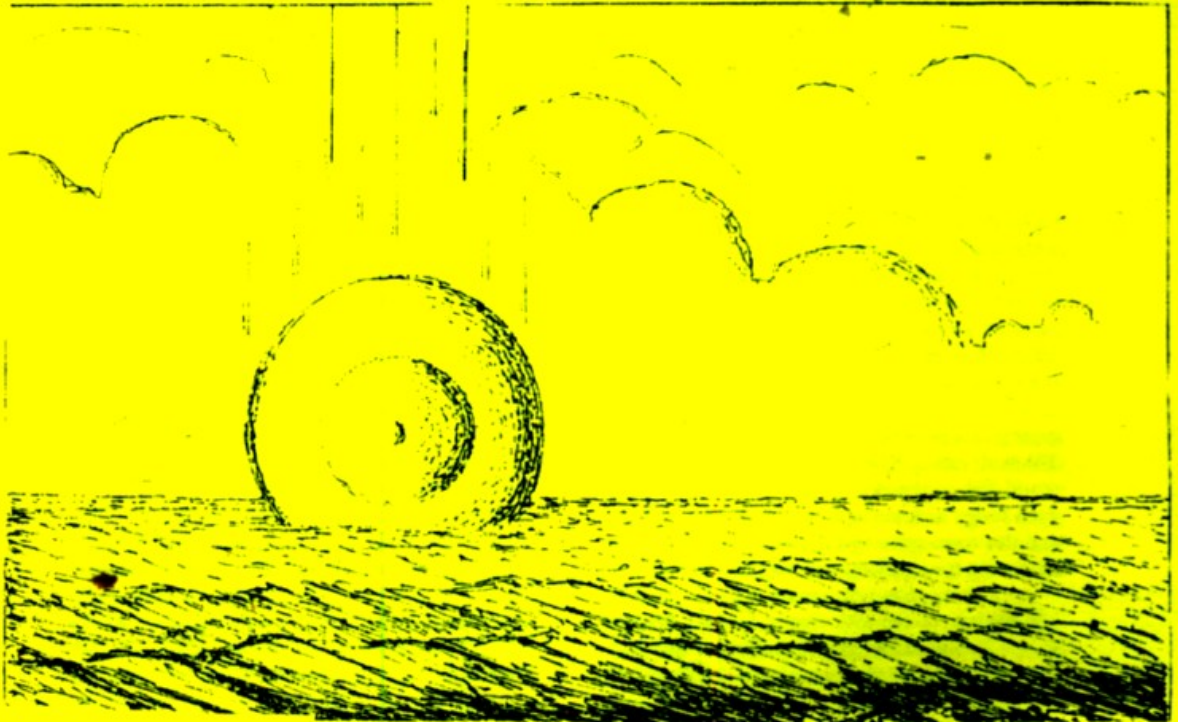


NORTHERN UFO NEWS

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J R Comments:

Time to go home?

UFOlogy is in something of a crisis. Sightings are down to very low levels. Groups have lost members in droves. Magazine subscriptions are at their nadir. The aliens have got fed up, moved to Tau Ceti and perhaps it is time UFOlogy called it quits and joined them.

Or to put it another way - this is all rot! That is the basis for a debate that has raged during 2001. It was kicked off in April when Dennis Plunkett, one of the old stalwarts of the BFSB (British Flying Saucer Bureau) was alleged to have shut up shop owing to the factors reported above. After 50 years Britain's oldest UFO group (indeed quite possibly the oldest in the world) was calling it a day.

The shock headlines appeared in prestigious newspapers. There were debates on TV and radio. The story flashed around the world and escalated as it did so. The BFSB were soon hailed as a major force in British UFOlogy and this news as being the end of an era. By any reckoning it was a long way short of that.

But was it even true? Furious UFOlogists reacted with vigour. Graham Birdsall at UFO magazine put together a thorough demolition job in a press release - although it received far less media attention. But it did ably defend the subject and showed that all was not quite the doom and gloom the media suggested.

By the summer even the original BFSB collapse was seemingly in reverse. But again this revivification of the group was not being given the prominence that its apparent disappearance was afforded. In the eyes of most outsiders - therefore - UFOlogy had expired of natural causes age 54 in Spring 2001. But in true Sam Clemens style the reports of its demise were somewhat exaggerated.

So what is the reality here? As ever it is somewhat in the middle of these two extremes. There was substance to the story reported, but the rather hysterical glee with which the death of UFOlogy was announced proved - to say the least - premature. After all, crop circles by all rights should have been in the spirit world 10 years ago given the undeniable proof of widespread hoaxing and hints of a few residual atmospheric forces at work. But it survives the odds and shows no sign of imminent departure. Given that - UFOlogy - which has vastly more support behind it - is here to stay.

The BFSB - around which this story was spun - is hardly the major player in British UFOlogy that some of the overseas versions implied. It was founded in 1952 as an offshoot of the Flying Saucer Bureau (the infamous US group set up by Al Bender and closed down the year after when he was allegedly scared off by the Men in Black!) The British branch was based in the Bristol area and went solo. But this was in the heady days of the 50s, and early 60s. Back then Adamski and the contactees were all the rage, real space travel was new and exciting and all things alien filled the lives of a world just out of rationing and bitter war with few of life's distractions that we have in abundance today.

