

# Magonia

NUMBER 29 APRIL 1988

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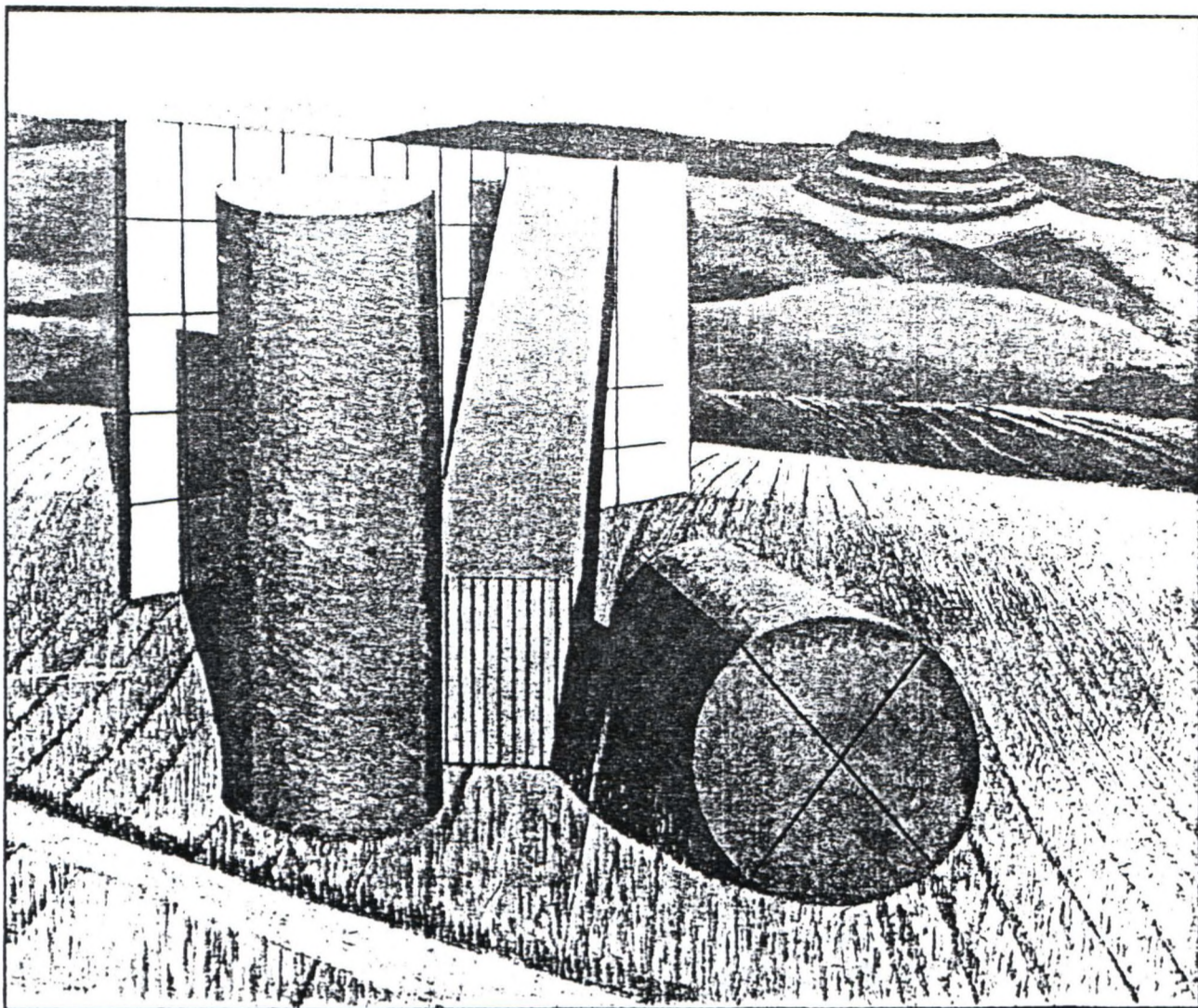
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## MAGONIA EDITOR IN ALIEN BONKING HORROR!!

An invitation to talk on UFO abductions to 50 saucer buffs turned into a night of horror for Editor John Rimmer.

Speaking at a BUFORA meeting in the plush UN-style lecture theatre of London's prestigious Business School, delight turned to terror as Rimmer found himself confronted by an ace news-hound from David Sullivan's notorious *Sunday Sport*. (Note to American readers: the *Sunday Sport* is a weekly which makes the *National Enquirer* look like the *Christian Science Monitor*, featuring text and pictures more usually associated with cellophane wrapped publications on 42nd St.)

It is believed the reporter burst his way through the tight security surrounding the meeting by forcing money into the BUFORA cash box.

"I was trying to give a serious talk examining the psychodynamics of the abduction experience - I had to mention Budd Hopkins and the Tujunga Canyon case; I had no choice," an ashen-faced John Rimmer told *Magonia*.

"Of course, once I'd done that all hell broke loose in the interval. He was asking me if

I thought the aliens were breeding with us. I tried to explain the complex psychological and sociological factors, but by then I could see the gleam in his eyes.

"I wanted to lay a false trail and told him about the Raelians - I thought their 'sensual meditation' would be right up the *Sport's* street. I told him I was 35, so that when the story came out I could say 'Look, it's a load of rubbish, they've even got my age wrong'. But he wasn't listening. He told me he had got to go and interview a paedophile, then left while I was still reeling."

Our Man in the Dark Glasses and Dirty Raincoat bought the following week's *Sunday Sport* to find this story:

"Bonking beings from outer space have got their love lines in a tangle. Shocked UFO-spotters (Shock a BUFORA audience, you must be joking - Ed,) have been told how amorous aliens anxious to breed with us are going for the WRONG targets. In one recently reported abduction sexy spacemen on the look-out for nookie beamed up a lesbian by mistake, according to author and researcher John Rimmer"

Oh, well, at least he did buy a copy of *Alien Abductions*, and spelt my name right! ...

Number 29, April 1988  
Incorporating MUF0B 78

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Magonia is available by exchange with other publications, or on subscription at the following rates for one year (four issues):

United Kingdom	£3.00
Europe & Irish Rep.	£4.00
USA (Surface)	\$8.00
USA (Air mail)	\$10.00
Other Countries (Surface)	£4.00

Please note that US subscriptions *must* be paid for in dollar bills. Due to exorbitant bank charges we are unable to accept cheques drawn on American banks.

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MAGONIA is an independent journal devoted to a broad examination of anomalous phenomena and their interaction with society and the individual. It is published independently by the Editors and has no connection with any other magazine or group. Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily shared by the Editors.

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PETER  
ROGERSON'S  
NORTHERN  
ECHOES

Last year's Channel Four documentary on the paranormal (called, with stunning originality *Is There Anybody There*, and scheduled with equal imaginative flair for transmission on Hallowe'e'n) was an example of many of the problems which face public discussion of our topics. True believers who relate various wonders in confidential whispers, versus the sceptics who are out to disabuse the savages of their superstitions. The programme in question came out clearly in favour of the sceptics.

Listening to your average CSI-COPER telling us all to shape up and live in the real world of physical science, I was struck by a feeling of *deja-vu*: where had I heard those hectoring, nannyish tones before? Surely in the speeches of Thatcherite politicians, 'realist' economists, etc., telling us to live in the real world of the immutable laws of economics. It is clear that what is objectionable to some people about the paranormal is its promise of something for nothing. "There is no such thing as a free lunch", says the realist economist, but the paranormal offers us this, and free energy, and free communications, too. It brings a promise of breaking the economic laws of the capitalist system and factory discipline.

Don't let this fool you into thinking that your Brigantian correspondent has joined the ranks of the 'believers': I can

just as easily detect in the well-modulated tones of, say, Kathleen Raine and the old SPR establishment, the voice of the landed gentry sneering at grammar-school types and 'mere tradesmen' who, horror of horrors, actually got oil on their hands.

Why do both sides irritate one so? Surely it is because they both present a face of total complacency as to the rightness - and the righteousness - of their cause. Both display that mixture of smiling condescension and withering pity that makes your's truly want to bang heads together and say, "well things just aren't that simple". An honest documentary would have to present the sort of back and forth argument which seems to characterise this field. But, according to the obscure myths and rituals of television producers (on the 'intellectual' Channel Four as well as the abysmal *Kilroy* show), that "just isn't good television, darling".

-- ... --

I suppose in a vague way this ties in with the question as to why the 'new ufologies' appeared during the time of the 'youth revolution' in the 60's. One possibility is that alien UFOs were parental, or at least authority, symbols, (Freudians may of course point to some interesting symbolism in the current crashed saucer syndrome - parental figures refuse to tell the children the truth about where foetus-like aliens - intruders - are being hidden). This symbolism had arisen through the 50's: UFOs as the manifestations of powerful external forces which curtailed human autonomy and replaced God as the means of disciplining a recalcitrant humanity, as in that central exposition of the UFO myth, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*.

Surely part of the reasons for the rise of 'new' ufologies was the mood of the sixties: "No bloody alien's going to tell me what to do!" - a reaction to the benevolent autocrats which characterised the previous decades's UFO visitors. The certainties of the Space Brothers vanished in the sixties, along with many other certainties.

It seems no surprise if that was the case that the more conservative, authoritarian climate of the eighties sees the revival of the ETH. ...

# NOTES TOWARDS A SOCIAL HISTORY OF LEY-HUNTING



## Roger Sandell

In 1985, during the confrontations between the police and supporters of the Stonehenge Festival one newspaper reported that to prevent gatherings at any alternative place, police were guarding other sites "where ley lines intersect". Bizarre as this item is (one wonders if police chiefs perused back issues of *The Ley Hunter*, or whether the Police National Computer was programmed to find such sites) it is nonetheless a testimony to widespread familiarity with the ley line theory.

Briefly, the idea, first propounded by Alfred Watkins, a Herefordshire amateur archaeologist, in the 1920s holds that the early inhabitants of Britain deliberately placed mounds, camps and standing stones across the landscape in straight lines. As time went by later structures were added to these sites. Some Roman roads followed the leys, Christian churches were built on what had been ley markers in order to take advantage of the age and sanctity already attached to them, and the keeps of mediaeval castles were sited on mounds that had marked leys millenia before. As a result it is still possible to trace these alignments on maps.

When Watkins first propounded these ideas in *The Old Straight Track*, the archaeological journal *Antiquity* refused to accept advertisements for its publication. The reaction of professional

archaeologists has remained dismissive ever since, apart from an occasional willingness to consider the concept provided the claimed alignment is short, consists entirely of indisputably prehistoric sites visible from each other, and can be shown to have an astronomical significance (and provided the actual word 'ley' is not used to describe it).

