

MAGONIA 98

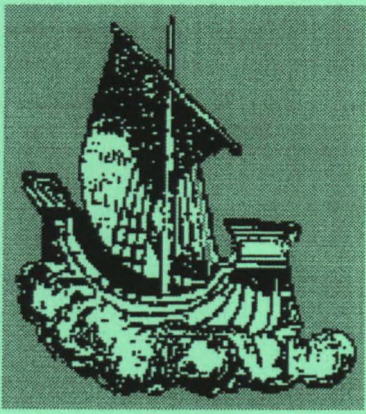
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CONTEMPORARY VISION AND BELIEF



"CRADLE HILL IS A FOCUS OF THE POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE
ASPECT OF THE UFO PHENOMENON -
**THOSE WHO VISIT THE HILL ARE DRAWN BACK TO IT BY SOME
INDEFINABLE ATTRACTION"**

JOHN CLEARY-BAKER, BUFORA BULLETIN VOL. 1, NO.11, WINTER 1966/67



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editorial notes

IT'S DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN

On August Bank Holiday Saturday (23rd August to our American and Scottish readers) I paid a nostalgic visit to Cradle Hill, Warminster, along with arch-hoaxer and Warminster veteran, Dave Simpson. For a couple of years now Kevin Goodman, author of *UFO Warminster Cradle of Contact*, has been organising skywatch revival events with fellow author Steve Dewey (*In Alien Heat*) in order to, in his own words, 'keep the flame burning'.

Well, my Warminster flame burned out a long time ago. Apart from a couple of brief drive-by visits my last serious, staying-up-after-bedtime visit to the sacred hill was in nineteen-hundred-and-blimey-was-it-really-that-long-ago. I admit, I have tried a bit of Warminster revivalism myself, for instance giving a talk to LAPIS in Blackpool, and boosting Goodman and Dewey's books wherever I could, but wasn't starting skywatches again taking things a bit too far? Who would come to them, apart from a few aging ufologists trying to recreate the excitement of their (comparative) youth? So when Dave Simpson rang up suggesting a jaunt, I accepted like a shot.

I knew from my earlier brief visits that the old meeting point at the top of Cradle Hill had changed. The famous 'white gate' now lay hidden in the undergrowth, the cart track to the infamous copse and barn had been tarmacked, and the military camps had expanded; but it was only after it got dark that I realised what a difference the latter had made to the night-time scene. Where there were once just a few lights from barracks windows and a line of street-lamps, there was now a row of very high intensity lights around the perimeter of the camp nearest the hilltop. The view to the east had been totally changed, making observation difficult in that direction. The copse was now a regular haunt for dog-walkers in the early evening (plenty of 4x4s taking our canine friends up there), and a different kind of dogging later at night (two other cars returned very rapidly after discovering a squadron of ufologists at their favourite trysting site!)

Kevin Goodman was in-situ, ready to greet all-comers, not quite sure how many would turn up to help keep that flame burning; few people had replied to his invitation. But as the evening drew on it was clear that Warminster still had pulling power, and not just for those who remembered the heyday of the 'sixties and early 'seventies. I think eventually there must have been getting on for thirty people clustered on

and around the site of the white gates, with little groups making sorties up to the copse or further along the road.

I got talking to some people from the midlands, and suggested that the overcast conditions and threatening rain would not be conducive to good observations. "Oh, no," one replied, "They hide above the clouds, out of sight, but they often come under the clouds so we can see them." The 'Chinese lantern' UFOs weren't lanterns, he explained, that was an explanation put out by the Ministry of Defence. Midlands ufologists aren't fooled by tricks like that!

The years fell away, and I was back with the original enthusiasts, crowded round, waiting for Arthur Shuttlewood, seizing on every glimmer and point of light as a potential Aenstrian space-craft: "they move rapidly then hide in front of a star, so you can't see them", "they are the ones called amber-gamblers", "no, it's not car headlights, far too high in the sky for that!", "the army say they'll shoot Arthur if he walks onto the ranges!". (For a moment I thought that might happen to us, when a security van drove up and stopped near the skywatchers. Kevin skilfully defused the - not at all - scary situation.)