Indeed once UFOlogy began to get organised the BFSB settled back into a fairly low key existence. As BUFORA created the first major national grouping and more vociferous local societies grabbed the rising media attention the BFSB faded from the scene. Even by the time NUFON first appeared (and that was 27 years ago!) the BFSB were virtually unknown outside Bristol where they met in someone's house to chat about the phenomenon. It was a long way from the many hundreds of active members that belong to BUFORA even today.

I did meet Dennis and a few of his colleagues when they were guests at the BUFORA conference in Bristol in 1992. By then they were friendly, interesting but only modestly active. So if it were true that they had closed their doors for good it would be neither a surprise nor much of a story. Larger and more dynamic groups have closed in the past 20 years and made not even a ripple in their local media.

So why was this story such big news? Therein lay the seeds of a conspiracy theory that began to develop in UFOlogy. Was this a plan by the powers that be to spread disinformation? Was the story being deliberately fed out as a means to kill off this vital subject in the eyes of the public.

I doubt it! It was just how these things work. An enterprising journalist saw that the story only became big news if the importance of the BFSB was hyped and if extrapolations were drawn from it as to the general malaise of a once proud subject. Once that angle was reflected it became a self fulfilling story and truth or otherwise soon became a secondary issue.

Of course, UFOlogy is always going to generate news but the media want fresh angles to sell this news. The death of UFOlogy is gold dust. This is why the allegations took off. No

disinformation or government intervention was ever necessary. Only plain old human nature

NEWS

So is UFOlogy dead or awaiting treatment on the NHS? The latter, I suggest. There *has* been a decrease in sighting numbers (although waves do still happen) - but much is a result of apathy. The media no longer promote every light in the sky Phenomena that got regularly misperceived in the 60s and 70s (like weather balloons or satellites) are more familiar these days so less often trigger sightings And Ufologists have become more discriminating. They no longer follow up every sighting and focus just on those that offer potential. This inevitably results in a further decrease in totals

UFO groups and magazines are suffering membership decline. There are many reasons. UFO interest always has gone in cycles - so a few years lull after the boom of the past was inevitable. And the rise of the internet means that information is now available at the touch of a button that 5 years ago you would have needed to read in a UFO magazine or get from a UFO society. Of course, there will always be a root level of true supporters to whom subscriptions and group memberships stay important. Northern UFO News subscribers have only fallen by about 10% - but then we never had many sales beyond the really interested hard core and I have never attempted to advertise to get them. The Millennium has also had some effect. A bubble has burst. Those people waiting for the 'great event' long predicted (e.g. by Nostradamus with his 'King of Frightfulness' due in 1999) have realised that ET is not coming and packed up their picnic baskets and gone in search of pastures new. The consequent rise in popularity of the neo ancient astronaut market (check out WH Smith and compare 'Gods and Spacemen' and 'Atlantis Rising' type books with UFO titles) may be where they have headed. If ET isn't coming tomorrow - it may be hoped -perhaps he *did* come yesterday (or the eon before yesterday at least). In this way solace remains.

Certainly UFO books are not the commercial proposition they were and will be thin on the ground for a time But why pay £15 for a book when you can find much data free on the net (UFOlogy sites tumble off here like lemmings on a cliff - though sadly lemmings do make more sense). Not to mention how endless TV channels pour out daily documentaries (from the absurd to the ridiculous) to feed the hunger

So, yes, UFOlogy has changed and we can change with it. Some may call it a day now it seems that no X File truths are lurking out there. But for me UFOlogy has always been about *solving* mysteries and that is still as true as ever.

REQUIEM...

Following on from the losses announced in the last issue two other names in UFOlogy have sadly died in 2001.

Perhaps best known is writer Desmond Leslie - famous for bringing George Adamski to the attention of the world 50 years ago His death ends an era as he was the last of the original authors of the first few UFO books (which appeared from 1950 to 1954)

A name less familiar to most but not within BUFORA was Robin Lindsey, who was often seen taping and filming UFO lectures and conferences. Despite horrendous personal illness and years of dialysis he bravely soldiered on and had always been a part of BUFORA for as long as I have been involved His death in February, following the recent loss of long term chairman Arnold West, is a blow to the national association. But at least Robin's legacy of tapes will live on to give UFOlogists in future generations the chance to hear presentations by leading UFOlogists from a previous age. I hope that BUFORA take up my suggestion to name the tape library in Robin's honour as this would be a fitting tribute to decades of hard work.

THE VOICE SILENCED

In a poster sized memo headed 'Attention UFOlogy' 'The Voice' announced retirement in April. Saying 'After 34 years he's had enough - I'm off to greener glades and sweeter shores - no more of this chasing elusive / non existent UFO alien nonsense' - free at last! there was little doubt of the intention here. The Voice was in fact Barry King, long time witness / researcher - who during the 1970s was an active co-investigator along with Andy Collins - now a leading 'neo archaeology' writer Between them they pursued many famous cases such as the Aveley abduction and compiled excellent case reports More recently going their very different separate ways, Andy has shunned UFOlogy to write many successful books on ancient Egypt, Atlantis and so on, whilst Barry sent out these strange little magazines hinting at knowledge of covert government agencies and commenting/criticising or policing the UFO movement. They were always provocative and few escaped his wrath at some point (certainly not me!) It is to be hoped that the 'extreme ill health' also referred to is not that serious. And somehow I suspect this will not be the last we hear of this particular voice.