The credibility of the theory in the eyes of the professionals is not enhanced by other beliefs held by the ley hunters. Watkins held that ley lines marked ancient trackways or in some cases sightlines of astronomical significance (at least in his published work: it has been claimed that privately he held more occult ideas), but most contemporary ley hunters see them as being linked with mysterious but beneficial 'earth forces'.

When Aimé Michel claimed to have discovered similar

straight lines linking UFO manifestations in the 1950s attempts were soon made to link the two concepts. The 1960s saw a long series of mostly low-grade but for a time highly publicised UFO events around Warminster, an area rich in prehistoric remains, which seemed to add credibility to the idea. This soon became part of a body of fringe beliefs associated with the counter-culture of sixties Britain.

In recent years computer technology has been brought to bear on the ley line question. Bob Forrest, mathematician and Fortean researcher, has attempted to establish whether leys really do occur beyond chance expectancy and has concluded that, while this is an adequate explanation in most cases, there are one or two where chance does not seem probable. However, it is not very likely that statistical arguments will resolve this controversy any more than similar statistical arguments have resolved the ESP controversy.

What is certain however is that the idea of leys has an appeal that expands far beyond those who subscribe to *The Ley*

Hunter or attend the annual ley hunters moot. In 1974 a *Sunday Times* journalist, having read *The Old Straight Track* but apparently unaware of anything that had happened in the field of ley hunting since then, wrote a piece on the subject for the paper's leisure section. The result was an enormous postbag as readers sent in their own discoveries. Some time after an item about the subject on the now-defunct TV programme *Nationwide* produced a similar large response from viewers. What is the secret of its appeal?

Part of the answer may be found by going back to Alfred Watkins himself. By trade the owner of a flour mill, his spare time was filled with a wide variety of activities. In addition to work as a local councillor, Justice of the Peace and school governor, his interests included not merely archaeology, but bee-keeping, conjuring and photography (he invented several photographic devices, and some of his photographs of rural life are still on display at Hereford Museum). The selection of epigraphs at the head of the chapters of *The Old Straight Track* testify to his wide range of reading beyond these subjects.

It was wealthy amateurs of this nature who in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had laid the foundations of archaeology. Aristocratic collectors built up their own collections of artifacts, and

had no compunction about vandalising or looting sites in order to do so. Nineteenth century capitalists had staked their claim to being part of the cultural elite by engaging in similar activities. At the same time, some of the Anglican clergy, isolated from large parts of the life of their rural parishes, had done much of the basic work of English local archaeology, on the same way as others had made a major contribution to English natural history.

Ministry of Works and the National Trust were playing an increasing rôle in the conservation of historical monuments, limiting the scope for independent amateur investigation. The new climate in archaeology found its most influential expression in Professor Gordon Childe's *What Happened in History*, a major study partly influenced by Marxism which attempted the task of a detailed reconstruction of life and culture in Neolithic Europe.

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There can be few readers of *The Old Straight Track* who have not been intrigued enough to take a ruler to their local Ordnance Survey map to see if any leys leap to the eye.

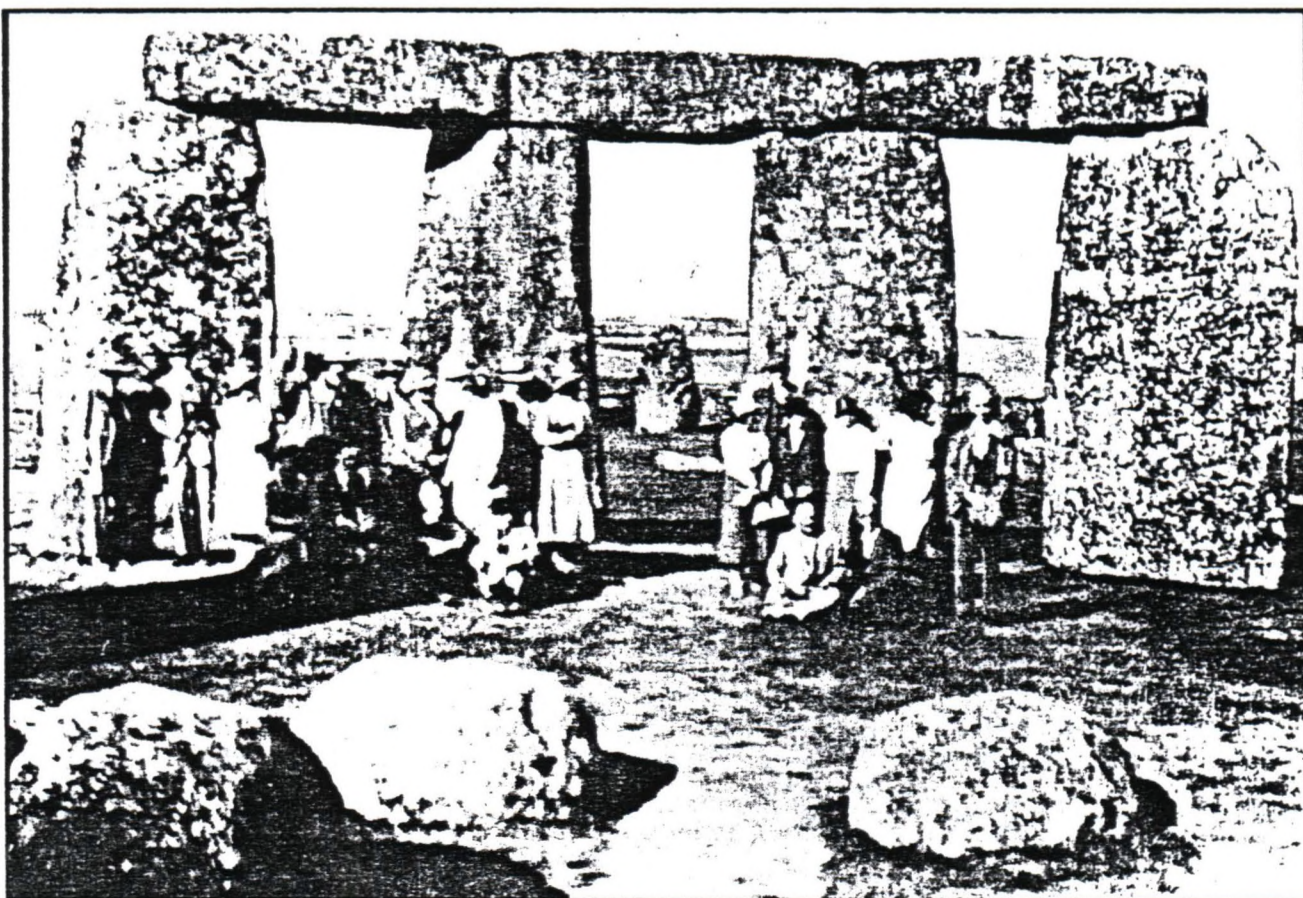
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When *The Old Straight Track* was written, in the twenties, the scope for archaeology of this type was becoming much more limited. The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 preserved many of the older traditions. The aristocratic Lord Carnarvon had ventured out to an imperial setting to unearth a fabulous treasure replete, at least in the popular imagination, with associations with curses and ancient magic. But this was a last triumph, as archaeology was becoming more the preserve of the academic professional. Techniques drawn from the physical sciences were increasingly being used to enlarge archaeological knowledge. In Britain the

In this climate, ley hunting seemed to offer once again a form of archaeology that the amateur could participate in fully. There can be few readers of *The Old Straight Track* who have not been intrigued enough to take a ruler to their local Ordnance Survey map to see if any leys leap to the eye. The appeal of Watkin's book to his fellow amateurs was such that it soon led to the foundation of an Old Straight Track Club, whose members exchanged discoveries and held outings to significant sites throughout the thirties.

On a wider level, Watkin's ideas seem to be in keeping with the changing perception of the countryside. On the one hand Britain was becoming increasingly more urbanised, and economic changes were making the countryside more marginal to the national economy. On the other hand the motor car, the rural hotel and the branch line were making the countryside more accessible to the town dweller. As a result the countryside was being seen more as a timeless haven away from immediate social concerns, rather than a place where people actually lived and worked. A development which was assisted by the fact that agriculture was becoming less labour-intensive, and hence rural labour became less visible to the outsider.

These changed perceptions of the countryside were becoming more central to definitions of the nation. Before 1914 Britain had gloried in its imperial, military and



Members of the Old Straight Track Club at Stonehenge

financial might, but in the post-World War I era all these things seemed under threat, and the picture of Britain depicted in the photographic guide books and travel posters produced for a new mass audience in the twenties, is of a gentle, tranquil, unchanging rural land - a vision which had sustained many amid the horrors of the Western Front.

It is easy to see how lay hunting fitted in with such perceptions. It presented a countryside whose continuity and unchanging nature were emphasised. When churches, castles, manor houses, farm ponds or stretches of road were found on ley lines it became proof that they represented continuities going right back to prehistoric times. History and nature became fused with each other as human constructions were found to be sited on leys that stretched from one hilltop to another, and notches or indentations on hillsides turned out to be sighting markers for leys. The countryside was transformed into a place of mystery, in which a mundane and unnoticed landmark might be the key to a great pattern stretching back to prehistory.

Viewed in this way, ley hunting seems to offer interesting parallels to what was going on in British art at the time. The twenties and thirties saw a revival of English landscape painting. However the themes of the paintings were very different from the eighteenth century when landscape painting depicted the estates and hunting parks of the aristocracy, or the work of nineteenth century painters depicting the world of rural labour. The new landscape painters like Paul Nash used the techniques of modern art that had developed in Europe, such as cubism and surrealism, to present visions of the English countryside in which everyday landscapes become transformed into mysterious places, or reduced to semi-abstract patterns. This work reached a massive audience as a result of its use in advertising campaigns for petrol (a long running Shell campaign) and the railway companies. One of Nash's paintings, *Equivalents for the Megaliths* shows huge abstract shapes arbitrarily placed in the middle of an English rural landscape seems especially to evoke the world of ley hunting. (Front cover)

Interest in the concept of leys waned during the nineteen-forties and fifties. Its revival to an even larger audience than ever began in the early sixties with a pamphlet, *Skyways and Landmarks* by Tony Wedd, a designer, art teacher and ex-RAF pilot, which for the first time made the link between leys and UFOs. A slight work of just a few pages, it nonetheless attracted some attention in the ufological field, stimulating a revival of interest in the whole ley concept, which was to cumulate in the later sixties, with leys being incorporated into the culture of the sixties underground. Sites like Avebury and Stonehenge became centres of pilgrimage. The long out of print *Old Straight Track* was reissued in paperback.