But then it dawned on me: these are not nostalgia freaks, these are modern ufologists who have come to Warminster to see real flying saucers, not reminisce about old times. Forty years on and nothing has changed. To be fair, Kevin and Steve, and one or two others, were there for old-time's sake, to keep alive something of their own personal heritage, and although Kevin believes that *something* strange was happening in Warminster at the time, I don't for one minute think he was really expecting to see 'amber gamblers' or 'coruscating shafts of light' emerging from over the West Wilts Golf Clubhouse, but I think the majority of people there hoped for just that.

We didn't stay the night, but drove back to London, amazed and somewhat baffled by what we had seen, the phrase "they hide above the clouds ..." going round in my mind. They believe this, they really do. The Aenstrians are still playing hide and seek over Warminster and nothing has changed.

I enjoyed my brief trip into the past, but it left me more convinced than ever that ufology drove itself into the ground a long time ago, and my decision to make the next Magonia the last of the regular series is the right one.

UFOs at The National Archives

David Clarke

For the past six decades the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has kept what it knew about the topic of 'unidentified flying objects' locked away in its archives. Unlike their counterparts in the USA, who ran an officially-funded 'UFO project' for two decades, the British MoD preferred to quietly monitor the subject and preferred to say nothing publicly about its UFO policy or the results of investigations of reported sightings, particularly those by aircrew.

Responding to a USAF enquiry in 1965, the MoD said: 'Our policy is to play down the subject...and to avoid attaching undue attention or publicity to it. As a result, we have never had any serious political pressure to mount a large-scale investigation such as Project Blue Book.'

This policy was more a product of Cold War paranoia than evidence of a conspiracy to conceal evidence of an extraterrestrial presence from the British public. Secrecy surrounded many aspects of military operations and intelligence during the Cold War and UFOs were no exception to this rule. Dr Edward Condon remarked, in the introduction to the 1969 Colorado University report on UFOs for the USAF Project Blue Book that 'where secrecy is known to exist one can never be absolutely sure that he knows the complete truth'.

Furthermore, the fact that in Britain many official papers on UFOs have been with-held for half a century in some cases, and destroyed in others, has provided a steady supply of fuel for conspiracy theorists. The idea of a conspiracy by the Air Ministry, and later the Ministry of Defence (MoD), to hide 'the truth' about UFOs (i.e. their assumed ET origin) has been a key theme in British ufology since the first 'flying saucer' clubs appeared in



1952-53.

Belief in the existence of a secret Government 'silence group' – led by the mythical 'Men In Black' (MIB) – was encouraged by Albert Bender's fantasies and the 'cover up' stories circulated by Major Donald Keyhoe in the USA. These ideas filtered back into British ufology and were enthusiastically promoted by successive editors of the *Flying Saucer Review*, who believed the British authorities were working with the Americans to suppress the 'facts' about the ET presence.

The myth of a 'UFO cover-up' by the British authorities grew out of the culture of secrecy and the paranoia of UFOlogists. The facts are that before the arrival of freedom of information the British public had no automatic right to examine any Government papers. Those relating to UFOs were no different to any other category of public record, from hospital records to MP's expenses. Prior to 1994 all government papers were retained for a minimum of 30 years before they were reviewed for preservation at the National Archive. Any material deemed 'sensitive' could be with-held for longer periods and, in the case of intelligence records, this could be as long as 50 or even 100 years. Worse still the Grigg Committee of 1957

recommended that some 95% of Government records should be destroyed at first review stage. As a result many papers on subjects deemed to be 'of no historical significance' – as UFOs were categorized until 1967 – were lost before they reached a public archive. Prior to the late 1990s British UFOlogists had limited success in their attempts to persuade the MoD to be more open about their work on the subject. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s individuals and groups tried to persuade the MoD's

'UFO desk' (then known as S4 (Air)) to open their records. These requests were always politely refused on the grounds that any reports made by members of the public to the MoD were confidential and their identities would have to be removed before they could be released. Correspondents were informed that the costs of processing this information could not be justified, and the requestors would have to wait until 30 years before the files could be released.

As many earlier papers had already been destroyed, the first UFO files did not reach the Public Record Office (now The National Archives) until the mid-1980s. UFO researchers who made the trek to Kew to examine these records were disappointed. The papers were fragmentary, superficial in content and betrayed none of the deep interest that had been assumed by conspiracy theorists. When Roger Morgan presented his paper 'British Government UFO Files in the Public Record Office' to Magonia's 20th anniversary conference in 1987 just four files – dating from 1950-1957 – had been released. As Morgan noted, these were fragments of a much larger collection of papers many of which had been lost during successive reshuffles of the Whitehall filing system. While they contained

evidence that at least one intelligence branch were directly responsible for investigations, it was evident from the paper trail they had 'no startling secret knowledge of the solution to the UFO enigma' as alleged by the conspiracy industry. The contents of these early files made it clear that 'the UFO enigma was militarily assessed as a tactically non-threatening problem, and probably trivial' and what's more 'military personnel were just as susceptible to 'flaps' as anyone else.'