Project Hessdalen - the Scandinavian window area research venture - is gearing up for a new intensive study. Several expeditions have so far been mounted to the remote valley near Trondheim and close to the Arctic Circle. Strange lights have been seen floating over the mountains here since World War Two and this seems to be a classic 'window area' generating these energy phenomena much as found in the Pennines. The difference is that in the Pennines (despite the ease with which such expeditions could be mounted) nothing coordinated has ever been done to try to capture scientific evidence - but Hessdalen has spent weeks camped out in this frozen wasteland and secured extraordinary evidence. This includes photographs and spectroscopic readings offering internal information about the plasma that seems to be the basis of these glowing energy balls. Now the project has secured two special cameras and a third is to be added. These will provide the facility to record stereoscopic images. If these succeed in capturing one of the UFOs on film then it should offer dramatic new insights about the size, height and speed of these objects. The team also plans to purchase a radar system that will much improve the tracking of phenomena in future rounds of on site investigations. These are planned for later this year. What a pity that UFOlogists in northern England cannot join forces, obtain support from local industry and universities and start a similar scientific investigation in our own hyper active window (meteorologically far more friendly too!)

: Book News The scene still remains quiet - although Robert Hale has started a new series that might prove of interest Released in hardback and then about 6 months later in soft back it will explore the paranormal on a region by region basis - from the areas folklore to modern day UFOlogy. David Clarke's first volume (Supernatural Peak District) is reviewed later this issue. My book 'Supernatural Pennines' - a detailed look at the why's and wherefore's of the window - is coming this winter and Peter Hough has 'Supernatural Lancashire' due in 2002. No doubt more will follow.

The Oz Factory

A possible explanation for the time distortion effect that is often found within close encounter cases (the Oz Factor) has been proposed by Professor Tom Reilly of John Moores University, Liverpool. He may have revealed the factory behind these odd effects.

Tests by this psychologist have shown that people measure the passage of time differently according to their age - with older people genuinely believing that time passes more swiftly than children. This subjective time phenomenon has long been suspected by experience (childhood summers last forever, adult holidays are over in a flash!) But this is the first time it has been objectively measured.

Several factors have been found to be at work. One is the loss of brain cells (which occurs regularly in all adults beyond the age of 25). It is believed that the lower numbers that older people possess mean that fewer memories can be stored as one ages, causing the passage of time to appear to be more swift since it encompasses fewer recent 'recorded moments'.

Another working hypothesis is that time may be partly measured by the brain as a fraction of ones total memory store. To a five year old one month represents just one sixtieth of their life span - a far more substantial fraction than the same period would be for a 50 year old. Here one month represents one six hundredth of full recall (and so a much smaller percentage). Being much smaller its passage may be subjectively judged as being more fleeting - hence the sense of time passing ever more rapidly as one ages and constantly diminishes the 'value' of a month.

But the most relevant factor to UFOlogy is the finding that stress creates hormonal flows and these appear to effect the brain's measurement of time. Of course, stress tends to be more common in adult lives -meaning that distortions would be more common in adults than care free children. Interestingly, this effect works in opposition to the other theories - causing the passage of time to slow. This process may be an evolutionary defence mechanism built in to the brain to allow a human, for instance, a better chance to escape from a predator that is leaping at you from a tree. It may give the person a longer subjective period in which to assess the danger and respond.

Stress may prove a key factor in close encounter cases - injecting hormones into the body if one believes that a flying saucer or alien is nearby. Does this then trigger the Oz Factor?

MAJOR ARTICLES ELSEWHERE

Fortean Times - monthly at £2.70 and on sale in newsagents. The **January** issue investigates sightings of ghostly World War Two aircraft that are remarkably common over the UK indeed I have heard one passing over Dove Holes apparently! The fascinating story of a wave of fireballs seen over the UK in 1783 is a highlight of **February**. But it is **June** before another UFO related piece appears, a somewhat disappointing study of alleged deaths care of UFOs that misses Britain's two best but has a dubious South American yarn and the long explained Mantell case. But FT is still a terrific read.

BUFORA Bulletin

With subs

Dec: Interestingly weird interview with Tony Bassett - the man who claims to have built a time machine in his London garage. Makes a change from reports of Lights in the Sky!

Awareness (CONTACT UK)

Winter: Contact takes a left turn at the Outer Limits via Monty Python. Do mind waves control us? Are long haul flight blood clots the result of alien technology not suited for humans? Were Bible visions UFO induced? Was this issue published on 1st April ? Apparently not.

IUR CUFOS (USA).

Fall: Excellent demystifying piece by Kevin Randle resolving the fatal Walesville, New York 'UFO induced jet crash in 1954 (series of chance malfunctions)... Claude Mauge re-examines Orthoteny...Clas Svahn looks at the Swedish military and UFOs. Mark Rodeghier reports on surveys about abductees and Dick Hall and yours truly debate Rendlesham Forest 20 yrs on. Winter: Eddie Bullard investigates Chupacabras in history. Patterns between CE 3 cases. History of French government studies. Surely the above tells you *why* IUR is *the* top UFO journal?

MUFON Journal (USA)

First the bad news. Since January I have had a column each month looking at UFO issues from a UK perspective. If that hasn't put you off (it would me) here's what else to look out for in these issues. Mar: A big Amazon River Flap. May: Did Marilyn Monroe's death have a UFO connection? (I kid you not)

MAGONIA (editor John Rimmer)

73: Sexual motifs in abduction narratives

74: The Walton abduction hoax theory assessed

Strange Times (Editor Gloria Dixon)

The erstwhile Strange Daze under a new name (why change what was already pretty good?). But you won't notice any other difference as Gloria Dixon puts together her usual fine fare. Cynthia Hind's final article (on a haunted African mountain), Andy Roberts on a north east UFO 'crash' found in public record files, real life underground bases, vampires, multiverses and string theory, Cumbrian UFO sightings and remote viewing. A typically rich mixture.

