

OUT OF THIS WORLD: Has E.T. finally phoned home? Don't call us

Can you tell me if any aliens are here? I promise to keep it secret

By **Tim Shipman**
Defence Correspondent

HAVE the little green men invaded Britain yet? The public would like to know.

And are there meatballs still for tea in the Royal Navy? We think we should be told.

These are the thorny issues that the brass hats at the Ministry of Defence are having to juggle with thanks to new freedom of information legislation.

Curious Britons really want to know if E.T. has finally phoned home.

One little girl asked: "Have we done any experiments with aliens? Have aliens actually landed on Earth? There are thousands of questions I could ask but what I really want to know is are there extraterrestrials on this planet? Please, please, please could you tell me if there are photos? Because I really need to know. I PROMISE to keep it a secret."

Another member of the public asked for details of the MoD's policy on abduction by extraterrestrials. The official answer: "We have had nothing to do with aliens." So now you know.

One couple who used to work for the Navy were so fond of the taste of curried meatballs that they wrote in to ask for the recipe.

A long-serving chef was charged with dredging out the old recipe and now Jan and Tony Rickard are again enjoying their old favourites.

Jan, 61, from Carshalton, south London, said: "The meatballs were absolutely scrummy. The MoD has really come up trumps to track down the recipe. They went to tremendous lengths."

Others have used the Freedom of Information Act, designed to wheedle out the secrets of government, to ask for vehicle operating manuals and to

MoD is hit by a fusillade of mad questions

find out the correct procedure for royal parades.

The MoD receives more freedom of information requests than any other Government department, around 300 each month, but many of them cannot be answered because of exemptions in the law where national security is at stake.

Officials are keen to point out, however, that they have gone out of their way to be helpful to members of the public where possible.

An MoD spokeswoman said: "One of the most popular requests is to ask

about alien life but we have to disappoint people. The success of the curried meatballs demonstrates our commitment to going the extra mile to

answer as many requests as we can."

Other oddball requests include:
● Could you please tell me whether the warships are moored and the Queen goes past them or whether the warships parade past the Queen?
● Which kind of tea is drunk by the Ministry of Defence?

● Do you know where I could get a workshop manual for a Reynolds Boughton RB44 truck as I'm doing a trip from Sweden to Cape Town?

● I own a Green Goddess fire engine. I am interested in tracing her history. Can you help?

● Could I have a photocopy of the new Pulsar aircrew issue Chronograph watch?

● Is it possible to buy recipe books from the Army?

'The meatballs were scrummy'



WE'LL NEVER FORGET THE FORGOTTEN

As victory over Europe was celebrated – another battle, just as ferocious, just as deadly was still being fought in the Far East.

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ay, August 1, 2004

METRO 3



'Alien wreckage' found in Siberia

THE wreckage of an alien space craft has been discovered at the site of an unexplained explosion that took place in Siberia nearly a century ago, Russian scientists claim. The team also says it has found a rock weighing 50kg which has been sent for analysis, according to the respected Interfax news agency. Researchers, working for the publicly-funded Tunguska Space Phenomenon group, believe the alien craft crashed on June 30, 1908. Until now, the blast, which devastated 2,000sq km of remote forest, was blamed on a meteorite impact near the Tunguska river. The scientists hope the evidence will help solve the mystery of what happened that day by the time of the centenary of the blast, in four years. The site was first researched in 1927, but no signs of an alien craft were reported then.

December 3, 2004

METRO 7

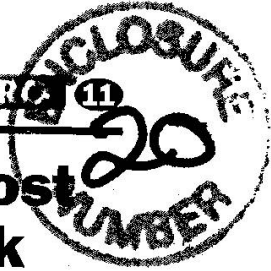


Aliens made me break the limit

IT WAS all too much for the poor motorist caught by a speed camera. The prospect of three penalty points in his licence and a £60 fine called for an inventive excuse. 'I passed out after seeing flashing lights in the distance, which I believed to be UFOs,' he said in a letter of appeal to officials. 'The flash of the camera brought me round from my trance.' Aliens are not the only bizarre excuse offered by desperate drivers hoping to get off the hook. One man blamed his dying hamster, which he was rushing to a vet. Another claimed to be taking a friend's severed fingers to hospital, said Northumbria Safety Camera Partnership, which monitors speed cameras in the North-East.

Thursday, January 19, 2006

METRO 11

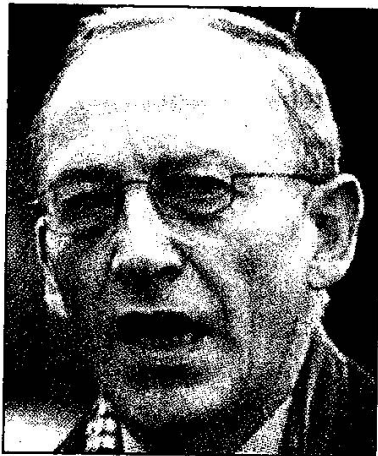


'Locked' by 'made on jet

Airways flight from Abu Dhabi to Heathrow.

Roberts told jurors he was first given Seroxat on the tenth anniversary of a Chinook helicopter crash which killed 29 military personnel in Scotland in 1994, including some of his friends.

chemist Prof Robert Forrest 'I don't believe the alcohol his behaviour unless on.'



Memory loss: Roberts

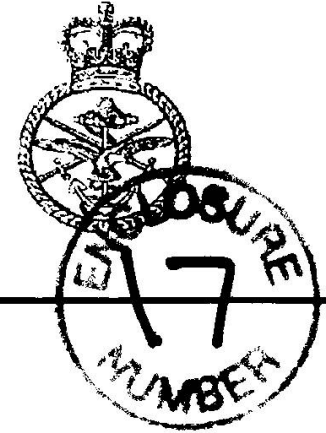
Ulysses is most valuable book

A RARE first edition of Ulysses by James Joyce has been named the most valuable work of 20th-century fiction. A signed 1922 copy of the novel is worth £100,000, according to Book & Magazine Collector magazine. Second on its list is a 1902 copy of Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound Of The Baskervilles, worth £80,000.

Aliens 'visiting millennium tower'

REPORTED sightings of alien craft have brought tourists and UFO watchers flocking to a millennium tower. Residents claim to have seen a cigar-shaped flashing object hovering over the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth. UFO spotters believe the 170m building is attracting attention from alien life.

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What is the truth about Britain's greatest

UFO MYSTERY?

It is nearly 25 years since a strange craft landed in a Suffolk forest. When asked about the incident, Margaret Thatcher replied: 'You can't tell the people.' Here, the Government's former UFO expert reveals the amazing story



by **Nick Pope**

Former British Government UFO Project leader

ON MAY 21, 1997, a former Prime Minister made an enigmatic comment that seemed to confirm the reality of Britain's most famous UFO incident. The remark hinted at darker secrets and led to much debate among conspiracy theorists. The politician was Baroness Thatcher and the implications of what she said are extraordinary.

The comment was made at a charity function. London-based socialite and author Georgina Bruni had been researching the Rendlesham Forest UFO incident, fascinated by hints dropped by diplomatic, military and political friends. Sceptical about the subject of UFOs, she thought it was awash with cultists and crackpots.

But Rendlesham was different so, when she met Baroness Thatcher at a dinner, Bruni put

the former PM on the spot. Was there any truth to the rumours about what happened in Suffolk's Rendlesham Forest? What did the Government really know about UFOs? Was it a serious issue or just pie in the sky?

Bruni was expecting a bland dismissal of the story. The official Ministry of Defence position was that no evidence existed to suggest UFOs were extraterrestrial in origin. Then the former PM dropped her bombshell. "UFOs?" she said. "You can't tell the people."

Bruni was astounded and pressed her point. What did she mean? Baroness Thatcher calmly repeated her remark, before departing.

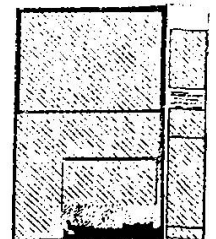
From 1991 to 1994, I ran the Government's UFO Project, based at the Ministry of Defence, and Bruni had interviewed me in the course of her research. Still astonished, she called me at 2am to tell me what had happened. I quickly grasped its sig-

nificance. I went to my study and began to make notes, all the time quizzing Georgina about every nuance of her brief encounter with the former PM.

If you take all the thousands of UFO sightings investigated by the MoD over the years, the Rendlesham Forest incident stood out. We could not ignore it, despite our best efforts to find some conventional explanation. This case was the Holy Grail and Baroness Thatcher's remark put the events into a new light.

SO WHAT actually happened at Rendlesham Forest and what makes the event the UK's strangest UFO encounter? As we approach its 25th anniversary, it's time to reopen the MoD's spookiest X-File.

Late on Christmas night, 1980, and early on Boxing Day, strange lights were seen in the forest. This might not sound particularly significant. When I was running



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the UFO Project I used to receive up to 300 reports of sightings each year.

Most could be explained as misidentifications of aircraft lights, meteors or weather balloons. What made this sighting remarkable was the fact that the witnesses were United States Air Force personnel based at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk.

Rendlesham Forest lies between the bases and, as the Cold War was still decidedly frosty, a UFO sighting at two of the nation's most sensitive military sites was bound to be of interest.

Early on December 26, duty personnel reported lights so bright they feared an aircraft had crashed. They obtained permission to go off-base to investigate. But they didn't find a crashed aircraft - they found a UFO.

The three-man patrol from the 81st Security Police Squadron - Jim Penniston, John Burroughs and Ed Cabansag - saw a small, metallic craft moving through the trees.

At one point, it appeared to land in a small clearing. They approached cautiously and Penniston got close enough to see strange markings on the side, which he likened to Egyptian hieroglyphs. He made some rapid sketches in his notebook. It touched down for only moments and then departed.

Later, because of the complicated legal and jurisdictional position of US Air Force bases in the UK, police from Suffolk Constabulary were called to the apparent landing site. They conducted a brief but inconclusive examination.

Three indentations were visible in the clearing and, when mapped, they formed the shape of an equilateral triangle. A Geiger counter was used to check the site and the readings peaked markedly in the depressions where the object - possibly on legs of some sort - had come to Earth.

News of the UFO encounter came to the attention of the Deputy Base Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt. He was sceptical, but had the witnesses write up official reports, including sketches of what they had seen.

The following evening, Halt was at a function when a young airman burst in and ran up to him. "Sir," he stammered, "It's back." Halt looked confused. "What?" he retorted. "What's back?" "The UFO, sir - the UFO's back."

Halt gathered together a small team and went out into the forest to investigate. He subsequently stated that he had no expectation of seeing anything and that his intention was to "debunk" the whole affair. But he didn't do so because he too encountered the UFO, becoming one of the highest ranking military officers to go on the record about such a sighting.

As he and his men tracked the UFO, their radios began to malfunction and powerful lamps taken to illuminate the forest mysteriously began to cut out. But a hand-held tape recorder the colonel took to document his investigation did not malfunction.

THE TAPE recording still survives and one can hear the rising tension in Halt's voice and the voices of his men, as the UFO approaches...

"I see it too... it's back again... it's coming this way... there's no doubt about it... this is weird... it looks like an eye winking at you... it almost burns your eyes... he's coming toward us now... now we're observing what appears to be a beam coming down to the ground... one object still hovering over Woodbridge base... beaming down."

At one point the tension in their voices almost seems to become panic as the UFO makes a close approach and fires light beams down on Halt and his men.

Halt wrote an official report of the incident. Although somewhat innocuously entitled Unexplained Lights, it described the first night's UFO as being "metallic in appearance and triangular in shape... a pulsing red light on top and a bank of blue lights underneath... the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy".

He went on to detail the radiation readings taken from the landing site and set out the details of his own sighting.

The report was sent to the section of the Ministry of Defence where, a little over 10 years later, I spent three years researching and investigating UFO sightings. It went to my predecessors, who began an investigation, but they were hampered by a mistake that was to have dire consequences.

For whatever reason - and it may have been nothing more

than a typographical error - Charles Halt's report gave incorrect dates for the incident. So when the MoD checked the radar tapes, they were looking at the wrong days.

Radar evidence is a critical part of any UFO investigation. Many spectacular UFO sightings over the years have been correlated by radar. MoD files detail several such cases, including ones where RAF pilots encountered UFOs and gave chase. Unsuccessfully, I might add.

In the absence of any radar data that might confirm the presence of the Rendlesham Forest UFOs, the investigation petered out. Yet, as I was to discover years later, the UFO had been tracked after all.

I spoke to a former RAF radar operator called Nigel Kerr. He had been stationed at RAF Watton in Norfolk at Christmas 1980 and took a call from RAF Bentwaters asking if there was anything unusual on his radar screen. For three or four sweeps,

something did show up directly over the base, but it faded away and no official report was ever made. It was only years later that Kerr heard of the Rendlesham Forest incident and realised he might have a missing piece of the puzzle.

In the apparent absence of radar data to verify the presence of the UFO, arguably the most critical piece of evidence was never followed up. The Defence Intelligence Staff had assessed the radiation readings taken at the landing site and judged them "significantly higher than the average background". In fact, they were about seven times what would have been expected.

So what are we to make of all this? UFO believers are convinced the sightings involved an extra-terrestrial spacecraft. They still hold sky watches in the forest and claim to see UFOs regularly.

The sceptical theories are almost as bizarre, with suggestions that the highly trained military witnesses actually saw the lights of a police car, or the beam from the local lighthouse. "Lighthouses don't fly," Charles Halt said, incredulously.

More rational sceptical theories include the testing of a prototype aircraft, but the bottom line is that, while there are things being developed you won't see at the Farnborough Air Show for 10 or 15 years, we know where we fly our own hardware. The "black projects" theory doesn't hold up.

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COL HALT'S evidence was obtained by American UFO researchers in 1983, under the Freedom of Information Act. But it was not until 2001 that the rest of the file came to light, including most of the details we now know.

Georgina Bruni had requested several documents on the incident under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information - the forerunner to Britain's Freedom of Information Act. She had also enlisted the help of former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Hill-Norton - himself a firm believer in UFOs.

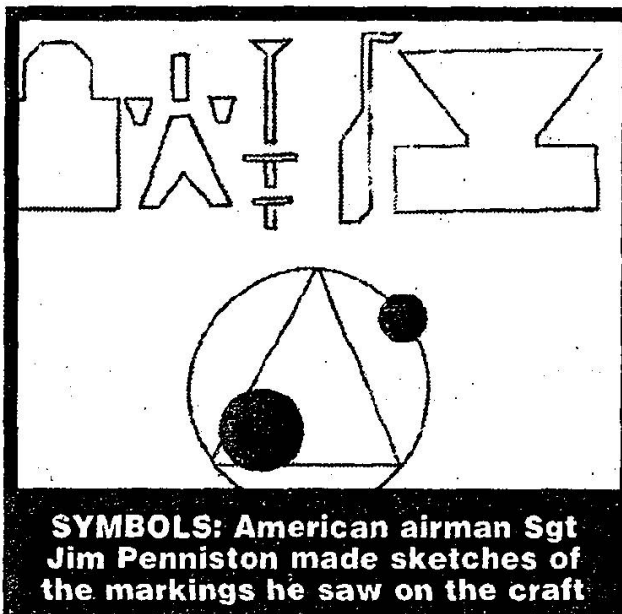
Despite the claims of conspiracy theorists, the MoD is committed to open government and was happy to release the file. It can now be viewed in entirety on the MoD website. The MoD and the National Archives are bombarded with requests about UFOs but have a rolling programme of disclosure. These are the real X-Files and they are being released.

As the 25th anniversary of this UFO encounter approaches, there is great interest in the incident. Enthusiasts are planning an anniversary vigil. The Forestry Commission - which has created a UFO Trail in the forest - is planning an event. Several television documentaries are being made and there's even talk of a Hollywood movie.

But despite the wealth of documentation to have emerged and

the testimony of the witnesses themselves, we are no nearer to knowing what happened in Rendlesham Forest.