A sea change began in 1994 when John Major's administration introduced a limited right to access to records younger than 30 years. This legislation was known as 'The Code of Practice for Access to Government Information' and was a precursor to the full Freedom of Information Act that became part of the Labour Party manifesto in the General Election of 1997. By this time, a large number of UFO records – now older than 30 years – were being prepared for release at the Public Record Office. This on-going process of releases became a veritable flood by 1998-99 when a large collection of records relating to the 1967 UFO wave were opened. This period marked the beginning of my project to systematically examine and catalogue all the UFO records at Kew, in preparation for the writing of my book with Andy Roberts, *Out of the Shadows*, published in 2002. By 2007 some 200 or more files, from a variety of Government departments had been opened covering a variety of UFO incidents and official correspondence from the Second World War to the mid-1980s.

Prior to the completion of the book we utilised the existing 'Code of Practice' to negotiate the advance release of the MoD's file on the infamous Rendlesham Forest incident and the 50-year-old report of the 'Flying Saucer Working Party'. The latter, referred to in the famous Air Ministry letter to Winston Churchill, had long been designated as 'missing, presumed destroyed'. The report, it emerged, had not been destroyed; it had simply been misfiled in the Whitehall archives before our requests to the Departmental Records Officer led to its rediscovery.

The growing momentum of releases culminated in the implementation of Britain's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on 1 January 2005. Since that time the MoD has been inundated with requests for information on UFOs. It emerged the subject was the third most popular in terms of numbers of requests received in the first

18 months of the act's existence. As a result of the pressure placed on resources a decision was taken during 2007 to transfer all the remaining UFO records from Whitehall to The National Archives. The collection, which contains some 180 files dating from 1980 to 2007, will be transferred in tranches over a three year period beginning in May 2008. In a statement to UFOlogist Joe McGonagle, the MoD describe the release as the largest single release of records younger than 30 years in the department's history. The decision, they added, was taken to counter what officials described as 'the maze of rumour and frequently ill-informed speculation' surrounding their alleged involvement in UFO research and investigation.

This article is an expanded version of a guide I have produced for the National Archives in advance of the first release of UFO records in 2008. It summarises the contents of the records opened at Kew prior to 2008 which mainly refer to the post-war years from 1950 until 1984.

At this point it is worth pointing out that the terminology used by the various departments of Government to describe UFOs has changed considerably during the modern period. From 1947 to at least 1959 UFOs were described interchangeably by officials both as 'flying saucers' (then popular in the media and popular culture) and, using military terminology, as 'aerial phenomena'. The acronym 'UFOs' – coined by Captain Edward Ruppelt of the USAF circa 1950 – is first used in an official British Government document of that year, but appears infrequently before the 1960s. Intelligence officers tended to prefer the phrase 'aerial phenomena', which reappeared in the mid-1980s under the umbrella of a new acronym, UAP (unidentified aerial phenomena). UAP was the term used by the author of the 'Condign report' prepared for the Defence Intelligence Staff in 1980, mainly because it did not imply the existence of solid 'objects' of extraterrestrial origin.

TNA file references are presented, where relevant, embedded in the text of this paper (i.e. as AIR 2/16918). These references – known as 'piece numbers' – can be used to locate records remotely, using the TNA's online search engine:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/default.asp?j=1>

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/default.asp?j=1>

Once a reference has been located the original papers can be ordered for

inspection in the Reading Rooms at Kew, or copies of the file ordered via the TNA public website.

UFOs in the early 20th century: 1909-1950

An understanding of the factors that lay behind the British Government's interest in the UFO issue can be found by studying the range of documents available at The National Archives. The vast majority of the records are concentrated in the post World War Two period. This reflects growing post-war fascination with the idea of UFOs as extraterrestrial visitors, as portrayed in popular science fiction films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). In contrast, official policy was restricted to establishing whether UFO sightings could be considered to be a threat to the realm. During the Cold War, for instance, the major threat came from behind the Iron Curtain. Once Soviet aircraft were eliminated, the identity of a UFO was of no further interest to the military.