Project Red Book

(YUFOS)

I am still amazed at the YUFOS team for producing what is easily the UK's best local group magazine month in month out. As always the insightful UFOlogist interviews are a highlight and worth the money alone. I hope they don't run out of subjects... **Feb:** Yours truly under the spot light to discuss time travel...**Apr:** Clas Svahn on UFOlogy in Scandinavia.

UFO Network UK

News and events from this West Yorks group

OVNI 94 Now bi-monthly £6 (plus post) for 6

East Midlands UFO investigations from PRA.

SUFOG

Useful updates on media coverage of UFOs

UFO Historical Review (USA)

Barry Greenwood's analysis of old US cases via document retrieval looks at the Kirtland affair

The Researcher MARA Merseyside Anomalies

Big step up in design for this spiffing and wide ranging journal. Winter issue features Andy Roberts solving a foo fighter mystery...Canadian UFO wave.. Isle of Man legends...Urban myths... A Liverpool hobgoblin and lots more.

Paranormal Newsletter IUFOPRA No price?

A look at Irish legends such as the Banshee.

Dead of Night

Packed as always with every weird thing under the full moon - from monsters to legends. Leave in the loo for visitors and cure their constipation.

The Skeptic

13-4 looks at the truth behind the Nazi flying saucer legends and how to seek God inside the brain. 14-1 features fantasy proneness in mediums and sleep paralysis. Plus many other deeply skeptical assessments of odd events.

Folklore Frontiers

The frequent stream of overtly sexist covers are of very dubious taste but if you can get over this worrying foible FF is easily the best source for a digest of modern day urban myths and legends culled from the UK media.

The Circular (CCCS)

If you never tire of seeing aerial photos of ever more complex fake circles (aka really mysterious events) - look no further This quarterly from the CCCS never disappoints with the latest news and all the best maps, diagrams and whirly images of pretty scribbles in some poor farmers field Or -if any landowners might dare to make their own squiggles - maybe a few not so poor farmers too

BOOKS OF THE MOMENT

Cosmic Test Tube by Randall Fitzgerald Moon Lake Media, LA 396 pp Softback \$19.95

I do not know much about this author save what the blurb alleges. He is a contributing editor to Readers Digest and that is apt, because this interesting concept is essentially a digest of UFO literature compiled for new readers.

Divided into main sections - Ancient Astronauts, UFOs and occupants, Contactees & Abductees, Debunkers and Skeptics, Contacting ET - it is a guide to the key books (with each section dozens of pages long). The author provides a reader's overview of each topic via the books. The selection of headings is one hint of the American parochialism that is its worst fault. I cannot think of many serious UFOlogists who would regard this as a sensible split of the major UFO topics. It is more a split of ETH themes. So this book masquerades as a digest of UFOlogy whilst really being a digest of the popular misconception that UFOlogy *is* the ETH.

However, things are not as bad as this may imply Fitzgerald has signs of objectivity and does introduce alternative viewpoints rather than merely present a one sided whitewash. Each section consists of his overall synthesis of the topic (which is often reasonably balanced) followed by at least page long digests of a large number of the books that he considers as essential tomes within this particular sub-genre. These are offered in chronological order of publication giving a fascinating historical trek through the progress of open debate on a topic

If the books chosen were more reflective of what has appeared other than in the US - few non American titles get a look in and major omissions thus occur - this would be a superb idea brilliantly executed. Even as it is the results are very well worthwhile. But when you realise that of the 200 or so titles digested in depth Britain is represented by only two UFO books-Tim Good's Above Top Secret and my own UFO Retrievals - you see the problem. There are surely lots of UK titles that deserve more attention than UFO Retrievals. But it is one of my most ET orientated - no doubt why it's here!

Still, accept this as being Fitzgerald's personal selection box - given ETH style UFOlogy. And in the main that choice works well enough and is not just fun but rather useful.

Randles Rating: Clever Idea. Useful reference.

The first in a new regional survey of old and modern myths across the UK (with two more already coming - see p. 4) this is very good value and features colour photos too

With Dr Clarke at the helm you know you are getting objective and well informed coverage based on his first hand investigation in many instances. So the book is off to a flier right away This is a simple book - no pretensions here. It does exactly what it says on the label and reviews the legends, myths and modern day folk tales otherwise classified as being supernatural. They are all rooted within the Peak District -north and west Derbyshire but also parts of South Yorkshire too - a wonderfully rich area for strange things - both old and new. David brings it vividly to life. Of course, there are some familiar cases but plenty that will be new to you.

Whilst UFOs do feature in here - and the Longendale Lights inevitably have good coverage - you shouldn't buy this book for its UFO content because that is not a major feature. But this is no serious detractor because the diversity of stories that are included will certainly entertain and inform the reader

The High Peak in particular is well known for its association with ghostly aircraft -apparently visions of world war two bombers -many of which did crash on the mist shrouded moors and indeed some debris can still be seen by intrepid hikers. But the Peak District has other legends that spill over from ancient tales to modern mysteries - notably a series of haunted skulls and weird lights and apparitions connected with the caves and mines that were once far more extensively worked than today.