Tony Wedd, who helped spark off this revival, was a very different figure from Alfred Watkins. By the time he wrote *Skyways and Landmarks* in 1961 he was already an exponent of many of the beliefs and practices that would later in the decade become identified with the underground, including anarchism, free child rearing, cannabis smoking, organic gardening, and fringe

medicine. He opens the pamphlet by making a contrast between the presumed benevolence of the space visitors, terrestrial economic crisis, the arms race, road deaths and commercial advertising.

The disappointment with the ideas of progress and modernisation that Wedd voiced would emerge as a major social and political force in the sixties, not merely amid the underground, but on a wider level in many conservation and ecological movements. Against this background it is easy to see the appeal of the ley line as an alternative relationship between humanity and the past, between nature and culture. The invisible lines spanning the countryside linking the landmarks of one era to another, joining the holy places of Christianity to those of Paganism, taking in sites like the old stone circles and hillside chalk figures, that themselves seem to lie on the boundaries between the natural and artificial, provided this new consciousness with a potent symbol of integration. They were a sign that a life in harmony with the natural environment was not only possible but a secret that our



Leslie Ward, *The Long Man on the Downs*. Woodcut, c.1930.

"Hillside chalk figures that themselves lie on the boundaries between the natural and artificial"

earliest ancestors had possessed and we might regain.

Many years before, W. H. Auden had presented a similar vision of the landscape in terms that, consciously or otherwise, precisely echo *The Old Straight Track*:

Across the Great Schism, through our whole landscape  
Ignoring God's vicar and God's ape

Under their noses, unsuspected  
The Old Man's road runs where it did

When a light subsoil, a simple ore  
Where still in vogue, true to his wherefore

By styles, gates, hedgegaps it goes  
Over ploughlands, woodlands, cow meadows

Past shrines to a cosmological myth  
No heretic today would be caught dead with

Near hill top rings that were so safe then  
Now easily scaled by small children

Shepherds use bits in the high mountains  
Hamlets use stretches for lovers' lanes,

Then through cities threads its odd way  
Now with gutters, a thieves' ally

Now with green lamp-posts and white curb  
The smart crescent of a high toned suburb

Giving wide berth to a new cathedral  
Running smack through a new town hall

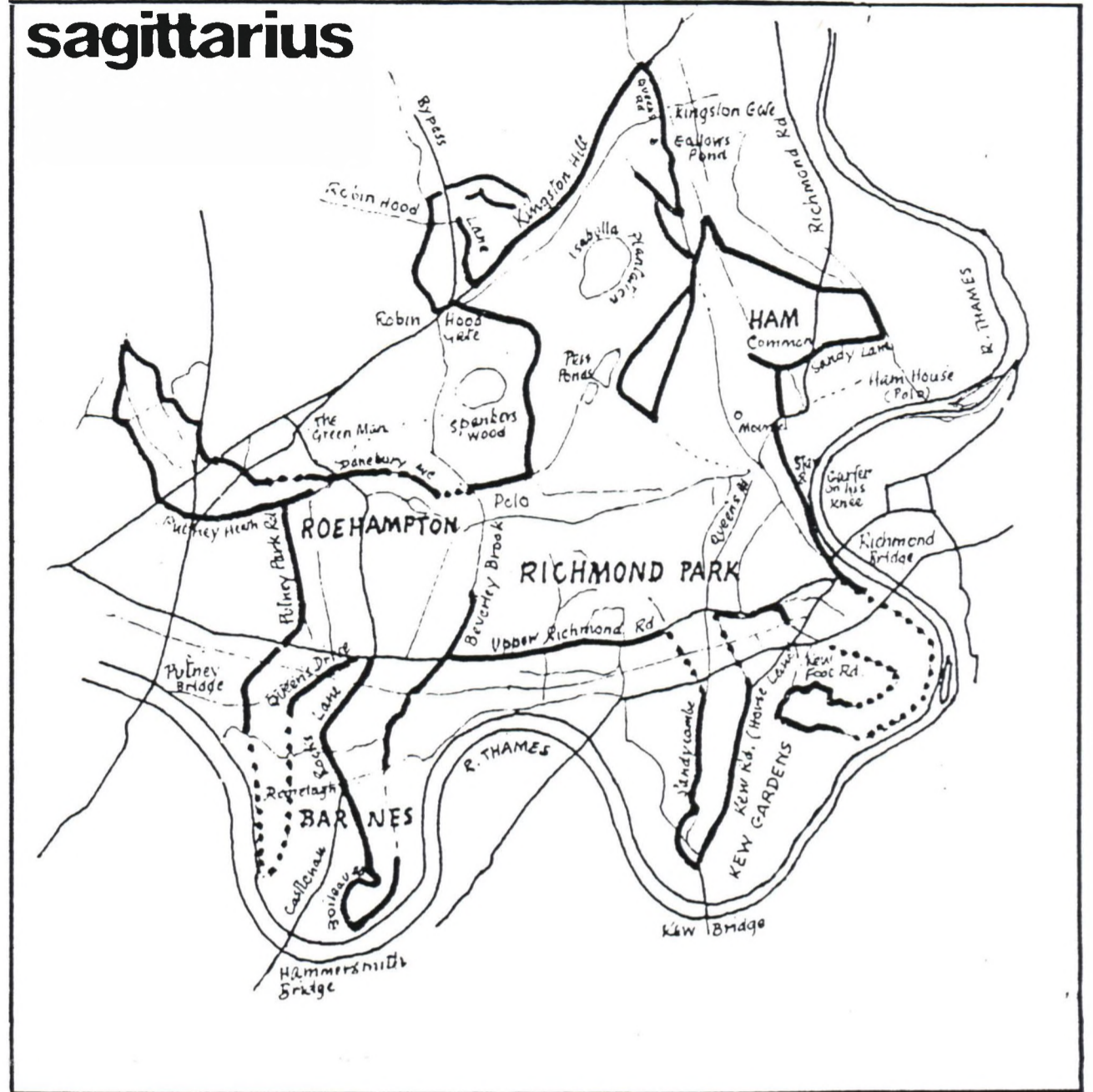
Unlookable for by logic or by guess  
Yet some strike it and are struck fearless

No life can know it but no life that sticks to this course can be made captive

And those that know it are not stopped at borders by guards of some theocrat,

(Auden; *The Old Man's Road*, quoted in Janet & Colin Bord's *'Mysterious Britain'*).

With the revival of interest in leys came a revival of other fringe ideas about Britain's past. In particular Glastonbury in Somerset was revived as a place of pilgrimage, with its legends of the foundation of its church by Joseph of Arimathea and the bringing of the Holy Grail to Britain. Like many legends they meant different things to different audiences. To Catholics, Glastonbury's traditions and its Abbey ransacked by Henry VIII symbolised the ancient continuity of Christianity in Britain that had been interrupted by



The Sagittarius figure from Mary Caine's Kingston Zodiac - *Magonia* is published from within this sign!

the Reformation. To the Anglican, Glastonbury's traditions of Joseph of Arimathea gave English Christianity a lineage stretching back to the New Testament, independent of missionaries from Rome. To occultists, the mysteries of the Grail and the presence of a Christian shrine in an area rich in the traces of pre-history were signs of the continuity of Christian and Pagan beliefs.

To these the late nineteen-sixties added a revival of another theory first proposed by an archaeological amateur in the twenties - Katherine Maltwood's Glastonbury Zodiac, the belief that trackways, roads and field boundaries around Glastonbury had been shaped in prehistoric times to form representations of the signs of the zodiac miles long.

Not only was the Glastonbury Zodiac revived in the late sixties, but other zodiacs were discovered inscribed across the English landscape. The most detailed exposition

of any of these has been earth mysteries researcher Mary Caine's Kingston Zodiac, covering a large area of south and west London. It is not necessary to be a believer in earth zodiacs or to be resident within the Zodiac (as are two of *Magonia's* editors) to find a fascination in Mary Caine's exposition as she finds traces of zodiac tradition in pub signs and street names on housing estates or amid derelict industrial areas. At one point she quotes a snatch of poetry which might serve as an epigraph for the whole earth mysteries and ley hunting movement:

The angels keep their ancient places  
Turn but a stone and you will start a wing  
Tis but you and your estranged faces  
That miss the many splendoured thing.

If Alfred Watkins failed to win orthodox archaeologists over to his comparatively conservative presentation of his ideas, Tony Wedd or Mary Caine's ideas are too far away from any seriously received notions of prehistory to attain any consideration from established

archaeologists. Perhaps it is more illuminating to see such writers are visionaries capable of creating symbols that for many people have given a new meaning to the landscape and the environment. Certainly Alfred Watkins describes how the concept of ley lines came to him in one visionary moment, and his description of the lines is at times lyrical in style:

Imagine a fairy chain stretched from mountain peak to mountain peak as far as the eye could reach and paid out until it touched the high places of the earth . . . then visualise a mound, earthwork or clump of trees planted on these high points and in the valley other mounds ringed round with water to be seen from a distance. Then great standing stones brought to mark the way at intervals . . . Here and there a beacon fire to lay out the track . . . with ponds dug to form reflecting points on the beacon tracks so it might be checked once a year when the beacon was fired on the traditional line.

It is perhaps significant that Tony Wedd was an art teacher, a field in which Mary Caine and Paul Devereux, the leading contemporary writer on leys, have both worked. For, considered as a symbol, the ley bears a strong affinity with some of the major themes of modern art. The surrealist idea of the found object, the work of art created by a random process sometimes making arbitrary connections, and the idea of conceptual art, the school that seeks to divorce art from its associations with purely technical skills and create a work that exists as far as possible simply as a concept, might both provide a frame of reference for ley hunters. In recent years the Californian artist Robert Long has experimented with creating works of art like fences kilometers long hung with various materials that, in their scale and placing in the landscape resemble the leys.

If the ley hunters are right and some of their lines really were placed there in the remote past, perhaps they are neither trackways, astronomical sightlines nor channels for earth energy, but simply early works of art, showing that the concept of the straight line across the landscape fascinated Britain's early inhabitants as much as some of their descendants. . . .

Philip Heselton's sympathetic biography, *Tony Wedd, New Age Pioneer*, is published by Northern Earth Mysteries (£3.00).



# THE CREATIVE FIRE

## Martin Kottmeyer

The theatre of the UFO phenomenon is a manifestation for the drive for creative expression. This should have been obvious to me when I wrote *Break a Leg*; but somehow it slid me by and I ended up saying applause was the driving end of the UFO phenomenon. The error is forgiveable. John L. Caughey in his illuminating study of the prevalence of fantasy in everyday life, *Imaginary Social Worlds*, points out that recognition as a media hero is one of the great American Vices and a repeated theme running through the fantasies of most people. Even if UFO percipients are merely ghost-writing for the ufologists and retain the customary anonymity, the knowledge that their story received acceptance could safely fill the needs of such a fantasy.