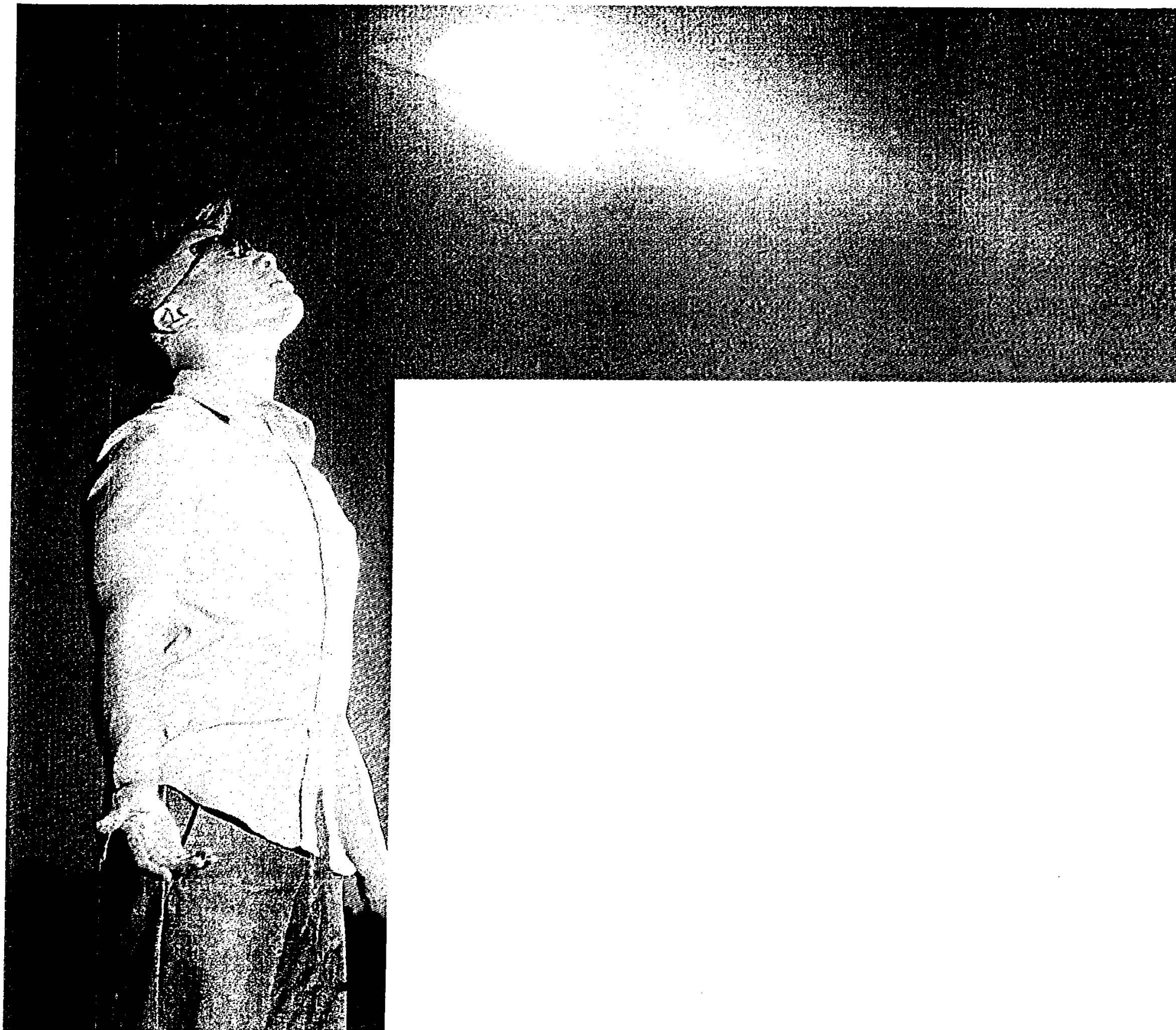
The truth is still out there. Somewhere.



SYMBOLS: American airman Sgt Jim Penniston made sketches of the markings he saw on the craft

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Louse Hirate

DI52/105/10

Section 40
24/2

DI55a Attn Section 40

Unexplained Lights

Reference: DI55/106/15/1

1. Like DI55, DI52 do not know of any serious explanation for the phenomena described at reference.
2. Background radioactivity varies considerably due to a number of factors. The value of 0.1 milliroentgens (mr), I assume that this is per hour, seems significantly higher than the average background of about 0.015 mr. I would not expect the variation in this to be much more than a factor of two, although it might be greater for specific reasons.
3. If you wish to pursue this further I could make enquiries as to natural background levels in the area. The way the US report is written, however, suggests that 0.1 mr was greater than they expected.

Section 40

23 February 1981

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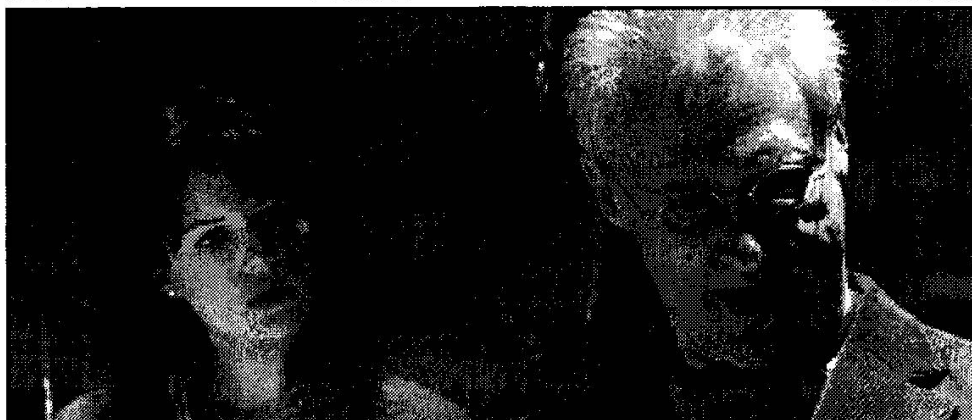
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REVIEWS



Sci-fi purists might find CBS' "Threshold" disconcerting, but for the rest of us, this is scary fun and suspenseful dramedy.
Sep. 15, 2005

Threshold

By Barry Garron
9-10 p.m. Friday, Sept. 16
CBS

Odd things happen when aliens invade. People exposed to eerie music go nuts and become zombies. Brain waves are altered. And just about everything from cockroaches to radar screens end up dancing to some sort of pinwheel pattern. What does it mean? Mainly that, in this version of Planet Earth Meets the Space Huns, the sober taste of terror and sci-fi has been sweetened with a dash of comic book excess and campy humor. Sci-fi purists might find it the taste of CBS' "Threshold" disconcerting, but for the rest of us, this is scary fun and suspenseful dramedy. Also, it comes as close to actual tactical government response as "The Love Boat" was to a real cruise ship operation.

The opening scenes of the double-episode premiere show a Navy crew in the Atlantic quickly decimated by a UFO that looks like some sort of Christmas ornament screensaver. In response, the U.S. calls on Dr. Molly Anne Caffrey (TV sweetheart Carla Gugino), who has made a living drafting contingency plans for various end-of-the-world scenarios. Now that this is a distinct possibility, she gets to assemble the eccentric team she proposed in her Threshold plan.

National Security Adviser J.T. Baylock (Charles S. Dutton) tells her, "You've just become the most important person on the planet." And she knows it, too. Later in the first hour, Caffrey tells her colleagues, "We've got to stare into the face of the unknown and make damn sure we don't blink." Be honest. Where, outside of a comic book, will you find dialogue like that?

And so the team is assembled, a veritable instant Fabulous Five. Under Caffrey's command is biologist and former 1960s radical Dr. Nigel Fenway (Brent Spiner of "Star Trek" renown); nervous young physicist Lucas Pegg (Rob Benedict); macho commando Cavenaugh (Brian Van Holt); and mathematician-linguist Arthur Ramsey (Peter Dinklage), whose other pursuits include booze and women. It is their interplay, as much as any weird science conjured up by aliens, that makes the time pass quickly.

More than most shows, the collaboration among exec producers is obvious here. Brannon Braga is a veteran "Star Trek" writer and

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Bottom line: What good is an alien invasion if you can't have some fun with Earth's defenders?

FILM

- ▶ The White Countess
- ▶ The Libertine
- ▶ Through the Fire
- ▶ Bam Bam and Celeste
- ▶ In Memory of My Father

TV

- ▶ The Ghost Squad
- ▶ Las Vegas: ... History
- ▶ SNL: Lost and Found
- ▶ I Have Tourette's but Tourette's Doesn't Have Me
- ▶ The Virgin Queen

HOME VIDEO

- ▶ Wages of Fear
- ▶ The Wizard of Oz
- ▶ Halloween treats
- ▶ Cinderella
- ▶ Titanic

CONCERT

- ▶ Clark, Ely, Hiatt, Lovett
- ▶ Bauhaus
- ▶ Jamiroquai
- ▶ Broken Social Scene
- ▶ Isaac Hayes

THEATER

- ▶ Almost Heaven: J. Denver
- ▶ Otherwise Engaged
- ▶ Karla
- ▶ See What I Wanna See
- ▶ Jersey Boys

- ▶ The Beatles
- ▶ The Lost One
- ▶ Spike Lee
- ▶ Want to be a Producer
- ▶ So You Want to be a Producer

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producer. David S. Goyer has a history of turning comic books to films, such as "Batman Begins" and the "Blade" series. David Heyman, producer of all four "Harry Potter" films, is adept at whimsical fright. If the sum isn't greater than the parts, it is at the very least equal to them. What's more, there's nothing remotely like "Threshold" on the competition, and Friday night -- as fans of "The Twilight Zone" and "The X-Files" -- will tell you, can be a welcoming place for otherworldly drama.

THRESHOLD

CBS

Braga Prods., Phantom Four Films and Heydey Films in association with Paramount Network Television

Credits:

Executive producers: Brannon Braga, David Heyman, David S. Goyer

Co-executive producers: Bragi Schut, Marc Rosen, Anne McGrail, Dan O'Shannon

Supervising producer: Mike Sussman

Creator: Bragi Schut

Directors: David S. Goyer, Peter Hyams

Teleplay: Bragi Schut, Brannon Braga, David S. Goyer

Directors of photography: Steve Bernstein, Frank Byers

Production designers: Carlos Barbosa, Stefania Cella

Editor: Conrad Smart

Music: Ramin Djawadi, Steve Jablonsky

Set decorator: Nancy Nye, Jim Mees

Casting: Ronnie Yeskel

Cast:

Dr. Molly Anne Caffrey: Carla Gugino

J.T. Baylock: Charles S. Dutton

Cavenaugh: Brian Van Holt

Lucas Pegg: Rob Benedict

Dr. Nigel Fenway: Brent Spiner

Arthur Ramsey: Peter Dinklage

Angela Hatten: Diane Venora

Gunnerson: William Mapother



Captain: Scott MacDonald

Crewman Sonntag: Kevin Durand

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'Tell us the truth on moorland UFO'

By HYWEL TREWYN

A UFO investigator hopes to unravel a 30-year mystery - did spacemen land on a North Wales mountain?

Unexplained lights in the sky, an earthquake and secretive men in suits all happened on a dark winter's night in 1974 as the people of Llandderfel and Llandrillo, villages in the Berwyn mountains near Bala, sat down to their evening's TV. But the quiet was shattered by the rumbles of an earthquake, registering 3.5 on the Richter scale.

As people ran from their houses, fearing another tremor, they witnessed a blaze of light on the mountainside above.

A local nurse and her daughters watched as a huge egg-shaped craft lay on the ground with a pulsating orange and red glow.

Police converged on the mountains, expecting to discover a crashed passenger jet

Cover-up claim on 30-year-old riddle

but what they did find has never been divulged.

Some think it was an experimental man-made top secret military aircraft, possibly a prototype Stealth bomber. Others believe it was an alien craft from another world.

The incident fired the imagination of many, including UFO researcher Russell Kellett, who now is trying to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Next month Mr Kellett, 42, will reveal what he claims are "the true facts" at a meeting in Bala. It will be at the White Lion Hotel on March 25, at 1pm.

Mr Kellett, who lives in Filey, North Yorkshire, says he has 115 pages of documents about the "UFO crash" about which he

insists there was a "cover-up."

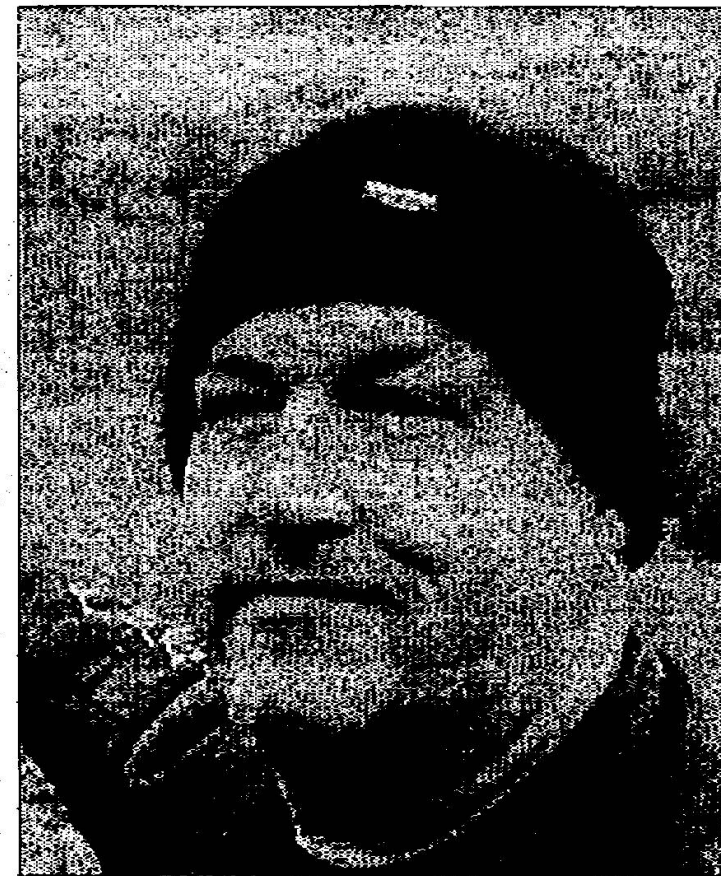
Last night Mr Kellett said: "I've had some information given to me, testimonies from a group of gentlemen. I have 115 pages of documents but the Ministry of Defence have told me that under the Freedom of Information Act I can't have documents "because of the fractious and conjure of internal discretion".

Mr Kellett believes "they're talking gobbledegook."

Mr Kellett said on that night some personnel were given information to "expect 50 flashes of light in the sky".

But, strangely, there are no records this exercise took place.

hyweltrewyn@dailypost.co.uk



UFO investigator Russ Kellett has been probing mysterious events on the Berwyn mountains in 1974

What was in those mystery boxes?

IN true X-Files style there were reports of soldiers mysteriously arriving in the area and stopping people on their way home.

One woman claimed she saw "coffin shaped" boxes being loaded aboard MoD vehicles.

Previous UFO researchers said they were contacted by soldiers claiming they removed "bodies" to Porton Down, the top-secret MoD germ warfare laboratory.

Farmer Hugh Lloyd, of Garthiaen, Llandrillo, who was 14 at the time, remembers seeing "this incredibly bright light lit up the sky, like an arc welder, two or three miles away, lasting for about 20-30 seconds."

Although he never discovered the source of the light, a mysterious, colourful rock was found nearby by his sister a couple of days later.

It was sent to London University but they have never seen it since.

Mr Lloyd said: "I do not believe that it was a UFO but I would like to find out exactly what it was."

23/02/06

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Pg: 2

LONDON'S A-HILES.

BY ELLEN WIDDUP

LONDON'S X-Files have been opened to the public. Reports of "lights in a worm shape wriggling around in the sky", a shiny "doughnut-shaped object" and a "massive light in the shape of an iron" are among sightings of UFOs which were meant to have been secret for 25 years.

