and 20ft deep". When he arrived home, the witness phoned Stansted airport who were not aware of any aircraft in that area at the time. The object was also reported by a woman who had been travelling on a coach going from London to Cambridge.

INVESTIGATORS TRAINING COURSE

I have a request from National Training Co-ordinator, Dave Pointon, to remind members about the Postal Training Course for prospective investigators. This is a valuable part of the training of prospective investigators. For further details please contact Dave at the address below.

Gloria Dixon has kindly provided me with notes from the National Investigations Committee (NIC) meeting at Newcastle Upon Tyne on 8th March 1997 which give some basic information about the course and how it relates to becoming an Accredited Investigator.

The Postal Training Course (PTC) is to be made compulsory to BUFORA members requesting to become an investigator for BUFORA. They will be listed as a potential investigator until they have completed and passed the PTC, whereby they will be listed as a Provisional Investigator for BUFORA. In order to gain accreditation they will then have to be submit two casefiles to their RIC for assessment. Based on an assessment both by the RIC and myself they may then be given AI (Accredited Investigator) status. This AI status will be an official recognition by BUFORA and is non transferable upon resignation and non-renewal of membership.

New additions to the current PTC. This course is now to be condensed into a three month period, and each module will be expected to be completed within a two week period of receipt from the course administrator. An extension of a further two weeks will be allowed for inexperienced trainees, who may need extra time to collate information, but a candidate who is in receipt of a course module longer than the maximum one month period will be terminated from the course.

Cost increase to the PTC. The previous cost of £7.50 has been reviewed and as of 1st April 1997 an increase of £12.50 has been implemented making the total cost for the PTC £20. £10.00 of this will go to the course administrator to cover postage and other expenses relating to the course. The balance of £10 will be forwarded to BUFORA central and allocated to a separate fund which will then be used for various activities relevant to the NIC with a view to inviting guest speakers to make presentations at future NIC meetings, which will be important for investigation techniques or feasible theories for witnesses experiences. It would also be considered that

these funds may be used for training days for investigators to attend..

Please note that **all** enquiries pertaining to the Postal Training Course should be addressed to **David Pointon, 5 Chapel Street, Mount Pleasant, Mow Cop, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs., ST7 4NP(No personal visits), Phone (01782) 522620, email: spibufora@aol.com.uk**

Contact Corner and Research Requests

Contact Corner provides an opportunity for members to meet other members in their area. Research Requests is for area where members can ask for assistance with their own private research projects. If you reply to any of these adverts, any arrangements you make are a private agreement between you and the advertiser.

Contact Corner : The following members would like to get in touch with other BUFORA members in the areas where they live :

Keith Fellows DIP AMSTRA, LIC Diph Phys, BSc
Thetford, Norfolk TEL: 01842 766729

Robert Lawson Snr., Sunderland, TEL: 0191 549 3386

I wonder can you help me obtain information on the following areas of UFO research

1. UFO Landing cases
2. UFO sightings by young people (under 18)

Any help in obtaining information on either of these topics would be greatly appreciated. Confidentiality of any witness details is guaranteed and credit will be given for any material published.

Philip Mantle, 1 Woodhall Drive, Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 7SW, UK
Telephone/FAX: 01924 444049 email : el51@dial.pipex.com

Technician in aeronautics in search of UFOs seen by pilots in France or anywhere in the world. Any reports would be very much appreciated. Please reply to: Mr Jean Bastide, 5 Avenue Maurice Blondel, 13100 Aix-en-Provence, France

UFO researcher looking to contact anyone who used to be as member of the Tyneside UFO Society - Please write to: Chris Holton at 97 Lichfield Road, Stafford, ST17 4LP

BUFORA LECTURES

Meetings are held at the University of Westminster, 35 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5LS starting at 2pm and lasting until approximately 5pm.

Saturday 6th June 1998

Speaker : Malcolm Robinson

Title : UFO Wave in Scotland

Malcolm Robinson is one of the leading investigators of UFO phenomena in Scotland. For several years he has investigated the huge wave of reports from the Bonnybridge area involving many local residents. Malcolm, who is probably the leading authority on the Bonnybridge events will discuss his researches into these and other recent cases.

Please note : There are no London Lectures during July and August. The new lecture season will start on Saturday 5th September. 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.

Close Encounters Competition

In the last issue of UFO Times we ran a competition to win copies of the re-released video of the classic sci-fi flick Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

The winners were :

Mr K. Owen from Shipston-on-Stour

Mr K. Wright from Pitsea

Mr Chester from Bedford

BUFORA, 16 Southway, Burgess Hill, Sussex, RH15 9ST