It takes little imagination to see a continuity of phenomena here between the glows within a cave that may once have led to the area being given a devilishly associated name to similar glows seen centuries later that may be interpreted as an alien presence.

As such this is a book that is more than appropriate even when it is not immediately apparent that what is being discussed overlaps into UFO territory. A perfect illustration of the maxim that what once was, still is, but not so obvious. And that myths and folklore are not a thing of the past - we are creating then right now although usually calling by another name

Randles Rating: Fascinating review of the fuzzy borders between local folklore old and new.

INVESTIGATION Latest UFO sightings

Camouflage Triangle

Case 9813 3 July 1998 Flimby, Cumbria

Report by Kevin Owen

A strange object was reported over Flimby on the Cumbrian coast. It seems to have had what are almost camouflage markings on the side. Described as a large black triangle with irregular grey patches inset this thing was seen at 23 00 to appear over the Thomas Armstrong Building. It then headed off towards Maryport at high speed, before returning three more times Then it finally disappeared for the last time.



Case 9813



Case 9912

Yes — they can be Sirius

Case 9911 17 October 1999 Stoke, Staffs

Mrs P called via Jodrell to report seeing the following - *"A very bright star to the west of Chesterton, Stoke at 20.10. It was flashing red and green. I called my father to go take a look as I stood watching it for 20 minutes measuring its very slight motion against the chimney pot. It was moving north west - but barely."*

Her father arrived to have a look through binoculars and saw it fade and reappear. It was there until 21.15 before they lost sight of it. There were slight motions, then long periods when it remained still, before it moved a little again. For this reason and because of the flashes the two witnesses refused to accept the diagnosis offered to them by Jodrell when they called.

But Jodrell were right - this was the star Sirius, then very bright. The motional effects noticed were illusions due to autokinesis

EM effects care of Stealth Fighter?

Case 9912 November 1999 Egremont, Cumbria

Report by Kevin Owen and Sharon Larkin

Four witnesses in a house report that they lost all their electricity at 21.00. Seconds later a loud roaring noise was heard and they rushed out to see what they assumed to be a low flying aircraft. They saw this, but it seemed to be following a black and very smooth object without lights. The jet fighter circled this thing.

Speed was estimated as some 250 mph as both objects moved over the house and away south towards the Sellafield nuclear plant. The electricity came back on about 20 minutes later.

Conclusion: Sharon Larkin argues this was a Night Hawk Stealth fighter seen side on. Possibly there was a target drone involved in a coastal exercise. If so, presumably, the power loss was completely coincidental.

Bubble, no squeak

Case 9913 24 November 1999 Flimby, Cumbria

Report by Sharon Larkin

Another from the Cumbrian wave. A group of witnesses waiting to go to the beach for the afternoon at 13 35 were stood near some tourists taking photographs of 'wind turbines'. All then watched as a big silver ball appeared over the New Balance Factory.

This object was surrounded by a white aura that moved across the sphere and gradually created an effect like an eclipse. Eventually the ball simply blended into the background sky and completely disappeared.

Although the tourists took several photographs of the object none of these seem to have come forward as yet. But Sharon notes that a couple of days earlier there had been a sighting in the same area of a flying bubble that ejected lots of little bubbles into the sky.

Conclusion: it seems likely the ball shape was a weather balloon, but the soap bubble UFO is more interesting; although there have been a few cases of this sort. One that springs to mind is the Werneth Low sighting of a bubble ejecting object Also the famous Goose Bay, Labrador case.

Curiouser and curiouser

Case 2000/7 25 August 2000 Helsby, Cheshire

Another encounter from 'Wonderland' - interestingly an area part dramatised in the new BBC TV cop series 'Merseybeat'. Basically a small region of northern Cheshire bordering the Mersey Estuary at Runcorn and involving the strip of land surrounding the M56 through Daresbury, Preston Brook and onto the brooding sandstone presence of Helsby Hill that overlooks the estuary. The term Wonderland applies as Charles Dodgson (alias Lewis Carroll) was born in Daresbury village. His fictional 'Wonderland' is curiously apt given the plethora of weird events that have been reported in this area.

Some cases are described in 'Mysteries of the Mersey'. Others - showing time distortion effects and a possible link to the linear particle accelerator located between Moore and Daresbury - are featured in 'Time Storms'

This latest case in a long line of activity was reported to me within hours by Jodrell Bank. The witness, V, was staying in a house on top of Helsby Hill in an attic room that gives a fine view over the estuary. At 1.20 am she saw a huge orange searchlight with 'sprouting flames' cross the field of view in total silence. Living herself on the flightpath into Manchester Airport she says this could not have been a plane - 'unless it was very low and in big trouble'. She braced herself for an explosion but none came.

Bemused she opened the attic window and gazed north over the Mersey and observed a brilliant white light somewhere in the direction of Warrington (NE). She believed this was the same object - despite its not similar appearance - and thus rejected any thought of an aircraft because it hovered until after 2 am. She left it still there and called Jodrell at breakfast time.

Conclusion: There was no police helicopter. Liverpool ATC say they did have an aircraft inbound during that hour, but it would not hover - nor did it use orange lights - and none had any trouble. But the flightpath into Speke (or John Lennon Airport as it is now named) is visible from the hill. I think these are separate phenomena (not one as V supposed). The orange light could well be a meteor, but I could find no reports of one and this would be surprising given its allegedly spectacular appearance, it may be possible that the aircraft lights were distorted by window glass to create the 'flames' effect. As for the hovering light, this was almost certainly a bright star in the pre dawn sky that generated a number of sightings this summer. I think this UFO will prove more chimera than Cheshire cat.