The files show that Loughton in Essex is the UFO capital of the Home Counties.

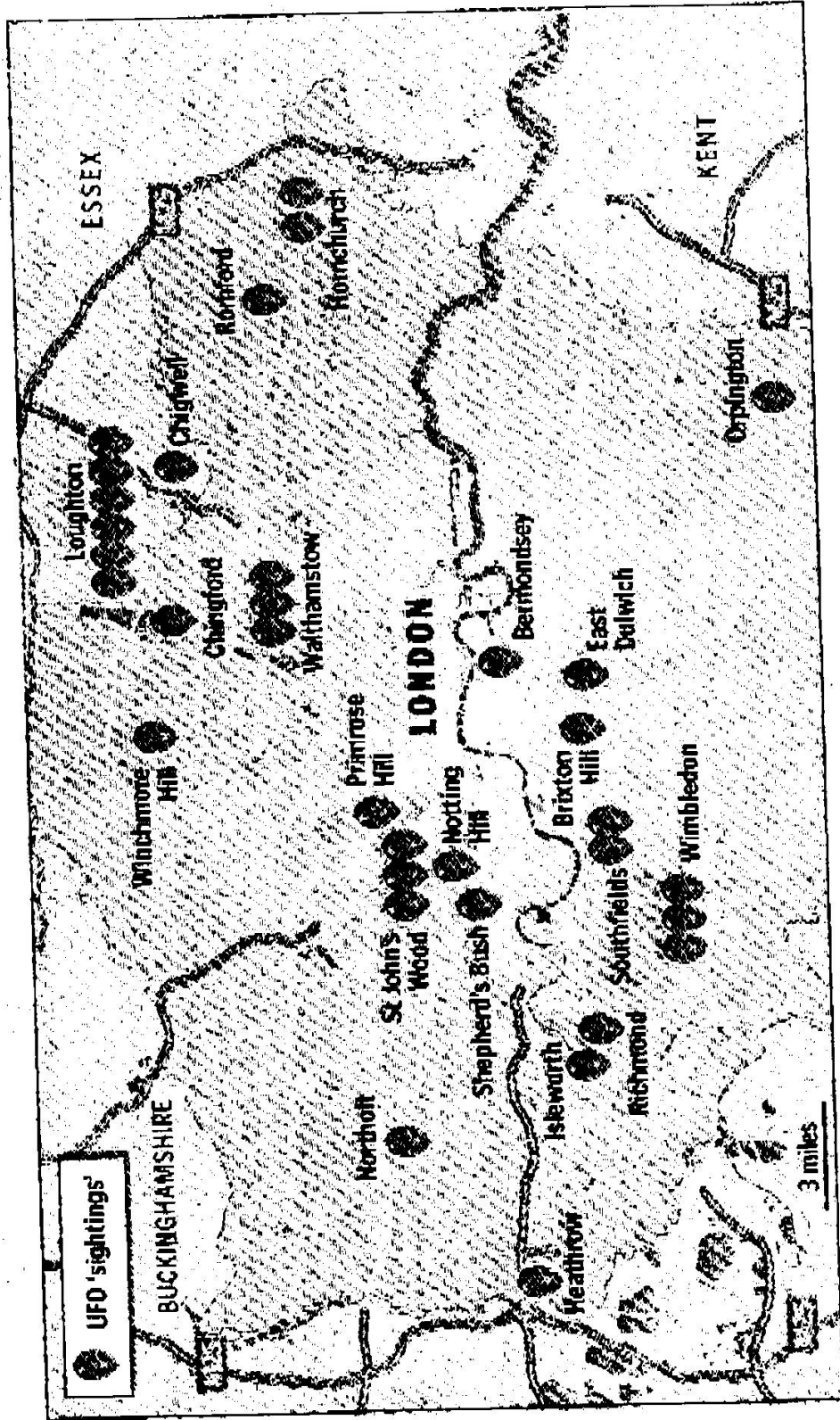
The MoD has six sightings listed there — five on the night of 10 September last year, when there was a series of reports of three mysterious orange lights in the sky.

The sightings in Greater London, dating from 2002 and kept on Ministry of Defence files, have been released after a request under the Freedom of Information Act by the Evening Standard.

The MoD receives hundreds of reports of sightings every year, most of which are dismissed as aircraft lights or natural phenomena.

But some have no rational explanation, and as a result, the Government remains "totally open-minded" about the concept of flying saucers and spacecrafts.

Following the Standard's request,



anyone but I do believe it is totally feasible that we are not alone in this universe."

One of the witnesses, Robert Sloan, said: "There was a triangle of three piercing globes. It reminded me of a scene out of Close Encounters. Everyone was gobsmacked. There was no way a plane would look or move that fast."

Other UFOs spotted include three over St John's Wood, two over Hornchurch, Essex, and three over Wimbledon.

Timothy Good of Beckenham, an author of several novels on UFOs, said: "UFOs remain the most sensitive subject in British intelligence. It is wonderful that some of this information is now being made public even though I believe they are withholding even more."

"The sheer number of sightings over London and the fact that none has a rational explanation is both fascinating and exciting to me."

An MoD spokesman said there was nothing to suggest alien activity. "We examine reports of UFOs solely to establish whether there is any evidence that the UK's airspace has been compromised by hostile or unauthorised air activity," he said.

"We do not know of any evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena."

said: "London has the most sightings because there are more people living there to witness any unusual activity."

"Almost 96 per cent of sightings can be explained away but that still leaves five per cent. I am not out to spook

outstrip a fighter jet" over south-east London and a "rectangle-shape white light" hovering above Primrose Hill.

Nick Pope, who ran the Government UFO project between 1991 and 1994, said the data was unsurprising. He

the MoD's UFO department — SP4 — revealed details of 34 sightings with their date, time and location.

Among them are descriptions of "a black cigar-shaped object which accelerated to a speed which would

Hulk changes from green monster ... into real-life policeman

BY PAUL SIMS

THE Incredible Hulk has changed from a raging green monster — into a policeman.

Lou Ferrigno, the former bodybuilder and star of the hit Seventies' TV show, has been sworn in as a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Depart-

ment reserve deputy. "I'm having a blast," Ferrigno, 54, said after last night's ceremony. "My father was a police officer with the New

York Police Department. I've always had a high respect for officers," he added. "I want to give back to the community and work with young kids, help them get off drugs."

Ferrigno was a renowned bodybuilder before he starred in the CBS TV series The Incredible Hulk from 1977 to 1982.

ster whenever he lost his temper.

Ferrigno completed police training in firearms, first aid, and high-speed driving and was recognised as "an outstanding trainee" by Sheriff Lee Baca.



Angry: as the Hulk



Lawman: Lou Ferrigno

The truth is out there... in Essex



X-Files detectives
Mulder and Scully

X-FILES TV detectives Mulder and Scully could have their hands full – the Ministry of Defence has released its secret report on UFO sightings.

The files dating since 2002 raise questions about extra-terrestrial life with over 170 'incidents' recorded, including five on one night in Loughton, Essex, alone.

The MoD's UFO department – SF4 – receives hundreds of sightings every year. Most are dismissed as natural phenomena, but some cannot be explained.

There are 34 incidents alone over the capital. Among them are descriptions of 'a black cigar-shaped object which accel-

erated to a speed which could outstrip a fighter jet' over the South-East and 'an object that changed from a cylinder to a crescent moon shape, with red and silver stripes,' over Isleworth, West London.

The MoD says it remains 'totally open-minded' about UFO sightings.

Nick Pope, who ran the Government UFO project between 1991 and 1994 said: 'Almost 95 per cent of sightings can be explained but that still leaves five per cent. I am not out to spook anyone but I do believe it is feasible we are not alone.'

BY IAN GRIGGS

ENCLOSURE
13

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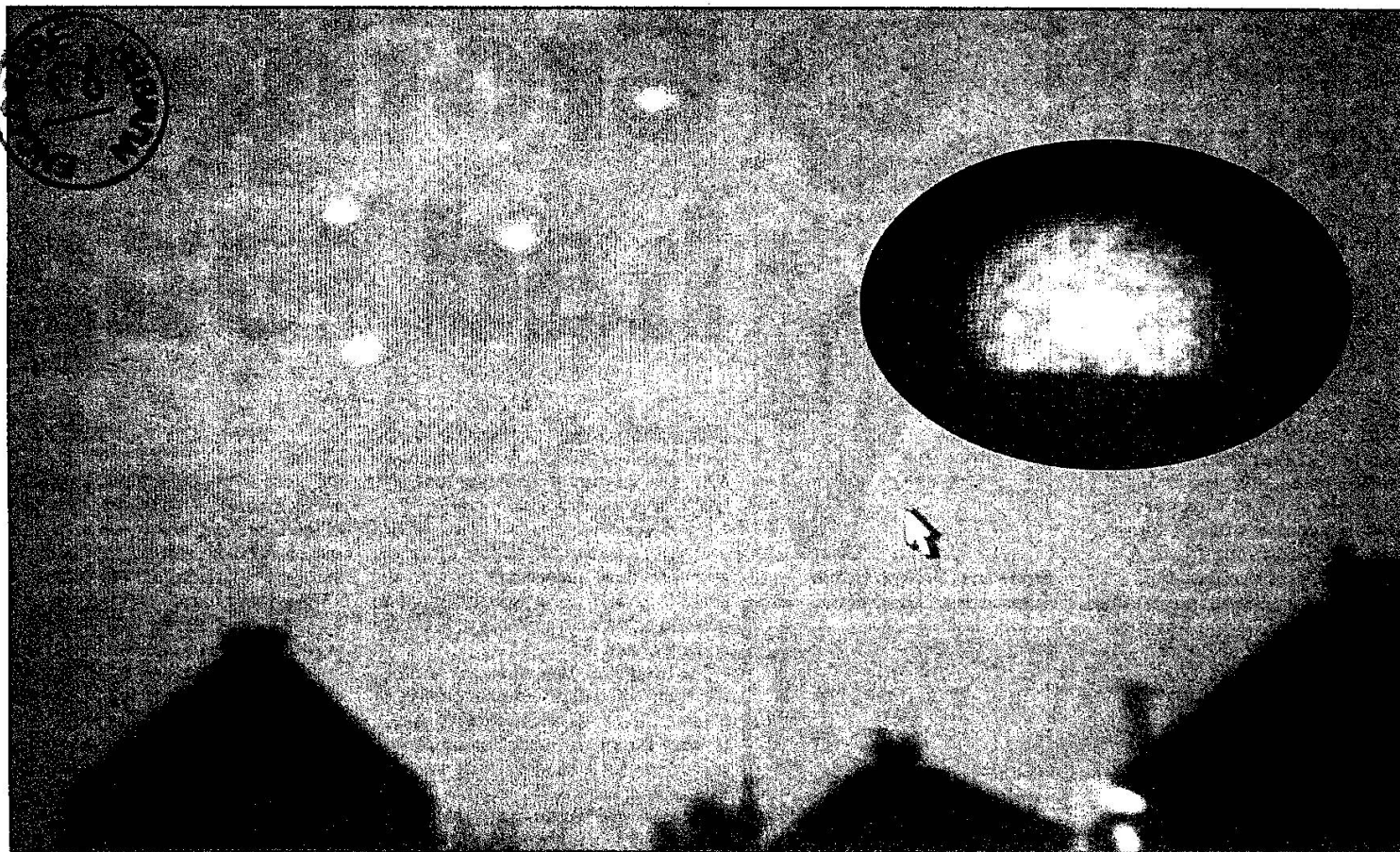
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UFOs? The MoD was called in to investigate the lights - which turned out to be lanterns (an enlarged one is shown inset) Picture: North News and Pictures

UFOs? U're kidding

IT WAS supposed to be a harmless stunt to celebrate moving into a new house.

But it left Paul McKinney and Emma Henfrey at the centre of an X-Files-style UFO investigation, after some stargazers thought they were witnessing an alien invasion.

The couple released lanterns - which can float up to 300m (1,000ft) in the air and glow bright orange and white - into the sky at their housewarming party.

The following day, they heard police had been bombarded with sightings of glowing lights in the sky, and decided it was best to keep quiet.

Fearing public ridicule, the couple even warned friends their party lanterns should be kept a secret.

But things got even more out of hand when the MoD launched an investigation - and the couple knew they would have to come clean.

The military experts were called in after police received 20 calls about the lights, to find out whether British airspace had been invaded. An MoD

BY STEPHEN HULL

spokeswoman said: 'We examine UFO sighting reports to establish whether there is any evidence to suggest that UK airspace has been compromised by hostile or unauthorised air activity.'

Mr McKinney, 28, and Ms Henfrey, 30, had released the lanterns, which hold candles, after moving into their new home in Seaham, County Durham.

Mr McKinney said: 'I wasn't going to say anything but then my cousin saw something in the local paper about the MoD investigating, so I thought I had better own up.'

Witnesses who spotted the lanterns were convinced they were UFOs.

Harry McCall, 67, and his wife Elizabeth, 74, filmed the lights.

'I said to my wife they were UFOs until I could be convinced otherwise - and now I have been,' said Mr McCall.

'It is quite funny to find out and it's good to know the explanation'. See, the truth really is out there.



Mulder and Scully: Harry and Elizabeth McCall filmed the lanterns, inset, with their video camera

Pictures: NNP

Sir Mick learns a lesson at last

AFTER belting out rock songs for 35 years Sir Mick Jagger has broken the habit of a lifetime - he's started having lessons. Sir Mick, 63, has voice coaching to help him warm up his vocal cords.

He told Virgin Radio: 'Better late than never. I did a bit of voice coaching a couple of years ago, after 35 years with no voice coaching. A bit of voice coaching and warm-ups really help.'

'I always tell these younger singers "I never used to do it either but you should".'

The Rolling Stone added: 'A lot of people have voice problems, not just older people, younger people too.'

'I mean, you sing a lot, every night you are singing for hours and hours and your voice gets tired. It's like anything, like running every night, that's why you have to warm up properly.'

The Stones are on a world tour.

METRO FACTFILE

In the 1820s, a group of hotel owners filled a boat with animals and ran it off the Niagara Falls - to attract tourists. They pushed the schooner - with buffalo, bears, foxes, a raccoon, a dog, a cat and geese - over the edge. Only two geese and a bear, who swam to shore, survived the fall. Some 10,000 people watched.

Pet goat taken on drunken ride

A REVELLER who drank ten pints (6litres) of cider stole a goat and took it on a joyride, a court has heard. Carl Myles took a shine to 11-month-old Snowy as he walked home from a party. The 20-year-old put the goat in the back of farmer Huw Leyshon's Volvo and then drove off with it. He was caught after he crashed the car into the back of a tractor. But Myles said he could not remember anything because of the amount of alcohol he had drunk. Myles, of Trallwn, Swansea, admitted one charge of aggravated vehicle-taking. Judge Richard Williams, of Neath magistrates, sentenced him to a 120-hour community order, disqualified him from driving for two years and ordered him to pay £1,394 compensation to Mr Leyshon. The goat died, possibly from shock, two days after the incident last month.

METRO weather

London Today

Sunny spells and areas of cloud with just the outside chance of a brief shower. A cooler day than yesterday with a brisk north-westerly wind. High 21-22C (70-72F).

Thursday AM		18°
Thursday PM		22°
Friday AM		18°
Friday PM		22°

Outlook

Tomorrow is expected to be a dry day with sunny spells. Saturday morning should be dry but increasing cloud will bring showers later.

South-East and the Home Counties

Oxford	22°
Luton	20°
Chelmsford	20°
Dover	19°
Brighton	21°
Portsmouth	21°

Today

Sunny spells and variable amounts of cloud with just the small chance of a shower. Feeling cooler than yesterday with brisk north-westerly winds. High 20-22C (68-72F).