I accept this was unduly cynical. I forgot the creative urge can exist in a vacuum. John Rimmer's recent essay 'Levels of Mystification' reminded me how novelists and artists continue to create in the face of scant rewards, virtual silence, and even critical rejection. Artists themselves attest to the primary role of pleasing their own aesthetic sensibilities as a measure of greatness. The work comes from deep inside, sometimes fully formed, sometimes fighting to shape itself as it finds expression in the outer world.

Rimmer conjectured that abductions might be a manifestation of this compelling drive to create. Discussing the Avely abduction he remarked on how the incident seemed to unleash repressed creative impulses in the central characters. John became a sculptor; Elaine re-kindled an interest in learning she had before she married. This observation suggested a testable hypothesis. If abductions are the result of a seething desire for creative self-expression, we might see this desire manifest itself in other aspects of the lives of abductees. We would predict a tendency for the abductees to be painters, writers and involved in creative enterprises more often than the general population.

I did a casual survey of published abduction accounts to see if this could be true. I came away with an impressive tally of 18 abductees having artistic backgrounds out of a population of 55. This does not even take into account that some of those 55 lack any personal backgrounds in their description and, on methodological grounds should probably not have even been included.

Betty Hill, as a youth, was a voracious reader and won contests, spelling bees and even dramatic rôles in school. Betty Andreasson won prizes in many art contests. All three ladies of the Liberty, Kentucky abduction had made art a hobby, and Mona Stafford, in particular, owned an art store. Stephen Kilburn from *Missing Time* was said to be dedicated to a career in the arts.

In the same book 'Mary' was said to be a painter. Kathie Davies from *Intruders* we learn is an autodidact with considerable talent as a visual artist. Also from *Intruders*, 'Pam' is described as a dancer. A more recent case reported by Budd Hopkins in the *International UFO Reporter*, 'Christie' is a successful graphic artist. Sandra Larson was a country and western singer. Whitley Strieber, as everyone knows by now, is a successful writer. Strieber's 'hidden choir' of

There is a fire to create  
in the souls of the abductees.  
Ufologists unleash it at their  
own peril

eleven includes a dancer, a museum curator/artist and a musician. Finally from *Direct Encounters* there is Ellecia Gruen, who is a painter and pianist, and Jessica Wolfe who is an actress and writer.

This undoubtedly underrepresents the percentage manifesting creativeness. Several accounts, without going into details, refer to literate backgrounds and brilliant minds. Antonio Villas Boas eventually achieved the title of Doctor and became a respected lawyer. Further hints are peppered about the literature, but I would not want to get lost in arguments about interpretation. It would obviously be contentious to conjecture that creative power generates every abduction experience. There are some cases which clearly resist fitting into this neat picture.

Independent of the creative elements of the Pascagoula

account itself there is nothing in either the background or psychological profiles of Charles Hickson and Calvin Parker to suggest they were possessed of creative fervour. Higdon's psychological profile showed only average levels of intelligence and imaginativeness. Unless, on no authorization, we read significance into the moderately radical aspect of his personality shown on the conservative-experimental scale, there is nothing in his oil worker/outdoorsman background to indicate a compelling need for self-expression.

Some justification for generalization can be found in Dr. Slater's psychological testing of nine abductees. While abductees may be 'normal' in the sense of lacking pathology, they clearly emerge as not average. Slater found the group to be not only highly intelligent but in

possession of a rich inner life. Slater describes this inner life as acting not only favourably in terms of creativity but negatively "to the extent it can be overwhelming".

It is also notable that the nine abductees chosen for study include some careers not to be described as mundane: actor, commercial artist, audio technician, college instructor, corporate lawyer, chemistry lab director and electronics expert.

It would be tempting to drag in evidences of the creative impulse in contactees (George Adamski's pre-contact writing, Orfeo Angelucci's movie script, the Shaggy God Story Syndrome) as further proof of creativity being the driving force of the UFO phenomenon but there is really no need to belabour the issue. The central point is too important to risk obscuring it in trivialities.

There is a fire to create in the souls of the abductees. Ufologists unleash it at their own peril. ...

MAGONIA'S 20th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE will be held at  
the SHEEN LANE CENTRE, London SW14.

MAY 1988

2 MAY 1988

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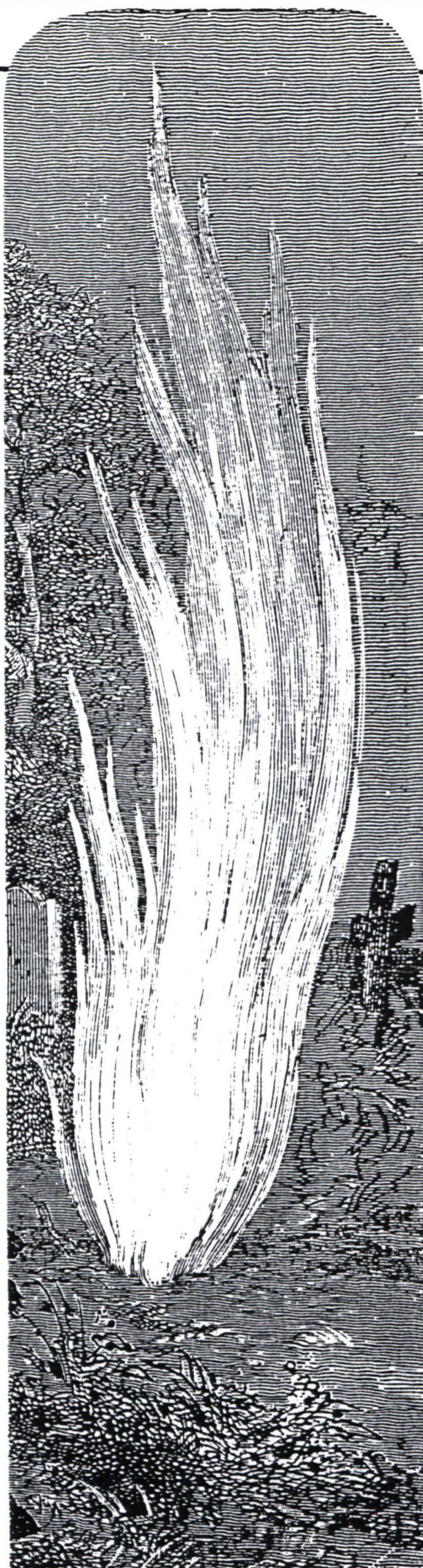
I thank Paul Devereux for his criticisms of my review of Persinger's tectonic strain theory'. As for the earth lights theory in general, I totally agree with Devereux's statement that "it is highly desirable that such an area be fully investigated"; the last sentence of my paper<sup>2</sup> attests my willingness. I must however comment on Devereux's criticisms.

He is right when he asks us to take account of all the work going on in the area, at least theoretically. In the absolute is it possible to study UFOs without having serious knowledge of physiology, sociology, physics, geophysics, epistemology, history of science, and so on? But we must indeed stop somewhere. Moreover, Persinger's series in *Perceptual and Motor Skills* truly deserves the label of science. I am however more cautious in my opinion about *Space-Time Transients*, which combines too many phenomenon, and about *Earthlights*, which mixes very interesting observations with quasi-occultism.

Devereux states that the earthlights theory is strongly supported in British regional studies. Let us accept the fact, although dots on a map are not a definitive proof of a correlation. What I dispute is that the earthlights hypothesis is supposed to give an account of most of the sightings. This is possible, but it is not yet proved. Therefore I choose for the moment the sociopsychological hypothesis, which seems to me to be more economical. But if Devereux or Persinger can convince me that their hypothesis is better, or that mine is wrong, I shall adopt theirs without quibble.

As for the Egryn 1904/05 events, there was indeed no "media industry devoted to UFOs at the time", but did the papers, or some of them, not report the events in religious terms?

Devereux is interested to know what basis I use to say that more than 90% of Persinger's data is noise. I thought he was well aware that almost all ufologists do acknowledge such a rate for explained or potentially explainable cases in a raw database, and that UFOCAT is such a raw base and not a sound cases set. See, e.g., Willy Smith's criticisms, or my own estimate for traces



## THE EARTHLIGHTS DEBATE

Claude Maugé  
Paul Devereux

cases in Belgium and France in *Magonia* no. 13.

According to Devereux, earthquake lights are "already a known, accepted and established" fact. There are indeed geophysicists who accept them; but are these all geophysicists, a majority of them, a minority, or only a few?

The last point I shall comment on is the fact that Devereux is acquainted with the most advanced physicists in the quantum field and co-operates with leading geologists. This is certainly true, but it proves nothing. Only the publications of these important people will be able to prove anything. Here Devereux uses the classical argument from authority, and this reminds him of his own sightings which he considers to have really taken place, and to be a proof of UFOs. It is normal that he thinks so, but his conviction is personal, and has no logical value.

### PAUL DEVEREUX REPLIES:

At his request, I respond to points raised in Claude Maugé's letter. At the outset I need to reiterate that I fully accept that most reported UFOs do not relate to actual skyborne phenomena, and that psychosociological factors are a key element in the matters dealt with in ufology. Further, as I stated in my paper at the July International UFO Conference in London, and in an article to be published by *BUFORA Journal*, ufology is not to be confused with UFOs. Only a part of the 'ufological pie' deals with actual unexplained phenomena; most of the slices deal with hoax, psychosocial and otherwise generated pseudo phenomena. I also am critical of *Space Time Transients* for the reasons Maugé states, and because of others as well (e.g. the piezo-electrical explanation). However, it is a major work and the statistical approach adopted by Persinger at least to some extent minimises the 'noise' in the database he used. Were this not the case, I'd bet the UFO-geology correlation would be virtually 100%!

I do not know what Maugé means by "quasi-occultism" in *Earth Lights*. I think there is much to be learned from studying so-called 'occult' material. Therein lies the basis for an extended natural science, in my opinion.

'Occult' simply means hidden, and it is our duty to bring the hidden to the light of day. If Mauge is using the term in its loose sense to mean false material, I am prepared to tackle him privately on the issues raised in *Earth Lights*

Mauge is justified to choose psychosocial explanations - but only for part of the material in ufology. Psychosociology cannot, does not answer the whole range of reported material and available evidence. If I was bloody minded enough (I am but I don't have the time) many so-called psychosocial theories could be exposed as little more than opinions. There is no indisputable psychosocial theory extant in ufology. Some of the theories make sense to me, however, and I feel we should accept them on at least a *prima facie* basis for some of the material circulating in ufology.