Stars in her eyes

Case 2001/1 13 January 2001 Macclesfield

Amateur astronomer (Ms K) called via Jodrell to report seeing something odd at 18.00 that night. She had failed to identify what it was.

Described as a 'huge star' with occasional red flashes it remained in one part of the sky but from time to time moved slightly in zig zags before coming to rest again. It faded and reappeared once but by 18.30 she left it still visible after giving up her efforts to understand what it was.

Conclusion: I think we can solve this one. Despite the astronomical familiarity of the witness her description is exactly that of a star planet displaying the autokinesis effect (the motion is caused by eye muscles and is not a movement of the object itself). In the west at that time venus was spectacularly bright exacerbated by ice crystals in the atmosphere. Indeed as Ms K had her sighting 10 miles west of me I was observing Venus through my telescope so know this was true that night. Ms K rejected my argument because she saw venus as well as the UFO. But she places venus too far north. In fact there was a bright star here quite near venus. I think she saw the star, assumed it was venus, then saw venus and assumed it was a UFO because she had already (if wrongly) identified venus. This may have major bearing on the Rendlesham Forest case. Here there were two lighthouses (Orford Ness and the Shipwash lightship) and some evidence that witnesses saw Shipwash, thought it was Orford Ness, then saw Orford Ness and thought it was a UFO because they had already located 'the' lighthouse. Did this same psychological trick recur above?

Snaefell sky fall

Case 2001/2 14 January 2001 Snaefell, I.O.M.

Thanks Gloria Dixon, Dave Clarke, Chris Rolfe

The Isle of Man, a British dependency, situated 60 miles off the Lancashire coast, is an ancient kingdom with Viking heritage. A popular holiday isle and tax haven (though British in most respects it has its own parliament). It is also rich in folklore and modern supernatural stories,

On this winter Sunday it became the latest location for a 'sky crash' mystery with many similarities to the October 1996 event on the Isle of Lewis (see 'The UFOs that Never Were' for a full report on this case).

Initial media reports told only part of the tale and then dried up. But further work (especially by Chris Rolfe) uncovered clues as to what might really have happened. From a synthesis of various sources here is the story.

At 16.30 on this Sunday afternoon police on the northern side of the island received reports that something had appeared over Snaefell (the highest mountain on the island). It had fallen from the sky after it struck a telecommunications mast before disappearing. Police took these stories seriously because they knew that there had been a sudden power loss from the tower. Emergency service broadcasts had to use a back up communication all that day.

Because there was a very real possibility that a light aircraft had crashed various bodies were immediately called in. As darkness fell the coastguard, civil defence, fire service and an RAF

search and rescue helicopter team from Valley on Anglesey were soon on their way to investigate.

The search operation ran for six hours and was temporarily called off at 23.20 -resuming on the Monday morning. After another four hours - and with power now restored to the telecommunications mast - the search was ended at 12.30 (exactly 20 hours after the 'crash').

There was damage to the mast, but this was relatively minor and easily repaired. But there was no wreckage. Possibilities included a firework explosion as a prank or coincidental damage, such as through a lightning strike (although there had been no storm that weekend - in fact weather was very cold and clear).

The police had launched an appeal on the island for witnesses to come forward. There were three main sightings of the events. One man described seeing what he thought was a hang glider over the summit that afternoon. It moved very slowly near the tower. A man at Jurby described seeing what he thought was a distress flare (a rocket like fire in the sky) fall to earth.

But the primary witnesses (who first alerted the police) were two horseriders at Lonan who had seen an object like a microlite near the mast and say it seemed to strike the tower and then spiral to earth in a trail of smoke. It was these women's excellent eyewitness accounts that provoked the initial fear of a plane crash.

After a day of fruitless searching police inspector Carolyn Kinrade said they had found no evidence that anything had come down on the mountain (from which on clear days all the British kingdoms - Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England - can be seen from the peak). Still persuaded that something must have happened to cause the very real damage and provoke convincing reports of a crashing aerial object, Kinrade urged anyone who was *"involved but left the scene"* to come forward. She added *"They are not in trouble. We just need to know what happened and make sure that everyone is okay."*

Officially that was the end of the matter. Nobody else came forward to say they saw anything in this sparsely populated area with very few out of season tourists. But according to Chris Rolfe there was a more sinister side to the case - one that involved suspicions of a cover up and frustrated police officers who felt they were not being told all they needed to know

Rolfe was approached by a source involved with the MoD who said this affair was linked to the Isle of Lewis case - which it certainly resembles in many respects (see NUN 177). According to him a Royal Navy frigate was rerouted to join the hunt because the object that crashed in both of these incidents was an electronically controlled drone - part of a joint US/UK military project from a base in Scotland.

There were certainly suspicions of something like this back in 1996. A massive naval search occurred as the object then clearly had fallen into the sea. That was less obvious in this new case (although after striking a glancing blow on the mast the pilotless drone may have continued on a little to fall in the sea near Jurby -9 miles north of Snaefell). In the Lewis case there was some involvement by US weapons lab - Sandia - noted for developing sophisticated military equipment - although David Clarke's then investigation suggested this was less than was being speculated and purely incidental.

Again Rolfe was told that a major research and development programme was behind the thing that hit the I O M mast. The drone was recovered and it had guidance problems. All those aware of what happened were sworn to secrecy and those with no need to know in the search operation were stonewalled.