Sunset: 8.33pm Air pollution: Low

Tomorrow

Quite a blustery day but it will stay dry throughout with sunny spells and varying amounts of cloud. Moderate to fresh north-westerly winds. High 19-22C (66-72F).

Sunrise: 5.39am Air pollution: Low

Britain Today (Max)

North	19°	South	21°
N.West	21°	S.Wales	20°
Yorks	21°	N.Wales	20°
W.Mids	21°	Scotland	20°
E.Mids	21°	N.Ireland	18°

Around Britain yesterday

Aberdeen	16 Showers	Leeds	17 Fair
Belfast	15 Cloudy	Liverpool	16 Rain
Birmingham	18 Cloudy	London	20 Sunny
Cardiff	21 Sunny	Manchester	17 Fair
Edinburgh	18 Fair	Newcastle	17 Fair
Glasgow	15 Fair	York	18 Fair

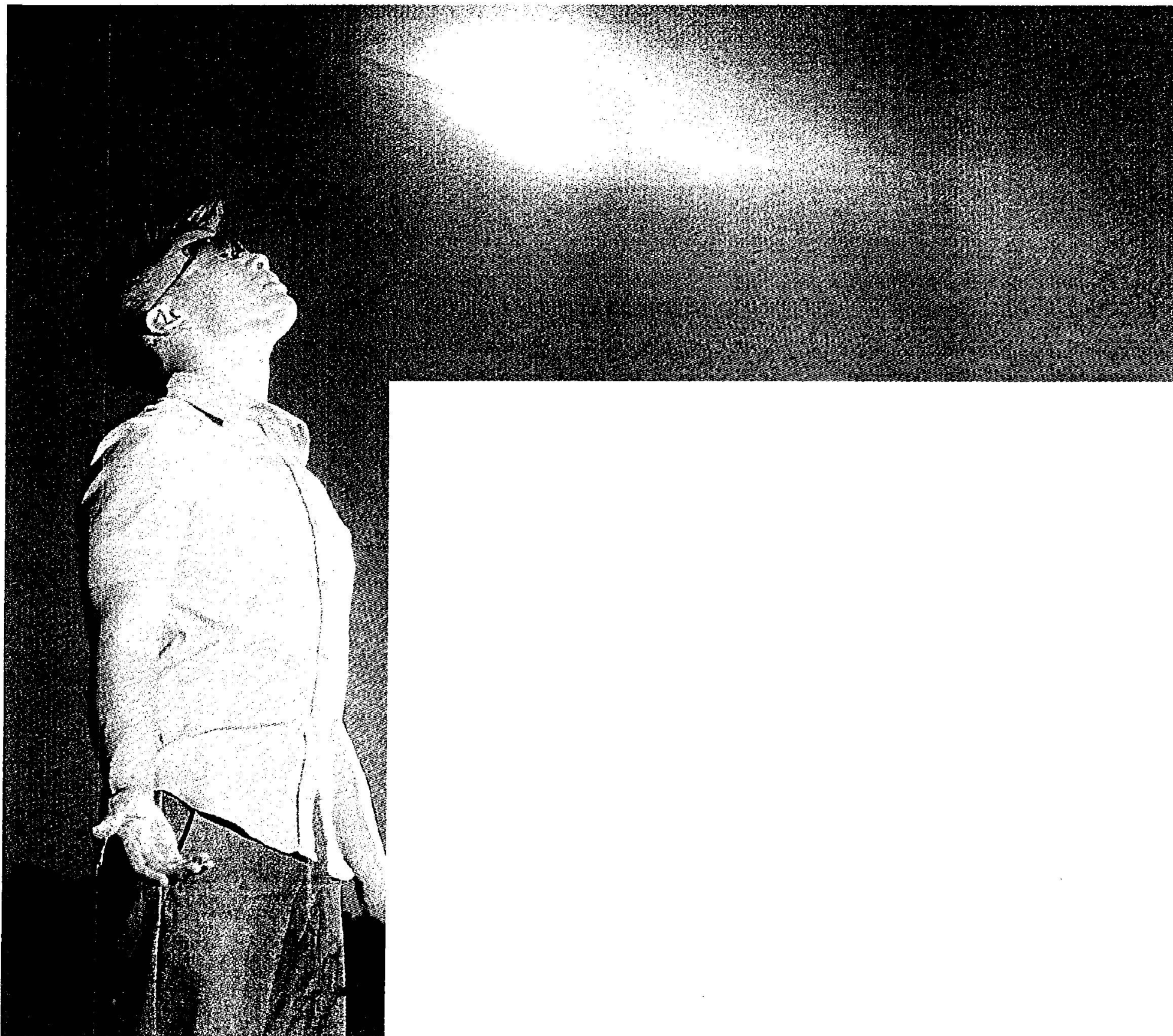
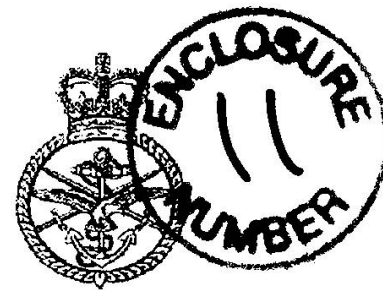
Europe Today (Max)

Athens	33°	Geneva	23°
Barcelona	29°	Madrid	35°
Berlin	20°	Moscow	17°
Brussels	18°	Paris	22°
Dublin	20°	Rome	27°

Around the World yesterday

Amsterdam	18 Cloudy	Madrid	28 Sunny
Athens	30 Sunny	Miami	31 Fair
Barbados	29 Showers	New York	29 Fair
Cape Town	15 Sunny	Paris	21 Rain
Hong Kong	33 Fair	Sydney	15 Cloudy
Los Angeles	25 Sunny	Tokyo	26 Showers

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COL HALT'S evidence was obtained by American UFO researchers in 1983, under the Freedom of Information Act. But it was not until 2001 that the rest of the file came to light, including most of the details we now know.

Georgina Bruni had requested several documents on the incident under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information - the forerunner to Britain's Freedom of Information Act. She had also enlisted the help of former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Hill-Norton - himself a firm believer in UFOs.

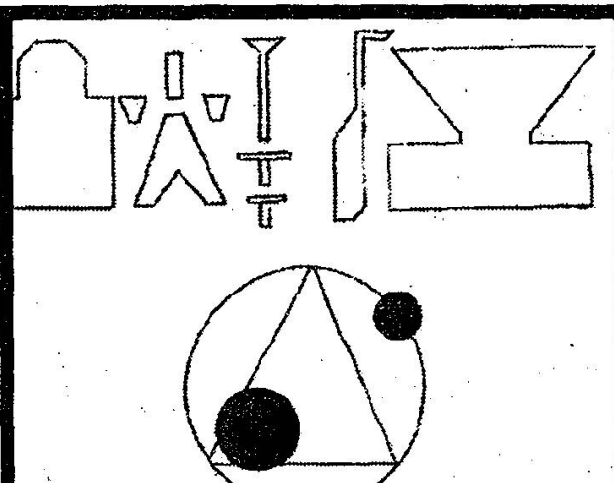
Despite the claims of conspiracy theorists, the MoD is committed to open government and was happy to release the file. It can now be viewed in entirety on the MoD website. The MoD and the National Archives are bombarded with requests about UFOs but have a rolling programme of disclosure. These are the real X-Files and they are being released.

As the 25th anniversary of this UFO encounter approaches, there is great interest in the incident. Enthusiasts are planning an anniversary vigil. The Forestry Commission - which has created a UFO Trail in the forest - is planning an event. Several television documentaries are being made and there's even talk of a Hollywood movie.

But despite the wealth of documentation to have emerged and

the testimony of the witnesses themselves, we are no nearer to knowing what happened in Rendlesham Forest.

The truth is still out there. Somewhere.



SYMBOLS: American airman Sgt Jim Penniston made sketches of the markings he saw on the craft

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What is the truth about Britain's greatest

UFO MYSTERY?

It is nearly 25 years since a strange craft landed in a Suffolk forest. When asked about the incident, Margaret Thatcher replied: 'You can't tell the people.' Here, the Government's former UFO expert reveals the amazing story



by **Nick Pope**

Former British Government UFO Project leader

ON MAY 21, 1997, a former Prime Minister made an enigmatic comment that seemed to confirm the reality of Britain's most famous UFO incident. The remark hinted at darker secrets and led to much debate among conspiracy theorists. The politician was Baroness Thatcher and the implications of what she said are extraordinary.

The comment was made at a charity function. London-based socialite and author Georgina Bruni had been researching the Rendlesham Forest UFO incident, fascinated by hints dropped by diplomatic, military and political friends. Sceptical about the subject of UFOs, she thought it was awash with cultists and crackpots.

But Rendlesham was different so, when she met Baroness Thatcher at a dinner, Bruni put

the former PM on the spot. Was there any truth to the rumours about what happened in Suffolk's Rendlesham Forest? What did the Government really know about UFOs? Was it a serious issue or just pie in the sky?

Bruni was expecting a bland dismissal of the story. The official Ministry of Defence position was that no evidence existed to suggest UFOs were extraterrestrial in origin. Then the former PM dropped her bombshell. "UFOs?" she said. "You can't tell the people."

Bruni was astounded and pressed her point. What did she mean? Baroness Thatcher calmly repeated her remark, before departing.

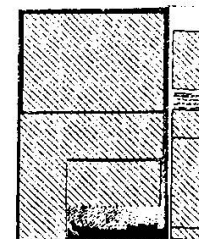
From 1991 to 1994, I ran the Government's UFO Project, based at the Ministry of Defence, and Bruni had interviewed me in the course of her research. Still astonished, she called me at 2am to tell me what had happened. I quickly grasped its sig-

nificance. I went to my study and began to make notes, all the time quizzing Georgina about every nuance of her brief encounter with the former PM.

If you take all the thousands of UFO sightings investigated by the MoD over the years, the Rendlesham Forest incident stood out. We could not ignore it, despite our best efforts to find some conventional explanation. This case was the Holy Grail and Baroness Thatcher's remark put the events into a new light.

SO WHAT actually happened at Rendlesham Forest and what makes the event the UK's strangest UFO encounter? As we approach its 25th anniversary, it's time to reopen the MoD's spookiest X-File.

Late on Christmas night, 1980, and early on Boxing Day, strange lights were seen in the forest. This might not sound particularly significant. When I was running



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the UFO Project I used to receive up to 300 reports of sightings each year.

Most could be explained as misidentifications of aircraft lights, meteors or weather balloons. What made this sighting remarkable was the fact that the witnesses were United States Air Force personnel based at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk.

Rendlesham Forest lies between the bases and, as the Cold War was still decidedly frosty, a UFO sighting at two of the nation's most sensitive military sites was bound to be of interest.

Early on December 26, duty personnel reported lights so bright they feared an aircraft had crashed. They obtained permission to go off-base to investigate. But they didn't find a crashed aircraft - they found a UFO.

The three-man patrol from the 81st Security Police Squadron - Jim Penniston, John Burroughs and Ed Cabansag - saw a small, metallic craft moving through the trees.

At one point, it appeared to land in a small clearing. They approached cautiously and Penniston got close enough to see strange markings on the side, which he likened to Egyptian hieroglyphs. He made some rapid sketches in his notebook. It touched down for only moments and then departed.

Later, because of the complicated legal and jurisdictional position of US Air Force bases in the UK, police from Suffolk Constabulary were called to the apparent landing site. They conducted a brief but inconclusive examination.

Three indentations were visible in the clearing and, when mapped, they formed the shape of an equilateral triangle. A Geiger counter was used to check the site and the readings peaked markedly in the depressions where the object - possibly on legs of some sort - had come to Earth.

News of the UFO encounter came to the attention of the Deputy Base Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt. He was sceptical, but had the witnesses write up official reports, including sketches of what they had seen.

The following evening, Halt was at a function when a young airman burst in and ran up to him. "Sir," he stammered, "It's back." Halt looked confused. "What?" he retorted. "What's back?" "The UFO, sir - the UFO's back."

Halt gathered together a small team and went out into the forest to investigate. He subsequently stated that he had no expectation of seeing anything and that his intention was to "debunk" the whole affair. But he didn't do so because he too encountered the UFO, becoming one of the highest ranking military officers to go on the record about such a sighting.

As he and his men tracked the UFO, their radios began to malfunction and powerful lamps taken to illuminate the forest mysteriously began to cut out. But a hand-held tape recorder the colonel took to document his investigation did not malfunction.

THE TAPE recording still survives and one can hear the rising tension in Halt's voice and the voices of his men, as the UFO approaches...

"I see it too... it's back again... it's coming this way... there's no doubt about it... this is weird... it looks like an eye winking at you... it almost burns your eyes... he's coming toward us now... now we're observing what appears to be a beam coming down to the ground... one object still hovering over Woodbridge base... beaming down."

At one point the tension in their voices almost seems to become panic as the UFO makes a close approach and fires light beams down on Halt and his men.

Halt wrote an official report of the incident. Although somewhat innocuously entitled Unexplained Lights, it described the first night's UFO as being "metallic in appearance and triangular in shape... a pulsing red light on top and a bank of blue lights underneath... the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy".

He went on to detail the radiation readings taken from the landing site and set out the details of his own sighting.

The report was sent to the section of the Ministry of Defence where, a little over 10 years later, I spent three years researching and investigating UFO sightings. It went to my predecessors, who began an investigation, but they were hampered by a mistake that was to have dire consequences.

For whatever reason - and it may have been nothing more

than a typographical error - Charles Halt's report gave incorrect dates for the incident. So when the MoD checked the radar tapes, they were looking at the wrong days.

Radar evidence is a critical part of any UFO investigation. Many spectacular UFO sightings over the years have been correlated by radar. MoD files detail several such cases, including ones where RAF pilots encountered UFOs and gave chase. Unsuccessfully, I might add.

In the absence of any radar data that might confirm the presence of the Rendlesham Forest UFOs, the investigation petered out. Yet, as I was to discover years later, the UFO had been tracked after all.

I spoke to a former RAF radar operator called Nigel Kerr. He had been stationed at RAF Watton in Norfolk at Christmas 1980 and took a call from RAF Bentwaters asking if there was anything unusual on his radar screen. For three or four sweeps,

something did show up directly over the base, but it faded away and no official report was ever made. It was only years later that Kerr heard of the Rendlesham Forest incident and realised he might have a missing piece of the puzzle.

In the apparent absence of radar data to verify the presence of the UFO, arguably the most critical piece of evidence was never followed up. The Defence Intelligence Staff had assessed the radiation readings taken at the landing site and judged them "significantly higher than the average background". In fact, they were about seven times what would have been expected.

So what are we to make of all this? UFO believers are convinced the sightings involved an extra-terrestrial spacecraft. They still hold sky watches in the forest and claim to see UFOs regularly.

The sceptical theories are almost as bizarre, with suggestions that the highly trained military witness-

es actually saw the lights of a police car, or the beam from the local lighthouse. "Lighthouses don't fly," Charles Halt said, incredulously.

More rational sceptical theories include the testing of a prototype aircraft, but the bottom line is that, while there are things being developed you won't see at the Farnborough Air Show for 10 or 15 years, we know where we fly our own hardware. The "black projects" theory doesn't hold up.