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Mauge's comment that "dots on a map are not a definitive proof of a correlation" is pure philistinism - a simple failure to respond to serious evidence. The dots are not the correlation, but they define correlations which are the result of accurate and painstaking research. Mauge is not being asked to "accept" anything: the data are there for anyone to study. Moreover, the "dots" add up to other things: the histogram in figure 2 in our *New Scientist* article (Sep. 1 1983) for example. It clearly shows that in the 1977 Dyfed outbreak reported incidence of geographically-locatable UFO events in areas where sufficiently detailed geological information is available increases almost logarithmically with proximity to surface faulting.

Wherever correlations between geology and reported UFO incidence has been studied in the greatest detail, the correlations have been remarkably tight - more so than I would ever have expected myself, allowing for all the variables in human nature and human reporting. I do not

expect everything to be an earth light!

Yes, the Egryn lights were reported as manifestations of the Holy Spirit; which precisely supports my point in suggesting that UFOs are explained in the prevailing cosmology of the times they are seen in. Today they are seen as ET spacecraft by positive-believers or relegated to psychosocial effects by negative-believers. Thus the possibility of there being a truly unexplained phenomenon actually occurring in the sky has been largely overlooked.

Most modern geologists accept the existence of earthquake lights. I dare say that there are some 'old school' geologists who dismiss them, but they are a dying breed. I can state that leading officers in both British and US Geological Surveys certainly accept EQLs, which must be as good a litmus test as any.

I do not mention physicists, etc., in order to establish authority, but merely to point out that when *Earth Lights* was published, I found scientists to be more open and genuinely inquisitive than ufologists. Ufology has become something of a closed shop, while the rest of the world has passed it by. Its narrowness of intellect and vision renders ufology to some extent unscientific, and makes it a bit of an anachronism. Good Lord, in America they are taking ufology back to the 1950's!

Yes, my own UFO experiences are subjective to anyone who was not with me at the time. I

can't do much about that. But they happened, and I am entitled to report them. From my experiential standpoint it is Mauge who is indulging in subjectivity. I have to accept the reality of the vents; he has the luxury of considering they were not objective. I know he is wrong in such an assumption, but I cannot prove it. In *Earth Lights* I suggest someone attempt a psychological study of the Ravensbourne event, using polygraphs on me and other traceable witnesses. I could hardly do more to 'objectivise' the event.

Whatever some ivory-tower ufologists may think, data and research confirm the reality of some form of earth-light phenomenon. In the landscape detailed work has been done, both here by my colleagues and I, and in the USA by Derr, Brady, Persinger, et al, which now make *Space-Time Transients* and *Earth Lights* rather out of date. I am most anxious to publish updated material to defuse some of the misconceptions, but that is in the publishers' hands, not mine! Work is also on-going in the UK - Project Pennine, for example. In the laboratory, rock-produced light phenomena are being studied that so far elude analysis by normal instrumentation. As John Derr has said, we are at the beginning of a new era of geophysics.

Time and events have passed Mauge's concerns by. We are certainly puzzling over what the actual mechanism may be, and the nature of the energy produced, but the existence of the phenomenon itself, and the geological link it has, is certain. ...

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*This earthlights correspondence has had a good airing in the last few issues of Magonia and is, for the time being at least, closed. Ed.*

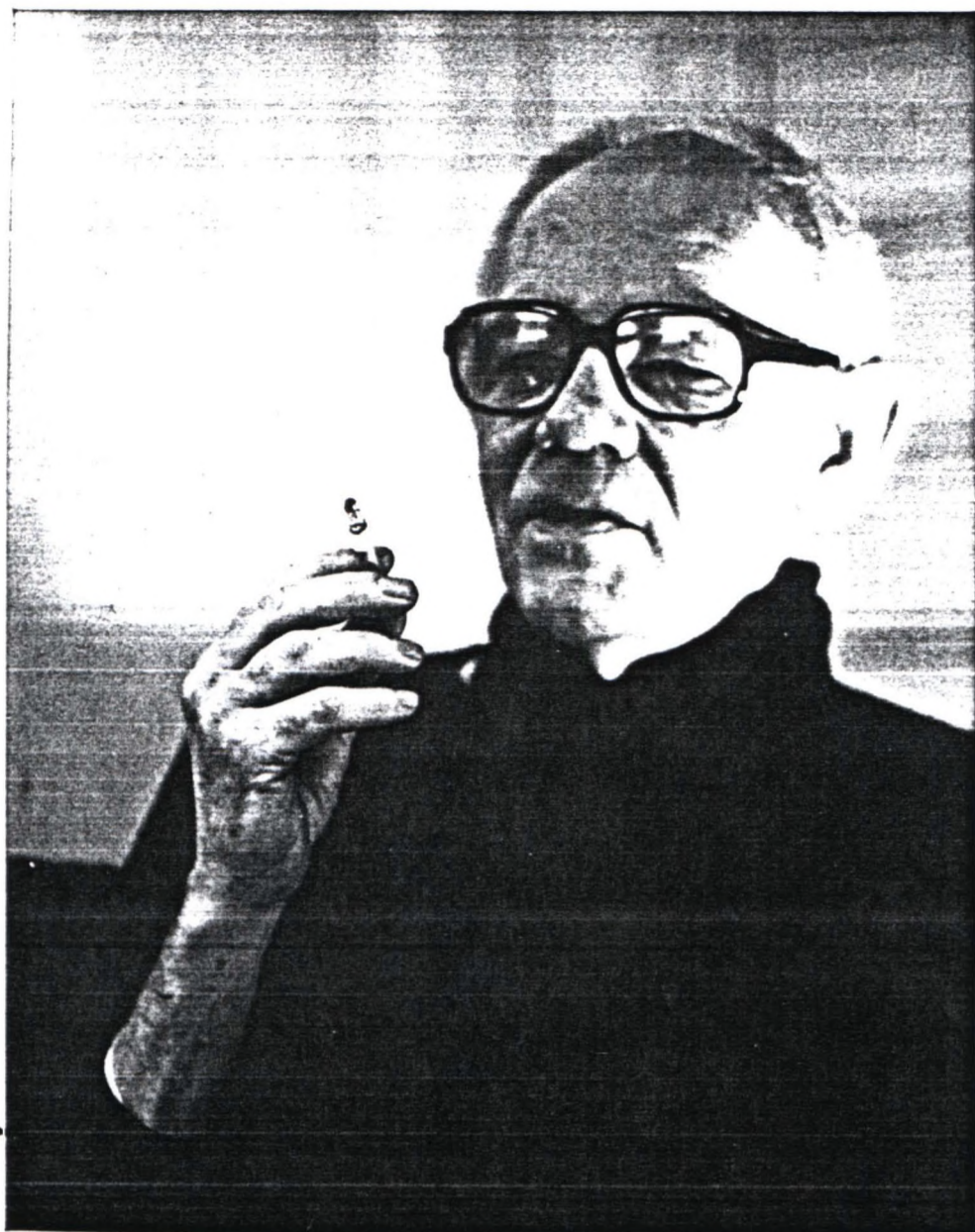
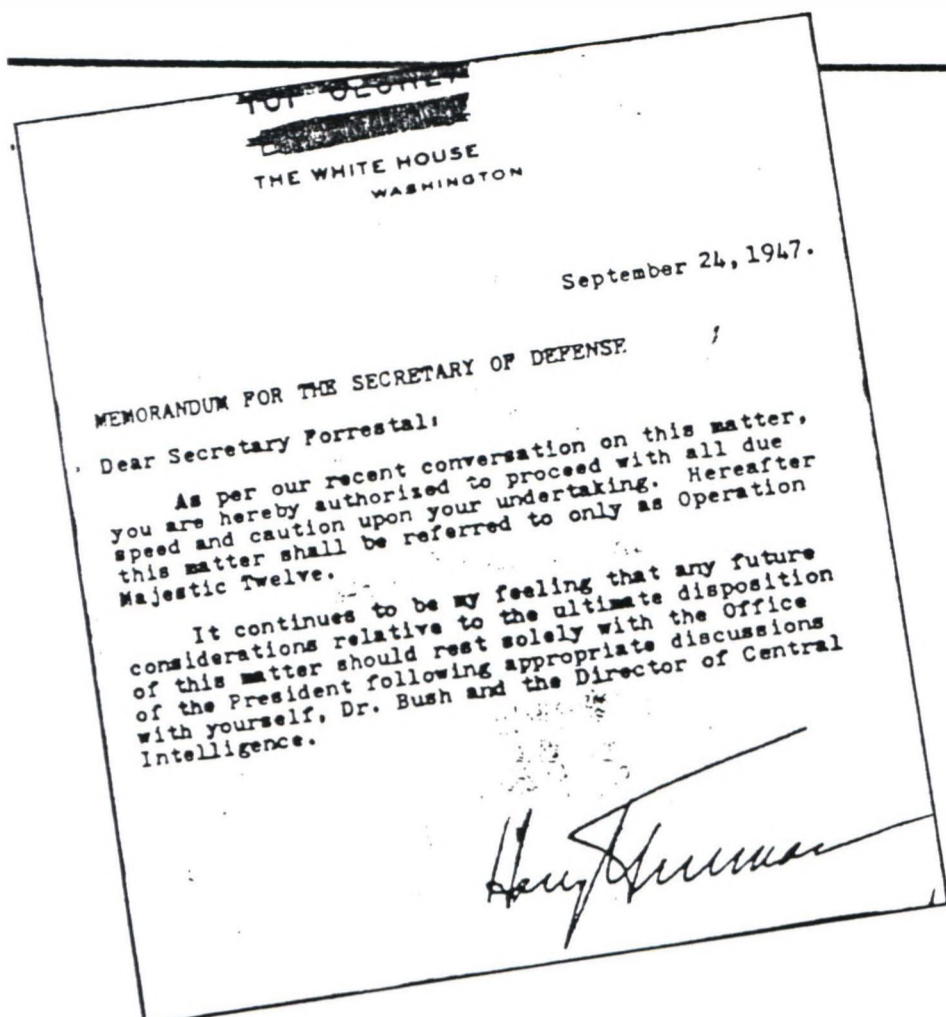
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Kevin McClure writes that

» « **END TIMES BULLETIN** » «  
will be returning in October:

"To make a success of what I hope will be primarily a news and comment journal, with some background articles, we will need a participative readership, sending in news clippings, rumours, religious tracts, prophecies, threats, stories of doom and gloom, the new age, geological disaster, disease, the Antichrist, Armageddon and all other components of the 20th century Apocalyptic vision. All contributions will be credited and I hope to provide free copies of the first issue to those who have helped. Please send *anything* that may be of interest to:

Kevin McClure, 20 Trembear Rd., St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5NY



## THE MAJESTICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Ralph Noyes

Timothy Good has done us a public service in giving us facsimile reproduction of that great wealth of documents in the Appendix to *Above Top Secret* (referred to as *ATS* in the remainder of this article). Lazy and reclusive ufologists, of whom I am one, can now study at a little closer to first hand some of the famous and infamous bits of paper which have enriched or littered ufology in the past four decades but which many of us only know by repute or selective quotation.