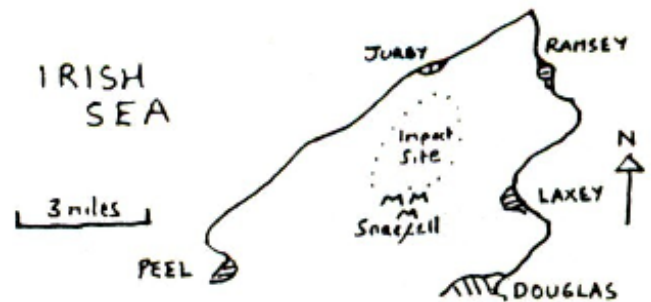
In June Rolfe obtained an interview with one of the women horseriders who triggered the alert. She confirmed that the object was about the size and shape of a microlite and after hitting the mast fell out of the sky on the northern side of Snaefell (meaning it could have hit land or made it to the coast). There was a thick pall of smoke near the mast until nearly 17.00.

The witnesses assisted the rescue operation by going with police to the top of Snaefell and pointing out the direction that the object fell. At 23 30 they were told that the search had been called off until morning. But then on the morning of 16 January (about 24 hours after the search was supposedly called off for good) one of the two women was visited at work by police. She again was asked to take them to the spot where they had been riding and from the distance between this point and Snaefell (about 3 miles) police told her they could eliminate a model aircraft as cause.

Apparently this was a working theory but one would be invisible so far from the peak. Of course, ironically, a military target drone is, in effect, a super advanced (and much larger) model aircraft. So maybe they were not that wrong after all!

Allegedly the police told this woman that they felt they were not being told everything by

'those in charge' but had been 'informed' that a model plane had caused the damage to the tower. Police confirmed this story to Rolfe but admitted they 'had not interviewed, let alone prosecuted, any owner of such a hypothetical model. They had just quietly dropped the case. This story about checking visibility and distance with the horserider after the search had ended rather suggests that investigating officers were having problems accepting the official line they were being fed.



Case 2001/4 14 March 2001
Altrincham, Cheshire

Mr S was travelling through Aktrincham heading home to Timperley at 16.40 when he spotted a conical object in the sky. As he was driving he could only glance at this for a few seconds but says it had no air stream around it but did have 'turbulence'. Although he told me he did not think this was an aircraft I suspect that has to be the cause. In July 2001 it was revealed that the skies over this area are the most crowded in the whole of Europe given the level of air traffic from Manchester, plus all the overflights from mainland Europe to the US. In any given minute at least one aircraft is apparently always visible *somewhere* in the skies of this area!

Return of the 1896 Airship wave!

This bizarre story would not have been out of place 105 years earlier during the famous airship wave of the American mid west. A characteristic of the wild tales then (some just made up and others based loosely on genuine observations) was that the press had a field day -jazzing up the stories and taking liberties with the truth to exaggerate and invent a profusion of anecdotal tales. These included the infamous 'cownapping' saga where an airship supposedly grappled cattle into the air (a

wild hoax) and the distorted version of a possibly real (but far more minor) story that led to the idea that a dead alien from an airship was buried in Aurora, Texas!

On 3 July 2001 reports were made that provoked global media stories that just seem to have blossomed as they spread across the Atlantic.

Here is what was really reported

At about 11 am a long silver cigar shape was spotted drifting over the rooftops of Liverpool. It was seen from several offices as it was heading north and was also witnessed on a number of other occasions during the afternoon - along the Lancashire coast and as far as the Ribble estuary and last seen around 8 pm a mile or so out to sea near Blackpool.

As this was a sunny day many witnesses said they saw a shadow passing over them first and then looked up to see the 'zeppelin' drifting silently away. Estimates of its size varied up to 300 feet and Liverpool airport were swamped with calls reporting it. But nothing was on radar. Some witnesses were terrified that the object was so low it would strike the high rise offices they were in. But it passed over safely.

So much for the reality. Then the media stories go on from here into territory that was very familiar from the 19th century yarns. How much of what follows is true is anybody's guess!

Evidently a radio expert from Hunts Cross supposedly picked up a radio broadcast from the 'UFO' using a parabolic dish. He alleges that male and female voices were heard chattering in a foreign language that he could not understand. However, a Japanese student did identify it as his native language. The Japanese UFO-nauts were discussing wind speeds, altitudes and other details of flying and taking pictures - saying things like

'We are over the river'. Other comments included: 'The docks...closer'.... 'If I can get closer I can scan in detail .' and ' I'll go down anyway and if it gets risky I'll come up and head northwest'.

Riveting stuff! But equally inane conversations in foreign languages were a feature of several of the airship wave sightings.

So what *really* happened? Tony Eccles of MARA tells me 'This was an IFO not a UFO' Many of the stories told about it were just plain daft as people seem to have had run with the basic plot to turn it into a big deal. But in reality it was a blimp - an advertising airship - that merely went out of control and adrift it was literally floating over Lancashire until it went out into the Irish Sea. It was flying at a relatively low height and for this reason was not picked up on radar at Liverpool airport, who were aware of its potential hazard to air traffic.

One wonders if similar things occurred in the 1896 and later European waves - a simple story then transformed into the tales we now see.

Country Music Rocks

Thanks to geologist Harry Mason for this extraordinary report. At 10.45 on Friday 6 July 2001 the town of Hartsville, Tennessee was struck by some mysterious energy blast. There was no conducive weather at the time (clear sky, calm conditions no sign of any electrical storms) but the bolt of high power came from the sky.