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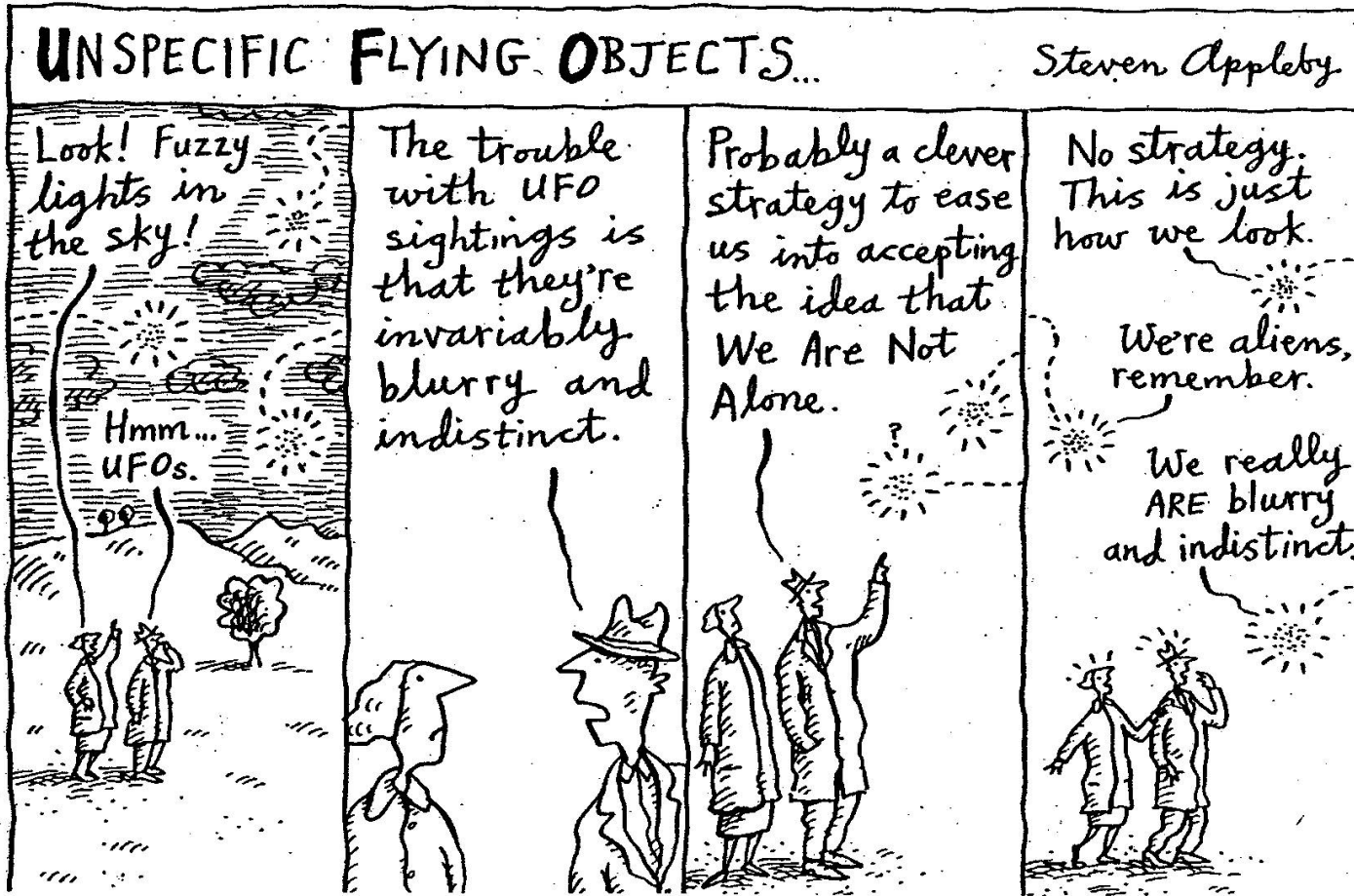
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→ Brief: Ministry of Defence



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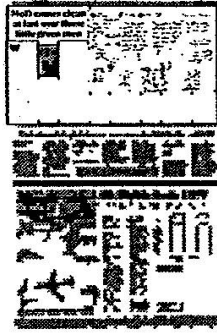
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MoD comes clean at last over those little green men

While the world celebrates the apparent rapprochement between Israel and the Palestinians, a glimmer of hope can be detected in the long-running dispute between another two factions: the scientific community and believers in UFOs.

For more than half a century, the debate over UFOs and whether they really are alien spacecraft has been characterised by wild-eyed zealotry and a refusal to listen to reasonable argument – and that's just the scientists. Those who believe that UFOs really are alien spacecraft show a preference for conspiracy theories over critical reasoning.

Part of the problem has been the official attitude towards reports of UFOs, which has been decidedly sniffy. It is now clear that this has been a bit of a pose. Following a request made under the Freedom of Information Act, the Ministry of Defence last week released the details of more than 80 UFO reports made by military personnel and members of the public in the last year.

The MoD pointed out that it has thousands more reports on file – thus confirming the long-standing claims by UFO

buffs that "the authorities" knew far more than they let on. It has to be said that the reports are risibly mundane: "strange lights in the sky" over Whitstable, a saucer-like object over Stoke on Trent, a "bright light" over Barry, South Wales. Indeed, some UFO enthusiasts now claim there is a new conspiracy in which only the ho-hum sightings are released, while the MoD keeps the juicy stuff to itself. Rather more interesting, however, was the official statement accompanying the release of the documents, in which the MoD declared that it remained "totally open-minded" towards the issue of aliens and UFOs.

This seems a long way from attitude of the Government working party which in 1951 dismissed the idea of taking UFOs seriously as "a singularly profitless enterprise". The new receptive attitude is in line with that taken by the authorities in a growing number of countries, including Belgium, Chile and France.

There are signs that the scientific community might also be getting over its aversion to the notion of aliens visiting Earth. In recent years, a number of academics have made public their frustration with the dismal level of

debate on the subject, and have sought to rectify it. An independent group of American scientists is responsible for the first paper arguing for the existence of UFOs to appear in a serious academic journal in 25 years.

Writing in the *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society*, the group claims that advances in scientific knowledge have made the case for alien visitation stronger than many might think.

For example, sceptics have argued that while life may well exist elsewhere in the universe, the probability that it is both intelligent and relatively close to Earth is extremely low.

Yet as the authors of the paper point out, since the mid-1990s, several methods for faster-than-light travel have been put forward in serious physics journals, thus undermining the argument that the sheer size of the

universe makes alien visitation implausible. The authors concede that while possible in principle, no practical scheme for faster-than-light travel has yet been put forward.

Even so, some advanced civilisation could have succeeded, which prompts the authors to point out another recent discovery. Last year a team of astronomers showed

that stars capable of supporting life in our galaxy are typically a billion years older than the Sun. If so, this could mean that aliens may be as far ahead of us as we are compared to primordial bacteria.

None of this proves that UFOs are real, of course, but it does show that some of the standard arguments used by sceptics do need sprucing up. Even so, for those of us taking a broadly agnostic stance, the fact remains that there is still no compelling evidence that UFOs are alien craft.

Yet in the most disconcerting of all their arguments, the authors of the *JBIS* paper claim that all those dodgy photographs and spooky encounters may be yet further evidence for the reality of aliens. They argue that all those brief encounters of the third kind may be part of a deliberate long-term strategy by the aliens to ease us all into accepting that we are not alone. Some scientists have argued that the proof of the existence of aliens could be very traumatic for human society.

Frankly, it is not half as worrying as discovering we are the target of a cosmic campaign run by little green spin doctors.



UFOs IN 2002, UFOLOGY WAS DECLARED DEAD. SO WHY ARE SO MANY SIGHTINGS STILL REPORTED? JAMES ELLIS INVESTIGATES

Just flights of fancy?

It was the announcement many had waited for. Four years ago, the then editor of paranormal bible Fortean Times, Bob Rickard, told the world that UFOs piloted by aliens did not appear to exist and sceptics danced on the graves of little green men.

The statement was followed by the closure of UFO Magazine in 2004 and premature reports of the winding down of the world's oldest club dedicated to extraterrestrials, the British Flying Saucer Bureau.

Yet reports of odd lights in the sky that apparently fly at unimaginable speeds persist, with Ministry of Defence records recently published under the Freedom of Information Act showing Britain still averages more than 100 sightings a year.

Open and shut case

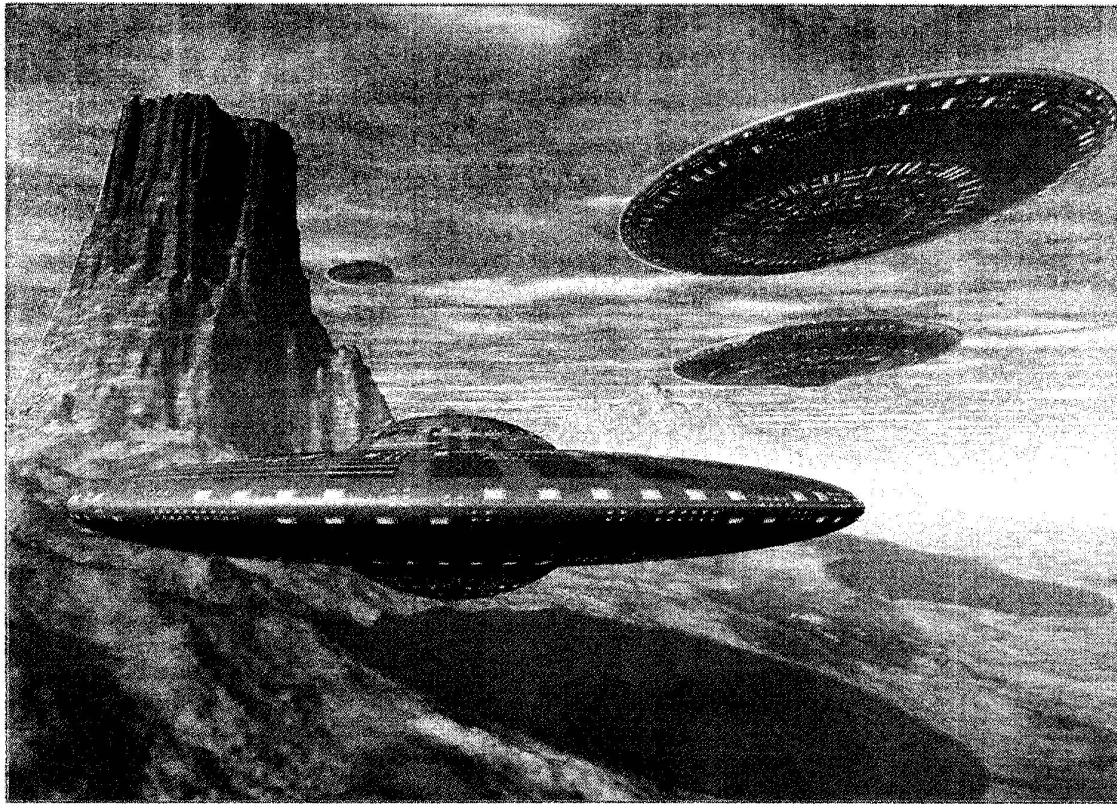
Officially, the MoD has closed down its 'X-Files' UFO project and no longer investigates sightings in depth, other than to ascertain whether they are a potential threat to UK airspace or a violation by aircraft from another country.

However, a spokesman for the ministry admitted to Metro that the jury is still out there, even if aliens may not be. 'We keep an open mind on the subject but it is not our job to prove or disprove the existence of extraterrestrials,' he said.

Nick Pope, who used to head the MoD's UFO project, is adamant the subject should not be buried. 'If there is no such thing as UFOs, then why are there still so many sightings,



Gotcha: An alien in Mars Attacks!



Picture: The Image Bank/Getty Images

Fact or fiction? There may be more to flying saucers than a graphic artist's imagination, say believers

some of them very accurately described?' he says. 'This whole issue was blown out of proportion and some of the information seems to have been manipulated. For instance, the only reason UFO Magazine closed down was because the owner died, while the BFSB's membership dropped as many of them were too old to carry on.'

Rickard's successor at Fortean Times, David Sutton, is also keen to point out that ufology is very much alive: 'It's not only not dead but it's not even starting to smell,' he says. 'You only have to look on the Internet to see the amount of literature there is still on the subject.'

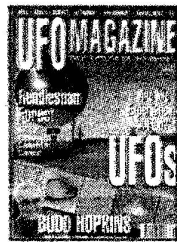
According to Sutton, one website currently causing a storm in the

world of ufology is Serpo.org - which claims to have access to confidential Pentagon documents proving there was a top secret exchange programme of 12 US military personnel to a planet in the Zeta Reticuli star system in the 1970s and 80s.

A different approach

So if there is still so much interest in ufology, why did Rickard make his original comment? 'It was taken out of context as it makes a good soundbite,' says Sutton.

'If we were seen to dismiss UFOs, then others may have followed. What



Bob actually said was that it was time for a different approach. People have spent many years looking for proof that aliens exist and not found it, so perhaps we should be looking elsewhere for an explanation. There's no doubt people see

unexplained objects in the sky. Whether they are craft piloted by aliens or not is another matter.'

Aliens, eh? Like small blue helmet-shaped creatures with two legs and no arms? Of course they don't exist... Let us know what you think at www.metro.co.uk

CELEBRITY GHOST HUNT

Who? 'Mama' Cass Elliot.



Where? The ghost of the supersized California Dreamin' singer and one quarter of 1960s superstars The Mamas And The Papas hangs out in Dan Aykroyd's house in Beverly Hills.

How? The Ghostbusters star claims his Stairmaster turns itself on and jewellery is moved around the house. Even spookier, he claims the ghost occasionally gets into bed with him. 'I'm sure it's her,' he says. 'You get the feeling it's a big ghost.' We should say so.

Anything else we should know? Despite the urban myth, Cass did not choke on a ham sandwich. Contrary to early newspaper reports, the pathologist who performed the post-mortem examination found no food blocking her trachea and concluded she died of an obesity-related heart attack.

MYTH-TAKERS

The myth: Men think about sex every 15 seconds.

The truth: Look, we know we're bad but we're not that bad. According to the Kinsey Institute in the US, widely regarded as the authority when it comes to sexual research: 'Fifty-four per cent of men think about sex every day or several times a day, 43 per cent a few times per month or a few times per week, and three per cent less than once a month.' And if half the male population thinks about sex just a few times a month, then it simply can't be true. Can it?

Edited by JAMES ELLIS mysteries@ukmetro.co.uk

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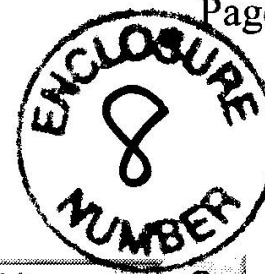
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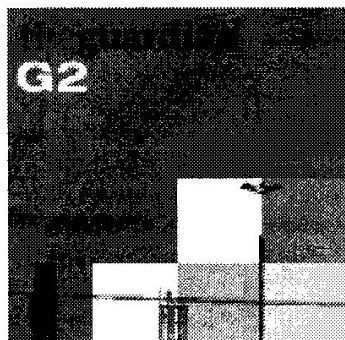
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Inside story

The Martians aren't coming

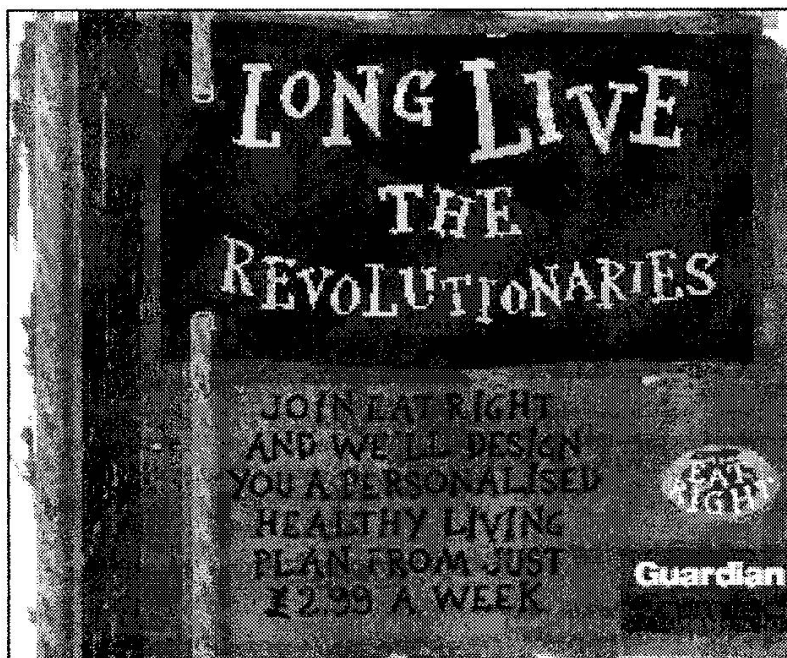
British UFO-spotting clubs may have to close because of a lack of sightings. Have the little green men really stopped visiting, or do we earthlings just have bigger things to worry about?