To understand the origins of the British Government's interest in UFOs it is necessary to look back to an earlier period of 20th century history. In 1909 and 1913 phantom airships - dark cigar-shaped flying objects carrying searchlights - were sighted at night moving over many British towns and cities. As tension grew in the build up to the First World War, the media and some politicians accused the Germans of sending Zeppelin airships to spy on dockyards and other strategic areas around the British coastline.

When sightings of an unidentified aircraft were made over the Royal Navy torpedo school at Sheerness, Essex, in October 1912 questions were asked in the House of Commons. This led the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, to order an investigation. This failed to establish the identity of the aircraft but the Germans were widely believed to be responsible. The relevant papers are AIR 1/2455 and AIR 1/2456.

Both the War Office and Admiralty investigated further sightings of unidentified airships, aircraft and mysterious moving lights, usually seen at night, that were made to the military authorities from many parts of the British Isles during the Great War. In 1916 a War Office intelligence circular concluded that 90% of the reports could be explained by bright planets, searchlights and natural phenomena ('Alleged Enemy Signalling 1916', WO 158/989).

More sightings of aerial phenomena were made during the Second World War

by RAF aircrew. These included balls of fire and mysterious moving lights that appeared from nowhere and appeared to pursue aircraft from Bomber Command operating over occupied Europe. American pilots dubbed these UFOs as foo-fighters from a character in a comic strip whose catch phrase was 'where there's foo there's fire.' Although the foo-fighters did not appear to be hostile the sightings caused considerable alarm in the Allied forces as they prepared for the invasion of France. The RAF began to collect reports from 1942 and later in the war the Air Ministry shared intelligence on the subject with the US authorities. They assumed the objects were German secret weapons, such as the Me262 jet fighter. At the end of the war no traces of advanced aircraft or weapons that could explain the 'foo fighters' were found by the Allied occupying forces. In addition, intelligence officers such as Dr R.V. Jones discovered that German pilots had observed similar unexplained aerial phenomena.

Air Ministry reports on 'night phenomena' are at AIR 2/5070 while reports from aircrew with Bomber Command's 115 Squadron in December 1943 are at reference AIR 14/2800. At the end of the war both the War Office and Air Ministry became involved in an investigation of mysterious ghost rockets sighted over Scandinavia. Initially senior intelligence officers at the Air Ministry believed the 'flying bombs' were of Soviet origin, possibly as V2 rockets from the captured Nazi rocket plant at Peenemunde. Dr R.V. Jones, who became Director of Intelligence at the Air Ministry in 1946, was skeptical of this theory. Drawing upon his wartime experiences, he believed the scare was triggered by sightings of bright daylight meteors in countries which feared Soviet expansion. Reports and correspondence between the Foreign Office, Air Ministry and the British air attache in Stockholm are contained in FO 371/56988 and FO 371/56951. An air intelligence report on the 'ghost rockets' of 1946 can be found at reference AIR 40/2843.

Reports of ghost rockets preceded by six months the first sightings of 'flying saucers' over the mainland of the United States. In December 1947 the newly-created US Air Force set up a project, code-named Sign to investigate the growing mystery. USAF Lieutenant General Nathan F. Twining's initial conclusion was 'the phenomenon reported is something real and not imaginary or

fictitious.'

British Government interest, 1950-1951

The British Government did not begin any official inquiry into the UFO mystery until 1950. During the spring and summer of that year a large number of 'flying saucer' sightings were made in Britain for the first time and the news media began to take an interest. Two Sunday newspapers serialised the first books on the topic that had been



Sir Henry Tizard, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Ministry of Defence who came to believe that 'reports of flying saucers should not be dismissed without some investigation'

published in the USA and this led a number of senior figures both in the establishment and the scientific community to treat the subject seriously for the first time. The Sunday Dispatch was encouraged to publish stories by Lord Louis Mountbatten, who was later to become Chief of Defence Staff. Mountbatten was one of a small group of influential military officials who believed UFOs were real and of interplanetary origin.

Another senior official who took reports of UFOs seriously was Sir Henry Tizard. He is best known for his work on the development of radar before the Second World War. Post-war Tizard became Chief Scientific Advisor to the

Ministry of Defence and came to believe that 'reports of flying saucers should not be dismissed without some investigation' (DEFE 41/74). It was as a direct result of his influence that the MoD was asked to set up a small working party to investigate reports of flying saucers under the Directorate of Scientific Intelligence/Joint Technical Intelligence Committee (DSI/JTIC).