He has exposed his evidence, and this is the scientific way of carrying on. He must expect, and will doubtless welcome, the kind of critical challenge on provenance and authenticity presented by Dennis Stacy;<sup>1</sup> and he will certainly have foreseen some vigorous polemics about whether his evidence is not only accurate but also sustains his preferred hypothesis of extraterrestrial visitation.

Anyway, we now have a number of documents before us. And not only the Majestic two which Good gives us (pp. 541-547 of *ATS*) and the Majestic third, the 'Cutler memorandum' of 13 July 1954<sup>2</sup> reportedly picked up by happenstance in

the US National Archives in 1987, but also a wealth of other papers. If *Majestic*, *mirabile dictu*, becomes the miracle of a public acknowledgement of the ETH by the only source which could now satisfy us, the President of the United States or officials speaking with his authority, our perplexities of the past forty years will be at an end (together with the productive occupation of many ingenious minds we value). But if -- as I feel convinced, for the reasons given below -- the *Majestic* papers merely take their place among such kindred as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, or maintain a tenuous repute (like so much else in ufology) as objects of uncertain identity but doubtful interest, Timothy Good will still have left us with many other papers of great significance and almost certain authenticity.

I can vouch for one of them myself -- a signal sent on 19 September 1952 to a NATO Command (and repeated to the then Air Ministry) about a minor and not particularly dramatic sighting of what came to be known to ufologists as a 'daylight disc' (p. 446 of *ATS*). I received a copy of this signal as the Private

Secretary to the Vice Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Ralph Cochrane, and I recall my own embarrassed unease, widely shared by the Operations Staff, that 'our own people' had begun to fall for 'that saucer nonsense'. The document carries an interesting manuscript addition to which I wish to refer later: the laconic note to his staff by the Wing Commander in charge of Ops (Air Defence) 1.

I mention this minor piece of paper, partly for the implication I wish to draw from it below, but mainly by way of presenting my credentials for the sceptical view I take of the *Majestic* documents. I have no access to onion skins, faded blue carbons or Remington-Rands of the appropriate vintage; and I must leave it to others to analyse security markings, peculiarities of text and the office practices of Washington bureaux (all of which seem to me to be eminently sensible lines of enquiry, long familiar to research historians and investigative journalists). My only claim -- though I do not think it is negligible -- is that between 1950 and 1952 I served as the eyes and ears of a senior officer, the Vice Chief of the Air Staff, who

above all (and second only to the Chief of the Air Staff) had prime responsibility for RAF operations, including air defence, and a major say in the conduct of scientific research in these matters and the intelligence assessment of enemy capabilities.

The job of private secretary to a senior member of a government department was, and I imagine still is, given to 'cadet' entrants to the Civil Service who are expected to reach higher office themselves in due time. It gives them early familiarity with the conduct of major business at a stage at which they are still learning their trade. The job cannot be done (and the young man or woman would rapidly be posted elsewhere if he/she didn't act accordingly) without access to, and intimate daily knowledge of, the entire range of the business of the office. No telephone call, no 'scrambler' message, no letter, report, loose minute, signal or other paper, and no visitor, entered or left Sir Ralph Cochrane's office without my knowledge. I kept the records of most of his meetings with staff and colleagues, and I drafted for him, under his direction, all of the papers which he took the responsibility of issuing within the Air Ministry or outside it. I therefore feel confident in making the following assertions, all of which derive from this hectic and exciting period of my Civil Service career.

1. In the 1950s (though I suspect that this may now be less true following our security hiccups of recent years) our links with the Americans were uniquely close among other European allies -- in the sharing of military intelligence, the assessment of enemy capabilities, technical research and development, joint planning and the granting of facilities in British territory to an extent and in a manner which was unique in NATO (to the point, indeed, of somewhat disturbing unduly chauvinistic members of the House of Commons).

Cochrane, in particular, kept up a close relationship, official and personal, with two key figures in the American military who are now said to have been members of the MJ-12 group: General Hoyt Vandenberg and General Nat Twining (pp. 252 and 542 of *ATS*). He frequently transacted

business with both of them during visits to the United States, setting in train major bits of Air Staff planning and liaison on his return. I find it inconceivable that he would not have been told -- at the very least by a wink and a nod from Vandenberg or Twining or, far more probably, by the offer of some, albeit token, British association with MJ-12 -- of the extraordinary event of a captured piece of extraterrestrial hardware, with all its potential implications for defence.



General Nat Twining  
*No nod or wink...*

2. I am equally clear that I could not have failed, as Cochrane's PS, to get some whiff of the thing myself. It is conceivable that I might, for once, have been excluded from the details of a matter of such extreme sensitivity and importance, but I could not have failed to be aware (because I would have had to make the arrangements) of the urgent briefing meetings which Cochrane would certainly have sought with the Chief of the Air Staff and the Secretary of State for Air (not to mention the Prime Minister); the urgent instructions which Cochrane would have had to issue to senior members of the Air Staff; and the setting-up of at least some small study-group. There was nothing of this sort at any time.

3. Cochrane was in fact impatient and sceptical about 'saucers'. I believe that before my period of service with him (i.e. before late 1950) he had, like many others (the United States Air Force, the FBI, the CIA) considered the possibility that the

'discs' were a piece of enemy hardware. By the time I knew him he had dismissed this hypothesis. And, like Vandenberg, he had no patience at all for the theory of extraterrestrial visitation.

4. I only once saw him disturbed by the 'saucer question'. The Washington 'flaps' of July 1952 interested him greatly, as they interested many of us at the time, including the then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Cochrane put some enquiries in hand through the Chief Scientist to the Air Ministry, Robert Cockburn, who in turn, I think, discussed the matter with the Government Chief Scientist, Lord Cherwell. The only comment which ever came back to Cochrane, following enquiries in the US, referred to 'American public hysteria'.

5. My argument, in short, is that anything so sensational and Defence-laden as a Presidentially approved study of a crashed extraterrestrial vehicle, conducted by a group which included two very close military colleagues of Cochrane's, Vandenberg and Twining, would have become known to him in the then state of Anglo-American relations. But we got no whiff... And I think this is strong evidence against the existence of any Majestic group in the United States with the terms of reference indicated on p. 542 of *ATS*.

6. It is some collateral for this view that the Air Staff, in 1950 to 1952, were taking only the most perfunctory (and embarrassed) cognisance of 'saucer stories'. The signal of 19 September 1952 which I have already mentioned carries the casual instruction from the Wing Commander in charge of Ops (AD) 1: 'Ask PA [viz. my Personal Assistant, a clerk] to open Folder...'. Clearly no folder, still less an official file, had yet been opened by the Operations staff on flying saucers. Whether or not this was a dereliction of duty I leave to others.

It is no rejoinder to these points to say, as I have sometimes heard ETH enthusiasts declare, that perhaps some tiny, 'inner', amazingly secret group of illuminati were conducting their own research into UFOs within government circles but without telling Ministers or senior military officers. Perhaps there was such a group... Perhaps there

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some arcane, back-room group of dedicated  
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of extraterrestrial intervention  
in human affairs

still is (though one would like to know how it gets its funding, by what secret handshake it keeps in touch, and what it expects to achieve in the absence of any attachment to the government machine).

But this is not the point. The argument about Majestic is an argument, not about some arcane, back-room group of dedicated boffins who are bearing, in lonely isolation, their terrifying knowledge of extraterrestrial intervention in human affairs, but about the existence of a very senior governmental committee enquiring, with Presidential approval, into crashed hardware and biological remains of a tangible and sensational character. It is this which I am taking leave to doubt.

After I left the VCAS's office my career brought me in touch from time to time with the UFO question. There is little to add to the information which I have already given to Timothy Good, and which he records in *ATS*. Nor is this the right place in which to defend (if that is the right word) the relative lack of excitement in the MOD during the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s (up to my own retirement in 1977) about a range of phenomena which has often greatly over-excited others.

I think there are good reasons for this 'neglect' and I believe they tell us something about the real nature of the phenomenon itself. At a convenient moment I shall be glad to deploy my reasoning in full. In the meantime, if any 'defence' is needed of the past 'inaction' of the Ministry of Defence, I believe that even Lord Hill-Norton, Chief of the Defence Staff in the early 1970s, would be the first to agree that he stands in the same white sheet as others who were serving at that time.

After so much scepticism I owe myself and *Magonia* at least the *frisson* of some tentative belief. I would not be troubling to cast my pennyworth of doubt into the current debate about the Majestic papers, if I

did not believe that the 'UFO phenomenon', that unassailable residue of human experience, contained something both real and potentially important. Here are some 'pointers'.

I am convinced that there is a degree of official 'flannel' in the responses which the MOD gives to enquiries from the public. This may be no more than a weary self-defence against what is possibly seen as eccentricity on the part of persistent enquirers. (I was sometimes, myself, driven to polite evasion -- in responding, for example, to members of the public who were offering us exclusive rights in perpetual motion devices for the propulsion of aircraft or in lighter-than-air materials which could be expected to repel gravity.) But I think I detect something more. Some of the evidence for this view is given on pp. 86 and 87 of *ATS* and in the Afterword to a piece of fiction which I published in 1985.<sup>4</sup> It looks to me as though THEY are hiding something -- though it may be no more than bewilderment. This should encourage the bewildered rest of us.

I am also quite prepared to believe, with the editors of *Quest*, that some sightings of strange objects are the outcome of Defence activities themselves -- perhaps of an even weirder character than the fertile *Quest* imagination supposes.

But none of this gives any support to the ETH or to MJ-12. Quite the contrary. If governments really had tangible evidence of extraterrestrial visitation, dating from 40 years ago, officials would hardly be wasting their time in questioning members of the public about whether an unidentified sighting had occurred in the vicinity of 'telephone or high-voltage lines; reservoir, lake or dam; swamp or marsh'; river; high buildings, tall chimneys... airfields... generating plant, etc., etc. (p. 454 of *ATS*.)

But the 'UFO phenomenon' does not stand or fall with the

ETH. Nor should ufology cease if the MJ-12 papers turn out to be a chimera. We shall be left with a very persistent range of strange occurrences which even the MOD now shows signs of uneasily recognising. And, thanks to Timothy Good, we now have the facsimiles of a number of interesting documents, some of which have a look of authenticity, and a few of which suggest different interpretations from those we have become accustomed to.