Stephen Moss
Thursday August 11, 2005
The Guardian

It may only be a small, translucent green gleam on the horizon, but there are signs of a crisis in UFO-spotting. Chris Parr, coordinator of the Cumbrian branch of the British UFO Hunters, sent a shiver through the hearts of ufologists with his announcement this week that his group may be forced to wind up. There don't seem to be any UFOs in Cumbria any more.

Or maybe there just aren't any spotters. Parr's statement seemed to leave both possibilities open. "In Cumbria we have gone from 60 UFO sightings in 2003 to 40 in 2004 and none at all this year. It means that the number of people keeping their eyes on the skies is greatly diminished. We are a dying breed in this part of the country. I put it down to the end of The X Files, a lack of military exercises in the area that would produce UFO sightings, and a lack of strange phenomena." A lack of strange phenomena or a shortage of strange people? Take your pick.

Article continues ▾



It has not been a happy couple of years for ufology. The closure last year of UFO magazine, following the sudden death

List of the day

of its editor Graham Birdsall, was a disaster for the close-knit UFO-spotting community. Several websites have sprung up to try to fill the void, but the best-known one, Ufodata - launched by Russel Callaghan, who used to work with Birdsall, his father-in-law, on UFO Magazine - kept making my computer crash. Spooky.

Parr's statement echoes those of UFO groups in Indiana and New Jersey, where ufologists are also having a long, dark night of the soul. Meanwhile, a leading Scandinavian ufologist has suggested that "maybe people are just fed up with the UFO hysteria". The sceptics reckon they have enough evidence to pronounce ufology dead.

"The whole UFO thing is a kind of meme," says Susan Blackmore, a psychologist who studies paranormal activity. "It's a craze, a bit like sudoku. UFOs were just a rather long-lived version. But crazes thrive on novelty, and eventually that dies out. It's taken a long time, but it's good that the UFO era is over. My prediction is that it will go away for a long time and then come back."

Blackmore has spent most of her working life examining the paranormal. She became interested in the subject after what she describes as a "dramatic out-of-body experience", and reached the conclusion that there really is nothing out there. "Everything is explicable in terms of psychology," she says. "I'm as sure as you can be that there are no paranormal experiences, and I've spent 30 years looking."

She says belief in UFOs and the existence of extraterrestrials, while mostly harmless, can in some cases be very damaging. "For most people, belief in them is neither here nor there," she says, "but some people can become very frightened and obsessed. It can also lead to an anti-science attitude and the belief that everything is being hushed up."

Britain's beleaguered band of ufologists are not, however, going to give up without a fight. "Cumbria is a delightful part of the country, but it has a small population and you shouldn't read anything into the fact that no UFOs are being spotted there," says Callaghan. He is currently excited, for example, by the extra-ordinary level of UFO activity in Filey, North Yorkshire, where he says there have been 80 reports in the past eight months. Russ Kellett, who describes himself as a UFO researcher, has been documenting them. "In Filey Bay there have been sightings of something that looks like a flying triangle," he says. "They are not conventional aircraft. They keep appearing and disappearing, defying the laws of physics. I've got video evidence and will be showing it at the Great British UFO Show in Leeds in October."

As is often the case with committed ufologists, Kellett's interest dates from a personal "close encounter" in 1988. "I was sat at a level crossing on a motorbike," he recalls, "when suddenly I was aware of light all around me and a beam of light hitting me. The crossing went up so I carried on, but I saw this big ball of light moving towards Halifax." Kellett is one of those who believes there is an official cover-up of the number of UFO incidents. "You can't have panic," he says. "All we can hope is that someone will bring the truth out about this."

Veteran ufologist Denis Plunkett, founder chairman of the British Flying Saucer Bureau, accepts that "there is not a lot happening at the moment" and that "the loss of the magazine was a great blow - Birdsall was a shining light". But he, too, insists that ufology should not be written off. "Belief in UFOs

and extraterrestrial life has gone up from 10% of the population to 80% over the 50-plus years the BFSB has existed."

Plunkett, a former civil servant who says his career suffered because of his publicly stated belief in flying saucers, argues that the evidence for extraterrestrials is "incontrovertible". He believes extraterrestrial life forms visit earth frequently. "They seem to be observing us but not interfering with us," he says.

Nick Pope, author of *Open Skies, Closed Minds*, used to run the Ministry of Defence's UFO project. He began as a sceptic, but the difficulty he had in explaining some cases he assessed shook that scepticism. "I became more open when I was there," he says. "Now I won't rule out an extraterrestrial explanation. During my three-year tour of duty from 1991 to 94, I had to investigate 200 to 300 sightings a year: 80% of them had perfectly rational explanations - meteors, satellites, weather patterns; with another 15% it was difficult to reach any conclusion; but with about 5% there was evidence of something more intriguing."

It was 1978, he says, that was "the peak in UFO sightings [it helped that Close Encounters of the Third Kind had been released the previous year], when there were 750 reports. We have seen these UFO waves many times. If a paper runs a UFO story and puts a line at the bottom saying, 'If you have seen a UFO, ring us,' they will be inundated. You try it."

David Clarke, a historian at Sheffield University and the *Fortean Times*' UFO correspondent, is not convinced by the "peaks and troughs" line. "People haven't stopped believing, but they do seem to be seeing far less than they did and it's not clear why," he says. "There's been a massive drop in sightings since 1996, which is when *The X Files* was on TV. It may also be that since 9/11 people have had other things to worry about. There is not just less interest in UFOs, but in all supernatural phenomena. People are more worried about terrorist bombs. The MoD also lost interest in UFOs when the cold war ended: what they had really been looking for was Russian intruder aircraft. They only collate sightings now because MPs keep asking questions about UFOs."

So is there a crisis in ufology? Joe McGonagle, who runs UFOlogyinuk, the main internet newsgroup for British ufologists, believes there is. "Ufology has shot itself in both feet and needs drastic surgery in order to recover," he told his 1,000-strong membership yesterday in an emailed response to the news from Cumbria. "Ufology is suffering from the paranoid accusations of government cover-ups which some of the more vociferous groups and individuals are all too willing to believe and kick up a fuss about. All of these things drive people away from what is already a peculiar subject."

It isn't just Cumbria. McGonagle points to the decline in the number of local UFO clubs as ufologists get their information from the internet instead; apathy among the public (oddly, he links the failure to report sightings to the falling turnout in general elections); and a general "loss of focus" in ufology. The great flying saucer-spotting days of the mid-20th century are long gone. Contrast the panic generated by Orson Welles' radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* in 1938 with the indifference which greeted Tom Cruise's recent "blockbuster" movie version.

David Clarke thinks the rise and fall of ufology is a rich subject for study and is currently trying to attract funds for just such an

undertaking. "I see it as part of modern folklore," he says. "UFOs are like modern-day angels, and descriptions of meeting aliens are just like descriptions of people meeting angels in the Middle Ages." Filey was probably big on angels, too.

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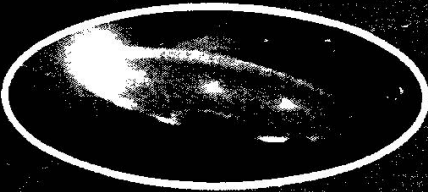
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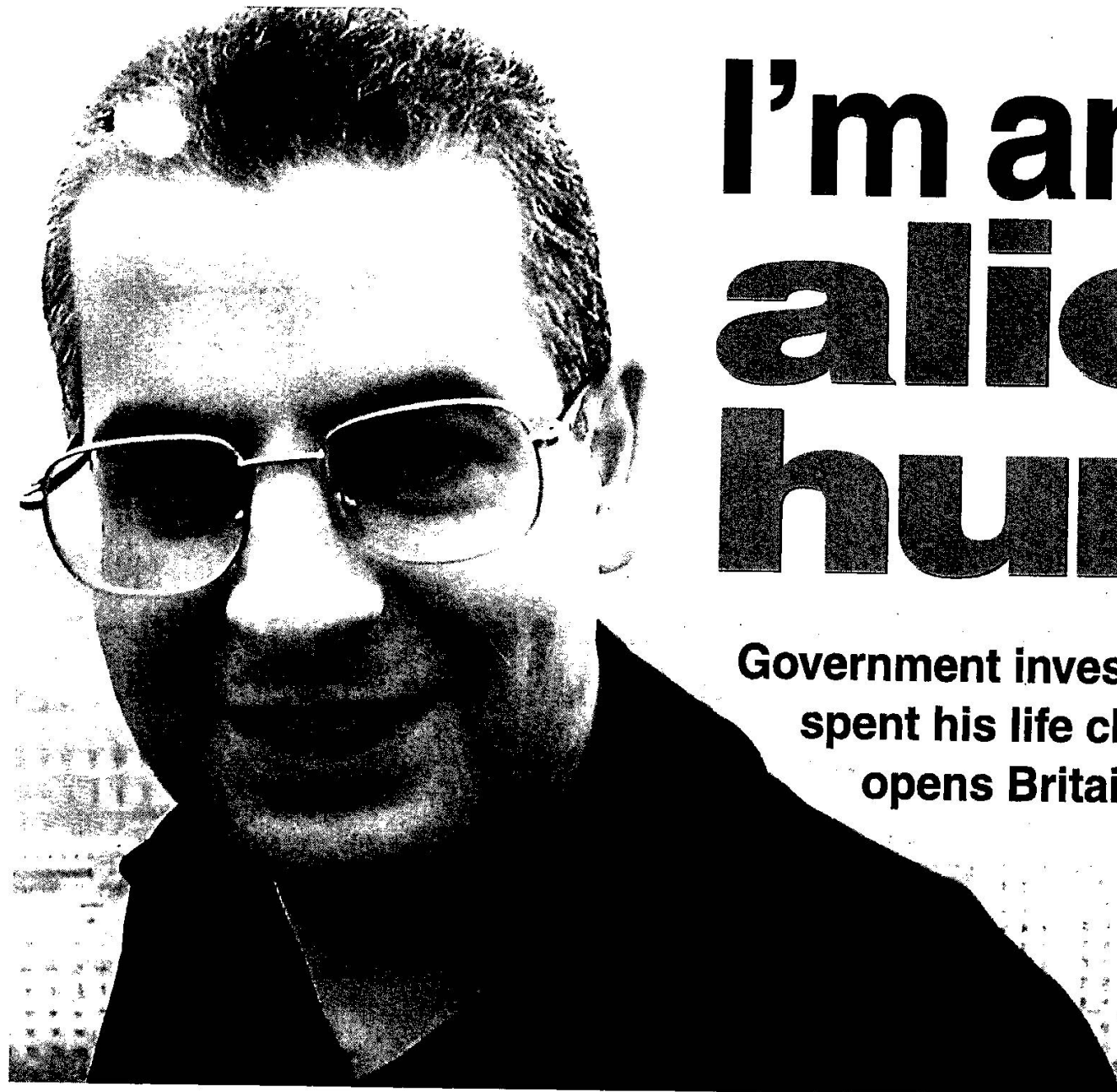
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Spooky Life



I'm an alien hunter

Government investigator Nick Pope, 39, has spent his life chasing ETs – and here he opens Britain's secret X-Files...

Fireworks peppered the cool night sky. It was November 5, 1990 and three silver RAF Tornado jets powered through the air at hundreds of miles an hour.

The pilots peered down at the North Sea and flew on.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, bright lights tore past, blinding them. As the pilots' jaws fell open, an other-worldly, diamond-shaped black craft overtook them in seconds.

The experienced fighter pilots knew this was no RAF plane. The Tornados' top speed was 1,452mph – but this craft had outflown them in seconds.

As the lights of the flat, flying object disappeared in the distance, the flight crews were left confused. They'd never seen anything like it.

So, who did the pilots report the strange unidentified flying object to?

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) UFO Project. Much like the FBI department in TV's X-Files, where agents Mulder and Scully worked to track down aliens, this British project investigates strange, out-of-this-world phenomenon.

And between 1991 and 1994, the team was headed by Nick Pope. Nick

UFO hotspots

Saucer spotters should visit...

- **Campanile – Scotland**
- **Stonehenge**
- **Greenwich Royal Observatory**
- **RAF Cranwell**
- **RAF Boulton**
- **RAF Cranwell**
- **RAF Cranwell**
- **RAF Cranwell**
- **RAF Cranwell**
- **RAF Cranwell**

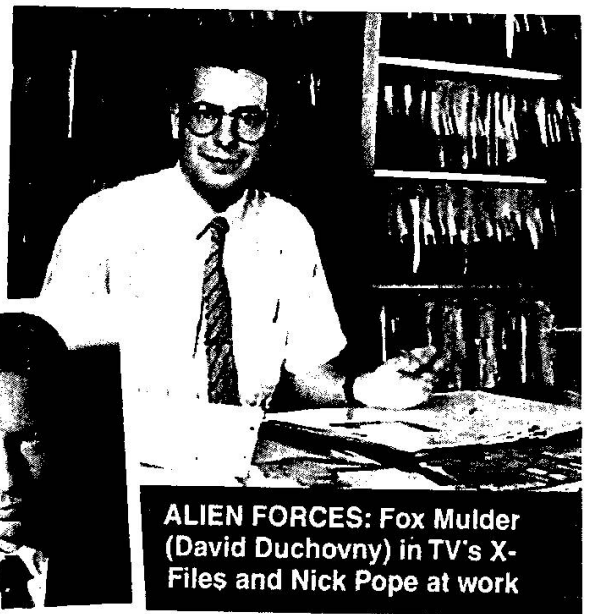
became the British expert on UFOs after working in the RAF. For four years he was investigating about 300 UFO sightings a year.

"My workmates started calling me Spooky Mulder," laughs Nick, 39. "About 95 per cent of UFO sightings can be explained. But the five per cent kept me awake at night – that I could never explain," he says.

When strange objects were spotted, Nick was the one man in the country who could explain them away. He had radar reports, all the flight paths and knew where helium balloons were flying.

"If nothing showed up, I'd check with the Greenwich Royal Observatory and specialist scientists," he says. "Any photo or video evidence would be analysed and if there was still doubt, I would contact the civilian UFO groups."

"The MoD would never discount a public sighting. However, if a trained



ALIEN FORCES: Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) in TV's X-Files and Nick Pope at work

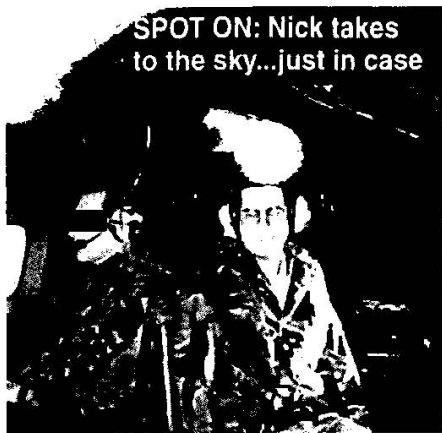
witness, such as a policeman or armed forces member made a sighting, this would be seen as more reliable as they are trained in distance sightings and used to seeing planes."

Nick says the MoD have never tried to cover up anything about UFOs.

In fact, details of possible UFO sightings can be found on their website, www.mod.uk.

Nick's investigations have led to

PHOTOS: USA BRUOKMAN; PHOTOS: 20TH CENTURY FOX, REUTERS



plausible explanations for most of the strange sightings. However, he admits there are four or five that remain a mystery, including the North Sea one. "One of the most famous was Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk in 1980. The sightings occurred on a British and USAF air base over Christmas," Nick explains.