The Flying Saucer Working Party operated under such secrecy that its existence was known to very few. However, a reference to a study of flying saucers emerged in 1988 when a file of correspondence between Winston Churchill and the Air Ministry was opened under the 30 year rule at PREM 11/855. On 28 July 1952 the Prime Minister asked his Air Minister: 'What does all this stuff about flying saucers amount to? What can it mean? What is the truth? Let me have a report at your convenience.' The response, dated 9 August 1952, began 'The various reports about unidentified flying objects, described by the Press as "flying saucers", were the subject of a full intelligence study in 1951'.

Several unsuccessful attempts were made to trace this study but in 1998 the minutes of the DSI/JTIC were released under reference DEFE 41/74 and DEFE 41/75. These revealed how the working party was established in August 1950 under these terms of reference

1. To review the available evidence in reports of 'Flying Saucers'.
2. To examine from now on the evidence on which reports of British origin of phenomena attributed to 'Flying Saucers' are based.
3. To report to DSI/JTIC as necessary.
4. To keep in touch with American occurrences and evaluation of such.

The working party included five intelligence officers, one from each of the three armed services. This team reviewed what was known about the subject and investigated a number of sightings reported to it by RAF Fighter Command. During their inquiries they questioned a group of test pilots from RAE Farnborough who had reported sightings of aerial phenomena. In June 1951 the working party produced a final report that debunked the sightings and concluded that flying saucers did not exist. A surviving copy of DSI/JTIC Report No 7 was found in MoD archives in 2001. It was released in the following year at reference DEFE 44/119.

Classified 'Secret/Discreet' the six page report concluded that all UFO sightings could be explained as misidentifications of

ordinary objects or phenomena, optical illusions, psychological delusions or hoaxes. The working party concluded with the following statement: 'We accordingly recommend very strongly that no further investigation of reported mysterious aerial phenomena be undertaken, unless and until some material evidence becomes available.'

The members of the working party relied heavily upon information supplied by the US Air Force UFO project (now renamed Grudge) and the CIA. US policy was to debunk the subject and restrict the release of information to the public about UFO sightings made by the armed services. A senior official from the CIA's Office of Scientific Intelligence, Dr H. Marshall Chadwell, was present at the meeting of DSI/JTIC in London during June 1951 when the report was delivered to MoD. American influence upon the team's methodology can be seen both in the adoption of the USAF term UFO in its title and the conclusions. Circulation was restricted within MoD with just one copy sent to Sir Henry Tizard.

Air Ministry investigations 1952-64

The conclusions of the Flying Saucer Working Party set the template for all future British policy on UFOs. After the report was delivered the team was dissolved and investigations ended. However, during the summer of the following year a new wave of sightings were made across the world. In July 1952, as Cold War tension increased, UFOs were detected by radars in the US capitol Washington DC, prompting the USAF to scramble jet interceptors. The scare made headlines across the world and led Winston Churchill to send his famous memo to the Air Ministry on 'flying saucers.'

The Prime Minister was told on 9 August 1952 that 'nothing has happened since 1951 to make the Air Staff change their opinion, and, to judge from recent Press statements, the same is true in America' (PREM 11/855). In September this policy was dramatically reversed as a direct result of further UFO sightings that occurred during a major NATO exercise in Europe. The most dramatic were those reported by a group of Shackleton aircrew who saw a circular silver object appear above the airfield at RAF Topcliffe in North Yorkshire. In a report made to the base Commanding Officer one of the men, Flt Lt John Kilburn of 269 Squadron, RAF,

said he watched as the object appeared to descend to follow a Meteor jet, rotated on its own axis and then accelerated away at a speed 'in excess of a shooting star' (AIR 16/1199).

According to Capt Edward Ruppelt, of Project Blue Book, it was the Topcliffe sighting that 'caused the RAF to officially recognise the UFO.' Soon afterwards the Air Ministry decided to monitor UFO reports on a permanent basis. Responsibility was delegated by the Chief of Air Staff to a branch within the Deputy Directorate of Intelligence (DDI (Tech) known as AI3. In December 1953 HQ Fighter Command issued orders to all RAF stations that in future reports of 'aerial phenomena' should be reported directly to DDI (Tech), Air Ministry, for further investigation. The order said it was important that details of sightings made by RAF personnel and from radar stations should be carefully examined and its release 'controlled officially.' The Air Ministry letter stated that 'all reports are to be classified 'Restricted' and personnel are warned not to communicate to anyone other than official persons any information about phenomena they have observed, unless officially authorised to do so' (AIR 20/9994).