The local country music radio station took the brunt of the 'attack' and was completely knocked out for a time. But the effects were noted over several blocks of the town. All phones were destroyed in one area, all ISDN and computers were fried. Several power transformers were blown up by a large energy surge (one even caught fire and sent smoke billowing). But nobody saw any lightning (bolt or ball) that created this devastation. However, perhaps the scariest part was the discovery at the back of the radio station that a number of birds had literally been frazzled and fallen dead to earth. The severest damage was to their wings, tail and feet. A number of birds did survive the blast but all these were badly burnt. Local experts noted that these birds were too small to have been burned by contact with a power line and there were too many for this to have been a very local effect.

Dr Mason advises that radio workers report hearing a sudden loud electrical hum that rose to overload and then the power just went. Electrical experts had not come across anything like it before; although they have had previous difficulties with strange power surges and computer malfunctions. The power company (Tri County Electric) had even set monitor equipment to try to find the cause, but failed. They were mystified by this new energy blast effect, too. Many computers that were affected were not even plugged in. The energy seems to have swamped all electrical equipment regardless by a form of induction.

Rumours around the town put the blame on an old power plant sited nearby. Officially the nuclear plant was abandoned when still unfinished and is now used only for storage purposes, at least so the government claim. But callers to the radio station allege that they have heard strange humming noises from it and have witnessed black unmarked helicopters landing in the early hours, plus sightings of large Hercules transport planes and also at least one flying triangle that reputedly hovered above the cooling towers. Yet there is no airfield visible near to the plant

One witness said of the humming noise 'you can feel it' and 'it makes the hair stand up on your neck' But the energy sensation comes from all around and cannot be pinpointed There are also claims that close to the plant florescent light tubes illuminate themselves as if being charged up with some energy field. A pungent ozone like smell has also appeared.

There have been reports of waves of mysterious illness, including disabling muscle spasms and acute migraine like headaches striking out of the blue

Over the 72 hours following this event there were other strange reports, including unexplained explosions in the sky over nearby Franklin on the Saturday and Monday. Also very unusual atmospheric electricity was recorded in Alabama. Hartsville. is, by the way, not far from Hopkinsville, just across the Kentucky state line. This was the scene of a famous encounter with goblins back in 1955

This energy burst has comparisons with UFO events such as the Risley, Cheshire episode of March 1978 (when a power surge blew up a vans radio transceiver and may have affected local wildlife similarly). And it has more than a few echoes of the odd events in and around Rendlesham Forest over the years. Can it be just coincidence that at Rendlesham there is a nuclear power plant and alleged experimental radar work And the Risley episode occurred literally next to the security fence leading into a UK Atomic Energy complex?

This Just in:

Money seems to be talking in the Derbyshire Peak District. But exactly what it is saying may be another matter! The Matlock area has been subjected to a wave of sightings since last autumn. Whilst the media love it and one UFO expert is quoted warning that the events can 'give people mental problems' other locals joke about dirty windscreens causing spaceships to get lost. And others wonder about the tourist potential in an area that has little local work left (apart from appearing as film sets and extras for 'Peak Practice'). In other words a pretty routine wave here again (as so often) is adopted by factions of society for their own reasons.

A careful appraisal is still being carried out, but various sightings worry me. The village of Bonsall, where bright lights have been seen, takes the brunt. But I have little doubt from hearing some of the tales that most are soluble.

Witnesses seem to be seeing bright stars, planets, meteors, aircraft heading into Manchester and occasional military activity. There may be a few interesting cases mixed in, too, but I doubt most sightings are inexplicable

However, the world and its cat is about to discover Bonsall because a woman there has taken an 'astonishing' video of a three mile wide UFO and this has allegedly stunned US experts. Taken at 21.15 on 5 October 2000 the video depicts a huge circular blob with a bite taken out Now a US TV network has paid £20,000 for it.

Well, good luck to the witness and maybe it will prove its scientific worth. But I would not bet on it. Yes, the witness clearly saw something and her video shows this. But the key to me is that it was a big stationary glow - like venus. And the huge ringed mass on film was seen 'through' a video camera. Investigation may prove otherwise but I suspect this shape is the creation of the auto focus of the camera struggling to lock onto a distant light source. This can reveal part of the internal lens that turns the filmed light into a blob with an odd shape.

No doubt I must have this wrong. Surely no TV crew would pay that much for an easily resolved case? Although it does *look* good if you don't fret over answers - maybe what matters in TV terms. If this proves a bad surmise, I will be delighted to say so in the next NUN.

Coming Attractions:

3 September (BUFORA) Brenda Butler
(Recent weird events in Rendlesham Forest)

1 October (BUFORA) Steve Gerrard & Steve Rider
(UFOs/ghosts in the Southampton area)

BUFORA lectures are at the Quaker International Centre, 1 Byng Place near the British Museum. Attendance £4.50 (£2 discount for members)

Groups in Northern Britain

SPI SCOTLAND	Linlithgow
SEMR	Bridge of Allan
Haunted Scotland	Kilmarnock
SRUFO	East Calder
NUFORI	Newcastle
Connect	Ikley
UFO Network	Leeds
YUFOS	Sheffield
NLUFOIG	Morecambe
LAPIS	Blackpool
MARA	Liverpool
NARO	Gatley
PRA	Derby
SUFOG	Rugeley
IUFOPRA	Dublin