"On Boxing Day night, a guard patrol spotted a small silver craft landing in the forest. Apparently, the guards got close enough to see some strange hieroglyphics on the craft – some even touched it.

"The following night, in a function at the base, a soldier rushed in and told the man in charge, Lieutenant Commander Hall: 'Sir, the UFO's back.'

"Thinking it was a hoax, Hall took a squad of men into the forest to investigate. There he saw a strange saucer-shaped craft moving slowly above the trees. Hall was convinced he'd seen a UFO and took casts of indentations of the landing site.

"Many have said it's a hoax but, to this day, it hasn't been explained."

Rendlesham's not the only case still puzzling Nick.

"March 30 and 31, 1993, witnessed a wave of sightings across England,"

he recalls. "Police and military in Devon, Cornwall, Wales and the Midlands reported strange lights in the sky.

"RAF personnel on RAF Cosford saw a UFO flying overhead at 1am. A civilian milly driving home chased the UFO by



'I saw a spaceship when I was at a funeral'



Jo Mullins, 30, from South Croydon, is one of MoD expert Nick Pope's cases. She had a close encounter at a funeral in November 1999...

"I watched as the coffin was lowered into the ground. 'I'm really going to miss you, Felix,' I thought, glumly glancing over at my brother Jerome, 41, a builder. As Felix's best friend he was devastated.

The cool November wind whipped my face and I pulled my coat tighter.

Look left!

The thought echoed in my mind.

Turn left, look up!

My eyes swivelled left and fixed on something glinting in the dark afternoon sky.

Peering closer, I distinctly made out a dull, silver egg-shaped object floating in the air above the grubby London tower blocks.

Looking at the crowd of mourners, I realised no-one else had noticed.

I gazed back and saw the silver craft floating directly overhead.

I'd never seen anything like it. It wasn't an aeroplane or a balloon...

A faint humming filled my ears as

a sinister black helicopter appeared and began circling the craft. I watched, amazed, as the unmarked helicopter tried to shoo it away.

Suddenly, the silver ship lit up from the outside, filling the sky with an eerie golden glow. As the light intensified, the helicopter kept circling until there was a blinding flash. The silver object vanished into thin air and seconds later the helicopter flew off.

I stood reeling from the shock, wondering if I'd imagined it. I could still see the helicopter, so I knew I wasn't dreaming. Had the egg-shaped craft been from another world? Had I seen a UFO?

I didn't tell anyone at the funeral as they might have thought I was bonkers. But later I talked to Nick Pope at the MoD.

No-one knows what exactly I saw, but I'll never forget my encounter with a spaceship."

car until it vanished above a field." This craft, too, was diamond-shaped.

Nick continues to investigate UFO sightings all over the world – but does he really believe E.T. is out there?

"When I started my job I didn't

believe in UFOs and aliens at all," he admits. "I was the ultimate sceptic.

"But after years of investigation I began to change my mind. Now I believe there is evidence, but no proof."

And with that, he smiles knowingly.

Have YOU had a close encounter of any kind?

Our five tests to help tell if you've had an alien experience...

1. Get a photo of it

As soon as you see any strange flashing lights or images, get a snap of it on your mobile so it can be investigated.

2. Grab a pen and some paper

No camera? Make a sketch. Then note down the exact date, time and location of your sighting. Include any strange markings or unusual light effects.

3. Make enquiries

Ask in your local pub or shop to find out if anyone in the area saw the same thing as you.

4. Get the local newspaper and radio station involved

Local reporters may run an article asking if anyone else has had a similar sighting. The more response, the more credibility.

5. Use common sense

Ask yourself: could it have been an aeroplane, a satellite, a star or lights from a nearby sports stadium? Account for fireworks displays around Christmas or Bonfire Night.

If all other possibilities have been ruled out, phone the Ministry of Defence UFO 24-hour hotline on: 020 7218 2140 or e-mail: das-ufo-office@mod.uk

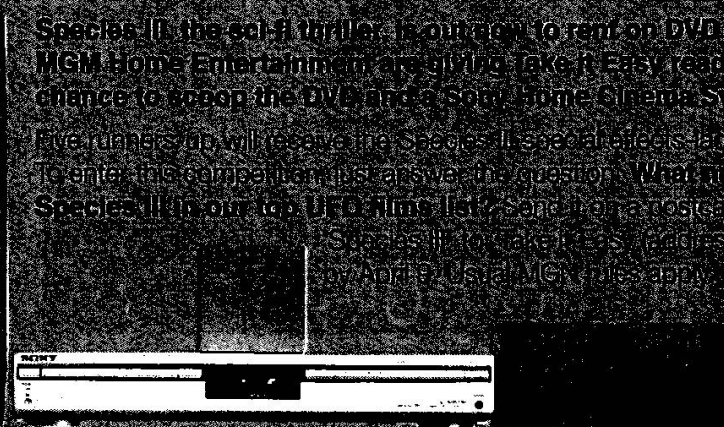
For more information on Nick Pope's UFO investigations, visit www.nickpope.net

Top UFO Films



1. Close Encounters Of The Third Kind
2. 2001: A Space Odyssey
3. E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial
4. Species III
5. Independence Day

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Species III, the sci-fi thriller, is out now to rent on DVD and VHS. MGM Home Entertainment are giving Take It Easy readers the chance to win the DVD and a Sony Home Cinema System.

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Science

Is it a bird? Is it a spaceship? No, it's a secret US spy plane

Sightings of flying object over Britain worried MoD Questions threatened to strain relations with US

James Randerson Science correspondent

It is the stuff of internet conspiracy theorists' dreams. A top secret, hypersonic, old war spy plane that was allegedly owned by the Americans in UK airspace without the government's permission.

Publicly, the UK government played down newspaper stories about people who reported seeing UFO-like phenomena. But documents released under the Freedom of Information Act suggest the Ministry of Defence took the rumours much more seriously. Its investigations even threatened to strain the special relationship.

The United States has never confirmed the existence of the mysterious aircraft, the Aurora, which was supposedly designed to sneak at very high speed over the Soviet Union and take covert snaps of what the enemy was up to. It was rumoured to be capable of flying at up to Mach 8 and so could reach anywhere on

the planet in less than three hours. In the early 1990s there was a string of supposed sightings and strange sounds over Scotland which some bewildered locals attributed to UFOs. Rumours in the press that Aurora was operating secretly out of RAF Machrihanish on the tip of Kintyre prompted Scottish MPs to ask questions in parliament.

Briefing notes given to the then defence secretary, Tom King, on March 4 1992 show that civil servants did give the idea credence. "There is no knowledge in the MoD of a 'black' programme of this nature, although it would not surprise the relevant desk officers in the Air Staff and [Defence Intelligence Staff] if it did exist."

The response suggested to an MP's question was rather less revealing: "The existence of any such project (or operation) would be a matter for the US authorities." The Americans denied everything, but the reports kept coming.

The most credible witness was Chris Gibson, who had 12 years' experience with the Royal Observer Corps and was an expert on recognising aircraft. He saw a triangular plane flanked by two US fighters being refuelled in flight by tanker while he was working on the Galveston Key oil rig in 1989. The plane was unlike anything he had ever seen. "There was no precedent for this," he said. "I kind of guessed out that it was something I shouldn't have seen." He reported the sighting to Jane's Defence Weekly in 1992.

On December 22 1992, the air attaché to the British embassy in Washington wrote to the assistant chief of the Air Staff in London explaining US reaction to renewed MoD questions prompted by Mr Gibson's sighting. "Secretary of the Air

If Aurora exists, it could look like this

Diagram of the Aurora spy plane with technical specifications: Altitude Up to 40km, Cruising speed Up to Mach 8, 5,300 mph, Propulsion Combined-cycle engine burning liquid methane, Materials Heat-tolerant titanium alloys, Wing span 15m, Length 27m. Includes flight times from London at Mach 8: New York 39min 9sec, Paris 2min 24sec, Rome 10min 4sec, Baghdad 28min 55sec, Sydney 1hr 59min 28sec, Rio 1hr 5min 14sec, Cape Town 1hr 7min 58sec.

Force, the Honorable Donald B Rice, was to say the least incensed by the renewed speculation, and the implied suggestion that he had lied to Congress by stating that Aurora did not exist.

"As you will have gathered, the whole affair is causing considerable irritation

'There is some evidence of an unidentified object operating over the UK'

within HQ [US Air Force], and any helpful comments we can make to defuse the situation would be appreciated."

"The sort of prickly reaction to people not believing their denials is pretty unusual," said Bill Sweetman, an expert on

top secret US black projects with Jane's Defence Review. "They generally don't deny things actually because it generally doesn't hurt them too much if somebody thinks they have a capability they don't."

A further batch of sightings on March 31 1993 over Devon, Cornwall, South Wales and Shropshire prompted another investigation by the MoD. These turned out later to be a Russian rocket re-entering the atmosphere, but the MoD investigators at the time suspected Aurora. "There would seem to be some evidence on this occasion that an unidentified object (or objects) of unknown origin was operating over the UK ... If there has been some activity of US origins which is known to a limited circle in MoD and is not being acknowledged it is difficult to investigate further." Mr Sweetman suspects

that by the end of the decade the MoD knew about Aurora. Another document from 2000 on the MoD's investigations into UFO sightings – or unidentified aerial phenomena as they prefer to call them – states that "some UAP reports can be attributed to covert aircraft programmes".

The section, which discusses other covert US aircraft such as the SR-71 Blackbird, contains two paragraphs and two illustrations which were censored before its freedom of information release last month. Codes next to the removed material indicate that it was excised in the interests of international relations. "Certain viewing angles of these vehicles may be described as saucer-like," the document says.

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Bad science Food for thought on alternative therapy

Ben Goldacre

It can sometimes seem like there are two competing ways to make a decision about any complex matter of evidence-based medicine. One is to purchase and digest How To Read A Paper by Professor Trisha Greenhalgh, and then find, read and critically appraise every published academic study independently and in full for yourself.

But there is a third way: what we might call "evidence-based prejudice". I can't possibly debunk every single alternative therapy column you will ever read: but if I could show that their single most popular claim has no foundation, then you could safely ignore everything else they say, thus saving valuable brain energy, and creating time to write best-sellers and eradicate world poverty.

And so to antioxidants. The basic claim of the alternative therapy industry is as follows: free radicals in the body are bad, but antioxidants neutralise free radicals; people who eat vegetables with antioxidants in them live longer, therefore antioxidant tablets are good. Now this "free-radicals-bad, antioxidants-good" morality tale looks great on paper. But if you're going to read a biochemistry textbook and pull bits out at random, you can prove anything you like. For example, my phagocytic cells build a wall around invading pathogens and then use free radicals – among other things – to kill the bacteria off, before the bacteria kill me. They're probably doing it right now. So do I need free radical supplements to help me fight infections? Sounds plausible. You can see, now, how I could make some serious money if I ever turned to the dark side.

are surveys, looking at people who, like me, already have healthy diets and lifestyles. But it's not just the antioxidants in rocket salad.

So what happens, then, when people do big studies, forcing people to eat salad? Well, it's not an easy thing to do, if only because it's difficult to get people to eat what you tell them, and measure what they eat, and check if they're truthful, and so on. The Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial in the 1970s was probably the single biggest medical project. It took 12,866 men, advised them, monitored them, cajoled them, persuaded them, followed them up for a decade, and found little benefit from dietary change. Intervention trials for diet have continued, since then, to produce negative results.

But what about vitamin tablets? They're easy to study, in the sense that it's easy to take a tablet – easier than changing your whole food lifestyle – easy to find a placebo control for, and so on. And there have been innumerable studies, and systematic reviews of those studies, and meta-analyses of those studies, and they have found no benefit for antioxidants. A meta-analysis – a mathematical combination of lots of smaller studies to give one larger and more accurate answer – of 15 studies, a total of more than 200,000 patients, followed up for between one and 12 years, found no benefit for cardiovascular outcomes. The current Cochrane review on antioxidants and bowel cancer had just as many patients, and again found no benefit for the pills.

That must be the single most prevalent claim of the alternative therapy industry.

Eat a mind meal

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE



BEXLEYHEATH has been identified by UFO experts as one of the top spots for seeing UFOs.

The town ranks number eight in a top 20 list of hotspots for UFO activity in the country, with Bonnybridge in Lanarkshire in first place.

The research comes as no surprise to one teenager who, while babysitting his sister two years ago, witnessed what he believed to be an alien ship hovering near his home.

Conor Sherwood, now 15, of Malvern Avenue, Bexleyheath, said: "My mum was out for the evening and I was in babysitting my little sister. "I was sitting in my living room and I heard a strange vibrating noise. I thought it was interference on the television, so I got up and turned the TV down. "But the noise was still there and it was getting louder. My house was shaking a little and I thought it could be a low-flying plane.



■ **SCOTT SINCLAIR**

the area and I had never felt the house shake like that.

"When my dad came back, I told him and he phoned the police straight away.

"No one else had reported seeing anything, although there had been a couple of phone calls about the vibrations.

"I really thought it was a Concorde but when I looked closer, it had lights all around it and I

have never seen a plane or anything like it before.

"I don't really believe in aliens but this was very strange and was definitely a UFO."

"But this was not the first time I had seen something. When I was younger, my uncle had a barbecue and there was a small, green, round shape in the sky. My uncle immediately got a camcorder, and my whole family saw it."

Conor logged his sighting on a Lycos website.

The list was compiled by leading UFO expert Nick Pope for Grolsch beer.

Mr Pope, who ran the Ministry of Defence's UFO desk from 1991 to 1994, said: "It is difficult to arrive at a precise number of sightings in any one place as there is no central data collection point.

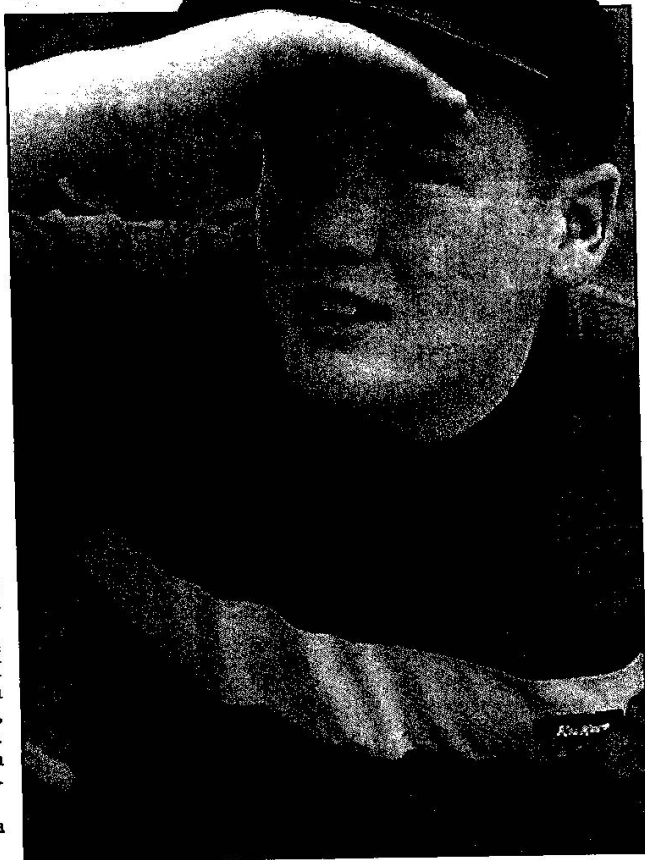
"We must also take into account widespread under-reporting due to fear of ridicule and the fact most people are unsure where to submit reports.

"However, it is certainly possible to gauge the intensity of current UFO activity.

"Our listed hotspots exhibit up to 20 times as many sightings as anywhere else."

Lewisham also made the top 10.

● **Have YOU seen a UFO?** If so, contact Scott Sinclair on 0208 269 7000 or e-mail s.sinclair@inuk.co.uk



SIGHTINGS: Conor Sherwood.