From 1953 reports from all sources were sent to DDI (Tech) for 'examination, analysis and classification'. Advice on likely explanations was to be obtained from Fighter Command, the Meteorological Office and the Royal Greenwich Observatory. Each year a special report 'summarising all UFO sightings by types' was to be submitted to the Air Staff (DEFE 31/118). None of these summaries have survived before 1956. However, an analysis of 80 reports up to 1954 formed the basis of an article published in Vol 10, No 3 of the Air Ministry Secret Intelligence Summary (AM SIS) during March 1955 (DEFE 31/118 and AIR 40/2769). This summary, based upon a longer report now lost, was classified 'Secret - UK Eyes Only.'

The existence of this summary came to light in May 1955 when the Conservative MP Major Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Air, in a Parliamentary Question, if he would publish the 'report on flying saucers recently completed by the Air Ministry.' In reply the Air Minister George Ward said that: 'Reports of "flying saucers" as well as any other abnormal objects in the sky, are investigated as they come in, but there has been no formal inquiry. About 90 percent

of the reports have been found to relate to meteors, balloons, flares and many other objects. The fact that the other 10 percent are unexplained need be attributed to nothing more sinister than lack of data.' (AIR 2/16918).

The residue of 10 percent 'unexplained' sightings that remained UFOs (or, as the Air Ministry preferred, 'insufficient information'), explains the policy decision to continue collecting reports to the present day. The reasons given in the AMSIS article were that 'there is always the chance of observing foreign aircraft of revolutionary design.' This factor remained a concern for intelligence agencies until the end of the Cold War. The Air Ministry was careful to qualify this interest with this caveat: '...as for controlled manifestations from outer space, there is no tangible evidence of their existence.' (AIR 40/2769).

The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) initiated inquiries into 'aerial phenomena' on two occasions during the late 1950s. Following press reports of UFOs tracked by radars at RAF West Freugh, Scotland, in April 1957 the Air Ministry informed the JIC it was unable to explain four recent incidents (CAB 157/27). Aerial phenomena were again the subject of JIC discussion in March 1959 following a sighting made at London airport (CAB 159/31).

MoD investigations 1964-present

From 1958 a civilian Air Staff secretariat branch known as S6 (Air) took over responsibility for dealing with public relations on the topic of UFOs. During that year an S6 desk officer said their policy would be 'politely unhelpful' in response to any public or press inquiry on the subject. In effect this meant that from this point onwards two separate branches of the Air Ministry were involved in dealing with the UFO problem. DDI (Tech) was responsible for investigating reports and assessing their defence significance, whilst S6 (Air) fielded questions from members of the public, the press and MPs.

In 1964 the Air Ministry became part of the new Ministry of Defence and the three separate service intelligence sections of the Army, Navy and RAF were merged under a new unified structure. S6's UFO remit passed to a new MoD secretariat, S4 (Air) and in 1967 responsibility for the investigation of UFO incidents deemed to have defence significance were inherited

by a Defence Intelligence branch known as DI55.

Although more than 11,000 UFO reports have been logged by DI55, S4 (Air) and a number of other MoD branches between 1959 and 2007, no detailed studies have been carried out on the accumulated data until relatively recently. Following a new wave of sightings in 1967 the Government faced a series of Parliamentary questions on their UFO investigations and policy. In response, the head of S4(Air), James Carruthers, produced a detailed briefing for the Secretary of State for Air, Merlyn Rees MP. In his report dated November 1967 Carruthers says MoD had kept a statistical analysis of UFO reports received since 1959 'and has found no evidence to suggest [UFOs] have other than mundane explanations.' He added that MoD 'does not consider that a separate study by [UK] Government departments or by a university other independent organisation would produce results to justify the expenditure, time and money involved.' (DEFE 31/119).