For example, a careful reading of that remarkable Canadian memorandum prepared in November 1950 by Wilbert Smith (pp. 460-462 of *ATS*) does not suggest to me that it provides any evidence at all for the existence of crashed saucers. What it *does* do is to give further support to the evidence provided by Good and others for keen American interest in, and alarm about, the saucer scare of that era. And it contains one sentence of great interest: "...the United States authorities are investigating along quite a number of lines which might possibly be related to the saucers such as mental phenomena..."

The implications are worth considering. "Quite a number of lines" suggests a baffled look at several guesses about the nature of a disturbing phenomenon; it does *not* suggest an enquiry into the known fact of a crashed vehicle. And 'mental phenomena' twangs at least a nerve or two of my own with the intimation that some Americans had already, by 1950, detected a weirdness in UFO events which was unlikely to yield to treatment by the established physical sciences.

It is along that path that I suspect we should now be treading, rather than in pursuit of anything so down-to-earth as a grounded saucer. As Marcellus says of Horatio's somewhat heavyhanded approach to the ghost of Hamlet's father: 'We do it wrong, being so majestic'.<sup>5</sup> ...

#### NOTES

1. *Magonia* 28, pp. 10-12.
2. Berry, Adrian; *The Spectator*, 1 August 1987.
3. Stacy and others give the date of this memorandum as 14 July 1954. The facsimile reproduced in *Quest*, Vol. 7, No. 4, shows 13 July 1954.
4. Noyes, Ralph; *A Secret Property*, Quartet Books, 1985.
5. Shakespeare, William; *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 1, line 145.

# LETTERS



## A SCEPTIC WRITES...

Dear Editors,

I feel I must respond to 'The Astronomical Mirage Hypothesis' by Stewart Campbell in your issue number 27. It stretches the Mirage Hypothesis far beyond what can be supported by the science of meteorological optics, let alone by common sense.

Campbell's general comments in the first part 'The mirage', are reasonably correct. But when he gets into the second part 'UFO reports explained as mirages', I should rather believe Adamski's yarns about the Venusians than what Campbell claims.

The most obvious problem with Campbell's explanations is that stars are *not* visible in the daytime, period. As a very experienced amateur astronomical observer, I can state from personal experience that while Venus can not infrequently be seen in full daylight (though it is *never* conspicuous), and Jupiter can be *just marginally* visible when the sun is low in the sky (as Mars must also be when it becomes as bright as Jupiter), fainter objects are *never* visible to the unaided eye when the sun is above the horizon. If you doubt this just ask any professional astronomer.

Campbell would have us believe that the Zamorra case, the Great Falls film, the Tremonton film, and others were caused when stars were sighted in full daylight! The Trindade film is supposed by him to show a mirage of Jupiter in daylight; he fails to understand that, even if such a thing could happen, the surface brightness of the mirage would be *far less* than that of the object causing it because the light is diffused outward, rendering the object even less visible in daylight than it would be before.

Campbell claims that Jimmy Carter's UFO was Altair, not Venus. Altair, however, was not even visible at the time; he must be using the incorrect date as originally recalled by Carter, not as subsequently established by written records; this is all explained in my book *The UFO Verdict*. In any case, Venus was exactly where Carter says the UFO was, and nearly five magnitudes brighter than Altair.

Ditto for his claim that Antares must have been responsible for the Hill UFO incident. Not only does he ignore the position of the alleged UFO with respect to the moon, as reported by Betty Hill, but he fails to notice that Saturn and Jupiter, both much brighter than Antares, match up perfectly with Betty Hill's reported 'star' and 'UFO', respectively. William Gill's famous close encounter, in which possible alien contact was foregone when they left to go off to dinner, was shown by Phillip J Klass to match up very well with the position of Venus, which is three magnitudes brighter than Sirius, Campbell's candidate, which was nowhere near Venus.

I cannot understand why he says that Captain Mantell died chasing Jupiter in broad daylight. I would think that the case for the Skyhook balloon has been well enough established. To claim that Venus was responsible for the New Zealand film of December 1978, hours before it had risen, is the height of irresponsibility.

In any case, one *vital* piece of information missing from this piece, and from Campbell's hypothesising, is that *mirages are never seen more than half a degree above the horizon, even under the most unusual circumstances*. Given that observers on the ground can hardly ever even *see* that close to the horizon unless

looking over a large body of water, we see how ludicrous it is to claim that widespread mirage sightings provide "the" explanation for the UFO phenomenon.

Anyone who asserts that an object seen, or photographed, high in the sky is a mirage, is woefully ignorant of the science of meteorological optics. See *The nature of Light and Color in the Open Air*, by the Dutch astronomer M. Minnaert (Dover Books, 1954) for an authoritative and easy-to-understand discussion of such phenomena. The careless over-use of the 'mirage' explanation by some would-be skeptics can only bring discredit upon the honourable name of skepticism.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Sheaffer, Mount Sereno, California.

## SCOTCHING THE ARGUMENT

Dear John

Professor Davies's recent article on ball-lightning in the Christmas issue of *New Scientist* was a masterpiece of entertaining but serious speculation about a phenomenon which remains nearly as mysterious as our UFOs. On 21st January *New Scientist* printed a letter from one Stewart (*sic*) Campbell which told us that "ball lightning does not exist. All that exists are reports of ball lightning". The tone seemed terribly familiar...

While, in a desultory manner, I was trying to establish that 'Stewart' was our old friend 'Stewart', *New Scientist* printed an agreeable tart comment by Dr. Stenhoff.

May I suggest that in the next

issue of *Magonia* you print a brief announcement to readers to the effect:

*Stewart Campbell does not exist. All that exists are reports of a solipsistic Scotsman who passes by the same or a similar name.*

Prompted by Paul Davies's article, I've now unearthed a plethora of interesting articles on ball lightning published by *Nature* over the past couple of decades. The range and ingenuity of the hypotheses reminds one somberly of all the ink and blood which have been spilt in the cause of ufology. And they too have their S. Campbells. In *Nature* Vol. 230 of 19 March 1971, one Edward Argyle, writing from the Dominion Radio Observatory in British Columbia, discusses 'Ball Lightning as an optical illusion'. The ease with which he dismisses reports of explosive damage, odours of sulphur or ozone, accompanying sounds and occasional long duration, is a tribute to the imaginative ingenuity of the Higher Scepticism. Towards the end he says: "There are a few reports which indicate the release of large amounts of energy... [However] if ball lightning is an optical illusion it will be necessary to categorise this and similar reports as unreliable."

Is Edward Argyle of Scottish descent? I ask myself. If so, what is it about the Scots which causes them to find no point of stable equilibrium between the Second Sight of the Highlands and the preposterous Empiricism of David Hume's Edinburgh?

Yours

Ralph Noyes, London SW 3.

*That's enough mirages, Ed.*

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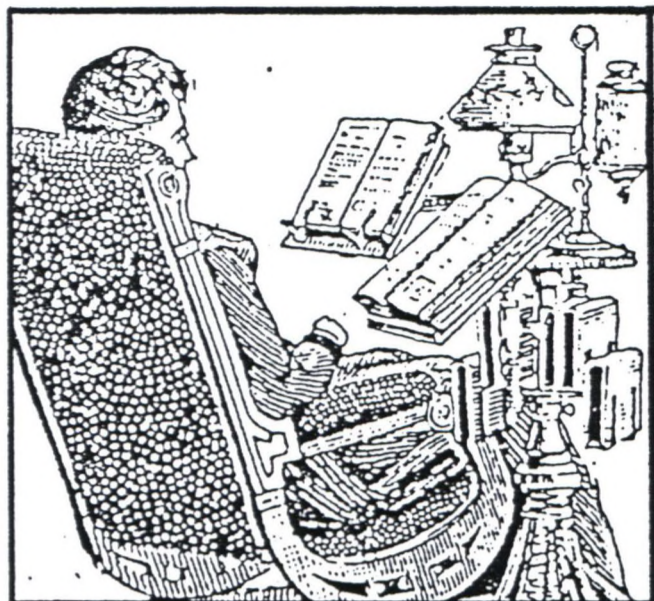
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# BOOK REVIEWS

SIDER, Jean, *L'Airship de 1897*, Privately pub., available from: M. Henri Scornaux, 55 rue des Cultivateurs, B1040, Brussels, Belgium. 815 Belgian Francs, 1987.

Much of the speculation about phantom airships - and in particular about the American 1896-97 scare - was generated before much of the information was extracted from old newspaper files. As a consequence rather simplistic ideas about these phantoms being UFOs in a slightly different suits have been repeated.

The landmark work on the American scare (as well as being an essential reference for many other airship scares) is Eddie Bullard's *Airship File*. Jean Sider's work can be seen as a handy guide to the scare for those who can read French. It details and gives useful references to the major sightings. In addition, there are several illustrations of the phantom and imaginary airship designs, plus reproductions of newspaper stories. Whereas Bullard's *File* serves to provide the primary sources of information, Sider attempts to make sense of it. He looks at such explanations as the inventor theory; or that it was caused by psychological and/or natural phenomena. My French is as helpful as a wooden leg in a chorus line, but I get the impression that Sider believes that this wave still poses many questions and that there is no simple answer or set of answers.

Jean Sider has spent a considerable amount of time and effort on this project, and it would be great to see an English version of it. It is at first sight surprising that no similar American work has been produced, especially since there is not the problem of translation involved. Though if we remember that Edgar Allan Poe did inspire Jules Verne to write his visions of fantastic flying machines, then it is right that the American visions they helped to produce in reality should interest the French.

Nigel Watson

EVANS, Hilary, *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians: a comparative study of the encounter experience*, Aquarian Press, 1987, £7.99.

In his sequel to *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors* Hilary Evans examines the world of the contactee - whether with the realm of spirits, religious figures such as the BVM, or UFO entities. As might be expected, he handles these experiences critically but sympathetically.

The encounter experience, Evans argues, is best regarded as a psychodrama, produced by an unconscious part of the mind, which answers either a

chronic or an acute need of the percipient. This often involves dramas of suffering and rebirth; the contact 'entity' becomes an authority figure, through which the lowly can give voice to their concerns.

It may be argued that the author adopts too individualistic a stance at times. In many cases it could be demonstrated that the percipient appears to be the voice of the community, particularly in the case of 'religious visitations'.

I am sure that Hilary is right in rejecting literalistic interpretations of encounters; symbolism is always culturally based - a point which could

WILSON, Ian, *The After Death Experience*, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987, £12.95.

This is, to put it mildly, a schizophrenic book. The earlier chapters examine critically, and largely dismiss, the claims of reincarnation and mediumship as evidence for survival. In the course of this Wilson convincingly exposes the late Dorothy Stokes as a fraud. However, the general discussion of mediumship is very superficial and important topics such as the 'Cross Correspondences' are not even mentioned.