XF/1995/5C

Triangle

"I went outside and saw to my left a white triangle. It wasn't very high up, maybe as low as a plane coming into land or a tall building.

"The triangle looked like it was falling from the sky, but slowly, like the ashes of a firework that had just exploded."

"Then the telephone rang in my house, so I ran in to answer it and when I returned, which was almost straight away, it was gone. The sound had gone as well.

"My sister slept through the whole thing."

Conor believes what he saw was an Unidentified Flying Object, and said it was not his first UFO sighting.

He added: "I thought it was a Concorde plane, because of the noise and the vibrations, but I have never seen one before over

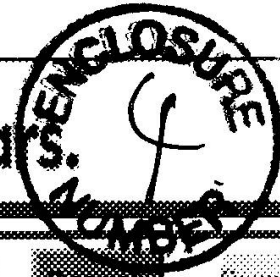
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WORLD

Mexican Air Force pilots film unidentified objects

Wednesday, May 12, 2004 Posted: 1210 GMT (2010 HKT)

MEXICO CITY, Mexico (AP) -- Mexican Air Force pilots filmed 11 unidentified objects in the skies over southern Campeche state, a Defense Department spokesman confirmed Tuesday.

A videotape made widely available to the news media on Tuesday shows the bright objects, some sharp points of light and others like large headlights, moving rapidly in what appears to be a late-evening sky.

The lights were filmed on March 5 by pilots using infrared equipment. They appeared to be flying at an altitude of about 3,500 meters (11,480 feet), and allegedly surrounded the Air Force jet as it conducted routine anti-drug trafficking vigilance in Campeche. Only three of the objects showed up on the plane's radar.

"Was I afraid? Yes. A little afraid because we were facing something that had never happened before," said radar operator Lt. German Marin in a taped interview made public Tuesday.

"I couldn't say what it was ... but I think they're completely real," added Lt. Mario Adrian Vazquez, the infrared equipment operator. Vazquez insisted that there was no way to alter the recorded images.

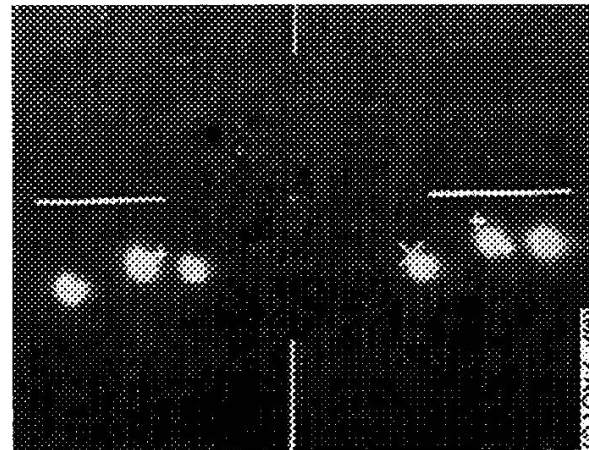
The plane's captain, Maj. Magdaleno Castanon, said the military jets chased the lights "and I believe they could feel we were pursuing them."

When the jets stopped following the objects, they disappeared, he said.

A Mexican Defense Department spokesman confirmed Tuesday that the videotape was filmed by members of the Mexican Air Force. The spokesman declined to comment further and spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

The video was first aired on national television Monday night then again at a news conference Tuesday by Jaime Maussan, a Mexican investigator who has dedicated the past 10 years to studying UFOs.

"This is historic news," Maussan told reporters. "Hundreds of videos (of UFOs) exist, but none had the backing of the armed forces of any country. ... The armed forces



Unidentified lights appear on a videotape taken by Mexican air force pilots.

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Maussan said Secretary of Defense Gen. Ricardo Vega Garcia gave him the video on April 22.

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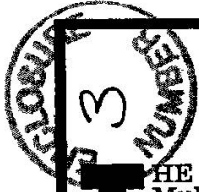
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THE truth, FBI agent Fox Mulder famously claimed, is 'out there'. The X-Files motto became a creed for the millions who believed in alien visitations, abductions, conspiracies and cover-ups.

But now, it seems, even though the truth may well be 'out there', no one seems to care. The UFO phenomenon, which started nearly 60 years ago, appears to have run its course, with dwindling numbers of people reporting sightings.

Now comes the news that UFO Magazine, one of the most popular publications that carried endless tales of sightings and other close encounters, is to close down.

Two years ago, the British Flying Saucer Bureau — the world's oldest flying saucer club — was shut by its eccentric founder Denis Plunkett, after 49 years. Not only had membership dwindled, so had the number of visitations.

So what has happened to UFOs? Why are we not seeing them any more?

UFOs were born in the technological white heat and paranoia of the Cold War. Fifty years ago, when food was still rationed and half our cities were still, courtesy of the Luftwaffe, rubblestrewn awaiting the planners to do their worst, the skies over these islands were alive with strange lights, cigar-shaped objects and, especially, flying saucers.

The spotting craze had begun on June 24, 1947, when American pilot Kenneth Arnold saw a flock of bat-shaped metallic objects skipping through the air 'like a saucer if you skipped it across the water' over the Cascade Mountains east of Seattle.

He soon became a celebrity, and despite the fact that the objects he described were most definitely not saucer-shaped, the newspaper shorthand 'flying saucer' stuck.

Soon, people all over the world were seeing machines in the sky that matched the description of the original sighting.

Nowhere were they more common than in the skies over Britain. They were spotted performing amazing acrobatics, turning on a sixpence at 2000mph and climbing at speeds no missile could emulate.

It was perhaps not surprising that the new fad took off so quickly in a country that had only recently seen its cities devastated by bizarre flying machines — Hitler's bombers, and later the sinister V1 and V2 rockets that were the prototypes for the spacecraft which later travelled to the Moon.

FLYING saucers in the U.S. burst upon the scene at a time when there was widespread paranoia about the perceived superiority of Soviet technology. Significantly, when the Russians launched the first satellite, Sputnik, in 1957, UFO sightings shot up again.

The Russians saw UFOs too. In the old Soviet Union, reports of alien spacecraft would come flooding in at times of political unrest. During the upheavals of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras, sightings were at an all-time high.

UFOs were seen by people from all walks of life — pilots and soldiers, schoolchildren and pensioners. In the U.S., a young Jimmy Carter even filed a sighting of a mysterious object in the skies of his native Georgia.

Winston Churchill found the whole phenomenon bemusing. 'What does all this stuff about flying saucers amount to?' he asked in a 1951 memo. 'What can it mean?' The Ministry of Defence set up its own 'X-Files' unit to investigate.

For 50 years, the debate raged. On the one side was the hardcore UFO enthusiasts, whose passion for the subject is akin to religious fervour.

These people believed — many still do — that the Earth is being

U-F-O-N-O?

Fewer flying saucer sightings than ever — but that doesn't mean there's nothing 'out there' ...




by **Michael Hanlon**
SCIENCE EDITOR

visited on a regular basis by alien visitors. A key tenet of UFO mythology is that these aliens — often described as rather sinister, grey-skinned humanoids — will pick on individuals and kidnap them, usually with the aim of performing uncomfortable and often obscene medical experiments.

The 'abductee' phenomenon is big in the U.S. Several thousand people are reported to believe that they were taken by aliens, only to have their memories of these events erased. Only by using hypnosis and the tricks of 'recovered memory' is the 'truth' revealed.

On the other side of the debate were those who believed that all UFO sightings were mistakes or — more often than not — hoaxes. So who was right?

It is true that 99 per cent of all UFO sightings are perfectly explicable. Birds, Venus (the brightest of the planets), reflections in car windows, experimental aircraft and weather balloons probably account for the majority of sightings.

As for tales of alien abduction, they are almost certainly the ramblings of the deluded and inadequate. Indeed, the 'alien autopsy' video, released in the 1990s and purporting to show film of a dead alien recovered from a supposed UFO crash at Roswell, New Mexico in 1947, was easily exposed as a crude forgery.

The MoD concluded, after 50 years, that the UFO phenomenon was a myth and so, two years ago, the British X-Files were quietly closed.

One of Britain's most famous UFO sightings — the appearance of a 'spacecraft' over an American military base at Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk, 24 years ago — was last year revealed to be an ingenious hoax, perpetrated by a

bored policeman equipped with flashlights and a loudspeaker.

But can we dismiss every single sighting as an illusion or a case of mistaken identity? Is it really impossible that alien spacecraft or people from another dimension are visiting the Earth?

The answer is no, but one is forced to ask why they would choose to do this — or at least do it in the way the sightings suggest. Travelling across space is very difficult and that's true for even the most advanced alien.

It is hard to see why, having put all this effort in, they would choose to buzz a remote corner of the American Mid-West or Gloucestershire (another UFO hotspot) and show themselves to the sort of people no one was going to believe anyway.

AND THERE is also the fact that humans have a long history of seeing strange things in the skies. But in the old days, it was not flying saucers that people saw. Instead, it was angels or other religious visions.

According to 'Ufologist' and sceptic Andy Smith, flying saucers are just a modern manifestation of a very old phenomenon.

He said: 'The will to believe in UFOs comes from the religious impulse. The prevailing cultural myth is that they are ET — but in the old days they would have been the Virgin Mary.'

Now the Cold War is over, and we no longer believe that we are about to be obliterated by mysterious Soviet technology. Our fears are more mundane — pollution and global warming.

The growth in the popularity of science fiction — which mirrored the rise in the UFO phenomenon — may have also contributed to its decline.

As more people associate space aliens with entertaining fictions such as The X-Files and Star Wars, the less likely they are to take them seriously as fact.

The Unidentified Flying Object will probably go down in history as a unique part of late 20th-century culture. For many, this will be a great shame.

To the diehard true believers, the skies, now empty of flashing lights and strange, cigar-shaped rocketships, will never be quite the same again.

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Edition: Early
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Brief: Ministry of Defence



UFO picture is out of this world

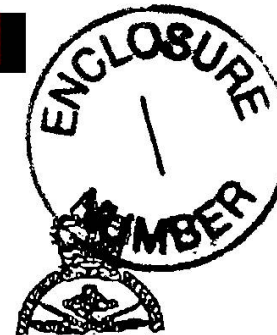


THIS photograph of an apparent UFO was hailed by experts last night as one of the best ever. The astonishing picture shows a ghostly, disc-like craft hovering over rooftops. Ufologist Bob Boyd said: "It's one of the five best UFO photographs I've seen in more than 25 years. There's no doubt in my mind it's the real thing." The image was taken from an unpopulated residential yard in the north of London. Boyd says the photograph was taken in the early 1970s.

1 page article. Page 1 of 1.

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FAX



Section 40



Section 40



3

20/2/04



THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Navy to probe 'one of best five UFO pictures ever seen'

AN extraordinary image of a shimmering disc-shaped object above the English coast has been hailed as one the best pictures of a UFO ever taken.

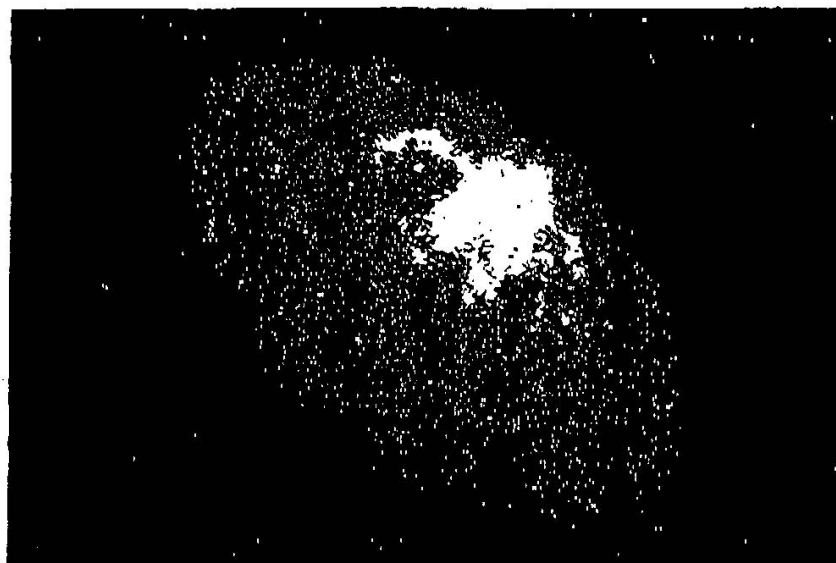
With a pinkish outer rim, golden middle and a light at its centre, there is no explanation for the "flying saucer".

Photographic experts say the pictures are not faked and a Royal Navy team has launched an investigation.

An un-named dockyard worker captured the image with his new digital camera in Plymouth. And Bob Boyd, chairman of the city's UFO research group, said: "It's one of the five best I've seen. There is no doubt it is the real thing."

There were no other sightings on the night of January 28, but he added: "If 100 people see a UFO, only one will report it."

lakers@cit.co.uk



PERFECT: Snap of the UFO that has caused such excitement

* D News RAF
claims that
source who showed
the Navy at Plymouth
Dockyard, said they
had a photo of a UFO
and asked if they wanted
to see it. They would do
but it. There is no
investigation being
conducted

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2 page article. Page 1 of 2.

Source: Daily Mirror

Section: Main

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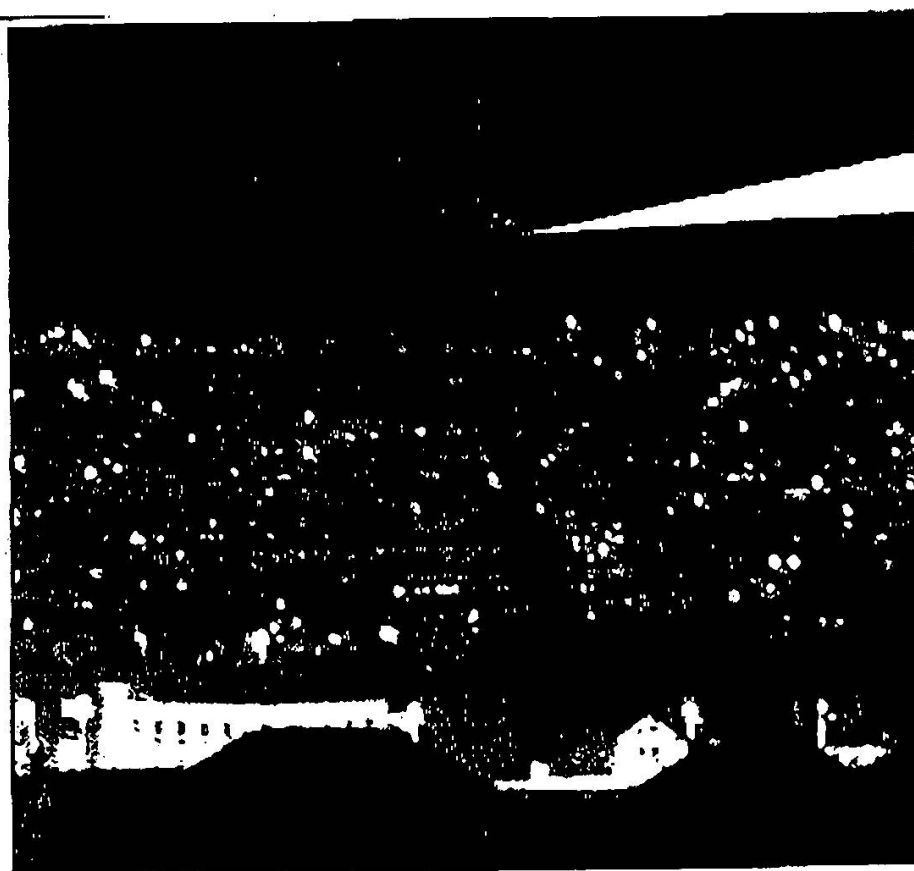
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SIGHTING: The UFO is captured in early evening above the St Budeaux area of Plymouth

2 page article. Page 2 of 2.

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