Suddenly, on coming to spontaneous cases, death-bed visitations and near death experiences, this welcome critical spirit vanishes and is replaced by a willingness to take at face value almost any anecdote told by Kübler-Ross, Moody, Ring, Sabom and even Rawlings, who is generally discounted by other researchers. Early in the book Wilson dismisses the claims of Ian Stevenson, because his case collectors are devout Hindus and Buddhists. No such reservations are allowed to intrude into his acceptance of the claims of 'devout Christian' Rawlings.

There is in this section a fair degree of half-truth, evasion and cover-up. Readers are unlikely to realise that near death experiences (NDE's) occur only to a minority of cardiac-arrestees. There is a consistent attempt to minimise the identity between NDE's and other out-of-body experiences, and hence to dismiss Susan Blackmore's subjectivist findings (similar findings by Celia Green and Harvey Irwin

are also ignored). Wilson is also keen to ignore 'unacceptable' aspects of the NDE, such as the prophecies of the end of the world in April 1988, or the 'mastery of life and death'. The Tibetan Book of the Dead is quoted, without it being pointed out that this work regards the NDE scenes of paradise and hell as delusional hallucinations to be seen through.

Nothing is allowed to intrude that challenges the view that survival occurs and takes the form of a real-time, quasi-physical existence in some quasi-objective realm. As an interesting aside, the notorious earthlights are suggested to be human souls.

The book ends with polemics against abortion and organ transplants. The cynic might be led to suggest that Wilson's condemnation of reincarnation and mediumship, and his approval of sanitised accounts of NDE's, is simply a reflection of the Roman Catholic party-line on these topics, as opposed to genuine enquiry.

Peter Rogerson

COUTTIE, Bob, *Forbidden Knowledge: the paranormal paradox*, Lutterworth Press 1988, £9.95.

To get one thing out of the way immediately; this is probably the worst proof-read professionally published book I have ever come across. There seems to be a major bug in Lutterworth's computer typesetting program. It is a tribute to the author that it did not disturb my enjoyment of the book too much, although one or two sentences are scrambled beyond meaning.

Bob Couttie once did conjuring tricks on radio, an act which seems quite enough of a paranormal paradox in itself. Like many stage magicians, including James 'The Amazing' Randi, he finds himself drawing broadly sceptic conclusions about the whole gamut of paranormal phenomena. This book, based on his radio series looks at such topics and personalities as Uri Geller, Doris Stokes, astrology and dowsing. He is not too impressed with any of these, and the first part of his book provides a critical demolition of some familiar subjects. Much of this will be familiar to *Magonia* readers, particularly some of the early psychic research exposés, on

P. Rogerson,

which I think he spends too much time.

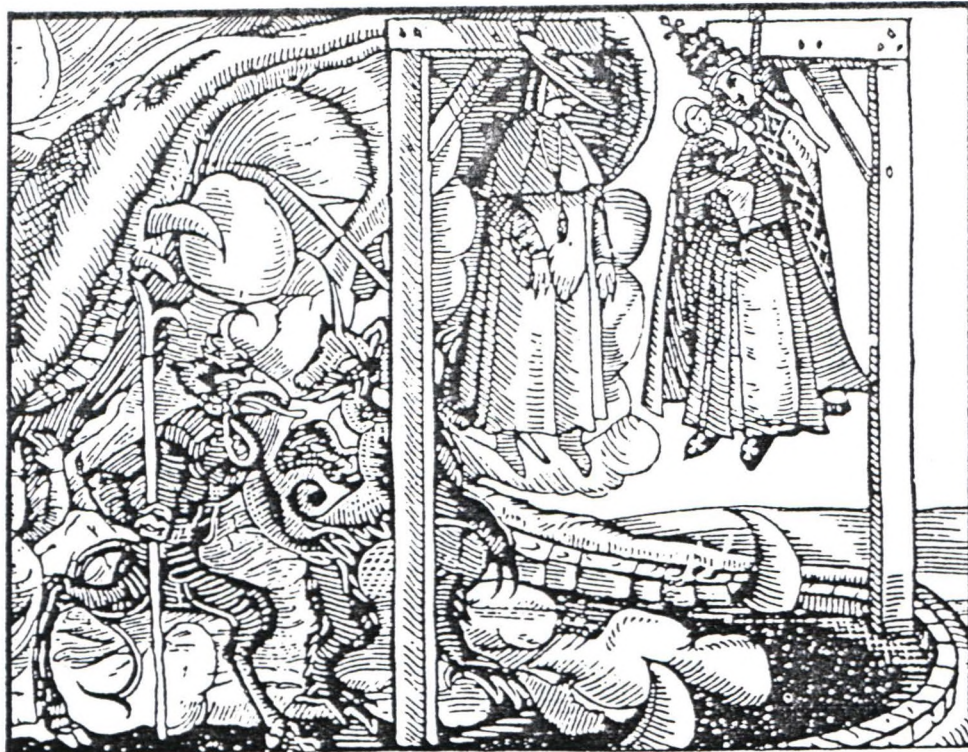
However this is all treated in a refreshing manner. Couttie manages to avoid the smartass cynicism that mars much of CSICOP's output. I feel that the author's scepticism is the result of a painful process of disillusionment, rather than an arbitrarily adopted pose. When he discovers Geller faking an effect his reaction is one of disappointment rather than triumphal glee.

It is the third part of the book 'Towards an Anthropology of the Paranormal', which I think *Magonia* readers will find most interesting. He comes to the very Magonian conclusion that perhaps the most important thing about the paranormal is not whether it is 'true' or 'false' - a hundred years of research and experiment have not convinced the doubters or defeated the believers, nor does it seem likely the next hundred will - but what it means in social terms. Perhaps the kernel of the book is the short - three page - chapter 'Madness, Mystics and Shamans' - in which he offers a social context for paranormal phenomena. In the following chapter, 'The Evidence of Experience' he discusses what Peter Rogerson has termed 'radical misperception'. He concludes with a sentence which could be *Magonia's* credo:

"Just as it has been by and large a failure of parapsychology that it has not examined the social context of the psychic and the psychic experience, so it would be also a failure if one looked at the social context without considering the individual's experiences and the nature of perception." An important and entertaining book. *John Rimmer*

**ZALESKI, Carol.** *Otherworld Journeys; accounts of near-death experience in medieval and modern times.* Oxford University Press, 1987. £15.00

An excellent comparison of modern NDEs and those of early and medieval Christianity. Zaleski points out the similarities; the panorama of the body, the encounter with supernatural beings, the journey to the garden of bliss, the return, the final ineffable revelation. But gone from modern accounts is the bifurcation of paths, one leading to hell, described in



Pope Joan and her lover in Hell from John Wolfius's *Lectio Memorable*, 1671.

**PARDOE, Rosemary and Darroll.** *The Female Pope; the mystery of Pope Joan, Crucible, 1988. £8.95.*

Rosemary Pardoe, editor of *Ghosts & Scholars*, and former editor of *Mark*, and her husband, have written a fascinating historical study of the strange tale of Pope Joan, the legendary ninth- (or was it eleventh-) century pontiff, who was discovered to be a woman when she rather embarrassingly gave birth to a child in the middle of a papal procession.

Is there any truth in this story? Is there any historical event on which it might have been based? The authors lead us off on a marvellous detective story where clues and red-herrings are strewn as thickly as anyone could wish.

The trail leads from the Middle-Ages to the present day. We find Pope Joan being vilified by Protestant reformers as the Whore of Babylon, presented by feminists as a persecuted victim of a patriarchal society; we see Joan in legend and in fiction. And throughout the telling of it there is the authors' meticulous historical research; the sources consulted demonstrate a depth of scholarship that is impressive even amongst students of M R James!

Reviewing earlier titles in the *Crucible* series (from Thorson's), Roger Sandell commented that they treat "subjects obscured by dubious claims with scepticism and scholarship while at the same time remaining sensitive to their appeal". This title continues that tradition splendidly. *John Rimmer*

splendidly gory detail. In modern accounts the judgment of deeds is transformed into a non-judgemental life review.

Like UFO abductees, medieval returnees have old scars healed and new ones imprinted. St Fursa bore a permanent burn mark on his jaw and shoulder from a flaming soul flung at him by a demon! There are also the psychological stigmata common to both classes of experience: loss of memory or the power of speech, or the possession of wild talents. Other familiar motifs occur; Knight Owen, in St Patrick's Purgatory encounters the room much larger on the inside than it is on the outside.

Zaleski argues that the approaches both of believers - naive literalism, and the sceptics - dogged reductionism - miss the point. The real significance of these reported experiences is that they are narratives, possessing a definite structure. For example, the medieval conversion tales of sinners transformed to penitents are paralleled by modern conversion tales from 'sceptic' to 'believer'. Writers like Ring and Sabon are also part of the narrative structure, which is aimed at instruction, encouragement and consolation.

Zaleski rejects the claim that modern near-death experiences

are free of cultural influences. This claim, she feels, reflects three prejudices; that 'myth' is equivalent to falsehood; liberation from the body is equivalent to liberation from cultural influences; and assumptions about the 'rationalist' nature of post-enlightenment society. Claims of prior scepticism, she feels are often indications of skin-deep attitudes which are soon shaken under stress.

The medieval near-death experience reflected the harsh, hierarchical values of that society, whilst the modern NDE presents a democratic paradise strongly influenced by nineteenth century spiritualism.

Zaleski suggests that the two views of the near-death experience, either as being generated by an amalgam of physiological, psychological and cultural influences, or as a revelation of the transcendent, are by no means mutually exclusive. Rather the experience can be seen as elements of sensation, perception, language, memory, etc., forged together "into one" by humanity's religious imagination. Attempts to investigate the experience 'scientifically' by isolating specific paranormal elements or play with statistics, can only frustrate the attempt to treat the 'narrative as a whole' as a living symbol of the transcendent.

This is not only the best available work on the near-death experience, but a major contribution to our whole field. *Peter Rogerson*

**INGLIS, Brian.** *The Unknown Guest; the mystery of intuition.* (With Ruth West and the Koestler Foundation.) Chatto & Windus, 1987. £12.95.

Well, it had to come - a Brian Inglis book which actually contains useful insights. In this case into the 'crash' of inspiration which comes to creative writers and artists. Clearly, Inglis leans towards a supernatural style of explanation, which is aided by viewing inspirational 'highs' through rose-coloured spectacles, with no reference to the savage depressions which accompany them. Thus Inglis does not tell us that Winston Churchill's 'unknown guest' which protected him from danger in high moods, at other times urged him to throw himself under trains! *P.R.*