Following the conclusions reached by the Flying Saucer Working Party the MoD continued to reply upon studies carried out by USAF and CIA for their policy lead on UFOs. There was never any British equivalent of the publicly funded study by the University of Colorado on behalf of the USAF that was completed in 1969. The 'Condon report' - named after the project head, the physicist Dr Edward Condon - was based on an analysis of 12,618 reports collected by the USAF Project Blue Book between 1947 and 1969 (Blue Book followed Projects Sign and Grudge in 1952). Of this total 701 remained unexplained. The main findings of the US study were that:

About 90% of all UFO reports prove to be plausibly related to ordinary phenomena;

Little, if anything, had come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that added to scientific knowledge;

Further extensive study of UFO sightings was not justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby

No evidence came to light in the study to indicate that UFO sightings may represent a defence hazard

The Department of Defence should continue to handle UFO reports in its normal surveillance operations without the need for special units such as Project Blue Book (S4 briefing to MoD, 24 March 1970, copy in BJ 5/311).

Project Blue Book was closed by USAF following publication of the Condon report in December 1969. In the UK the MoD used the findings to further reduce their workload on UFOs. From 1973 members of the public who reported sightings received only a polite acknowledgement. Unlike the USAF, the MoD decided it should continue to maintain an interest in the subject so that it could answer questions from MPs and where necessary, reassure the public that UFOs posed no threat to national defence. This policy rethink, the first of many, took place between 1970 and 1975 and the papers can be found at AIR 2/19086.

The last time the Government made a full public statement on its policy was in January 1979 when UFOs were the subject of a lengthy debate in the House of Lords. This was initiated by Lord Clancarty (Brinsley le Poer Trench), a UFOlogist who had written several books on the subject. Clancarty believed the MoD were covering up the truth about UFOs and he tabled a motion that called on the UK Government to set up an inquiry and for the Defence Minister to make a televised statement on UFOs. In the Lords, the Government's response was delivered by a retired Royal Navy officer and Labour peer, Lord Strabolgi (David Kenworthy). His closing remarks were: '...as for telling the public the truth about UFOs, the truth is simple. There really are many strange phenomena in the sky, and these are invariably reported by rational people. But there is a wide range of natural explanations to account for such phenomena. There is nothing to suggest to Her Majesty's Government that such phenomena are alien space craft' - AIR 20/12966.

Key Documents Held at the National Archives

Keyword searches on the Catalogue using the 'UFO' or 'U.F.O' or '(unidentified NEAR flying)' and 'flying saucers' will produce a list of most of the relevant files held at the National Archives.

Various documents held at The National Archives give a history of the British Government's involvement in the UFO issue and an insight into the politics and personalities responsible for shaping official policy. The official reporting, analysis and recording of UFO sightings commenced in the early 1950s, but substantial records at the National Archives begin in 1962. Until 1967 MoD

policy was to destroy UFO files at five yearly intervals because they were deemed to be of 'transitory interest'; as a result a number of records before 1962 have been lost. This policy was rescinded as a direct result of Parliamentary questions made by the MP Sir John Langford-Holt in 1970 (AIR 2/19086 and DEFE 13/1183).

The surviving records generally consist of four categories of material:

1. UFO policy;
2. Parliamentary business including responses to Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and Parliamentary Enquiries (PEs);
3. public correspondence;
4. UFO sighting reports;

There are several files documenting the UK Government's policy on UFOs, including references to how and by whom it was drawn up and how it evolved. These papers illustrate how a number of different branches and divisions with MoD were involved at different times handling policy and investigations.

Policy files created by the former Air Ministry DDI (Tech) and their successor, the Defence Intelligence Staff, can be found at references DEFE 31/118 (1953-1963) and DEFE 31/119 (1967). Air Staff policy can be followed at AIR 20/11612 (1967-68), AIR 2/18117 (1967) and AIR 2/19086 (1970-75)

Examples of Parliamentary correspondence can be found at DEFE 24/1535. This file also contains papers relating to the British Government's response to the Prime Minister of Grenada's attempts to table a debate on UFOs at the United Nations in 1977-78. Other papers include references to the French Government's UFO policy and the study group established by the French Space Agency, based at Toulouse. A series of files contains responses to Parliamentary Enquiries on UFOs, at DEFE 13/1183, DEFE 13/1187 and DEFE 13/1188. There is a substantial collection of papers relating to the UFO debate held in the House of Lords in January 1979. A number of MoD branches, along with the Foreign Office and the Dept of Science & Energy, contributed to the Government's response in the Lords. DEFE 19/253 contains RAF Chief Scientist papers while AIR 20/12966 is the Head of S4(Air)'s file on the debate and its aftermath.

UFO reports files contain a mixture of letters from members of the public and reports from official sources such as the police, coastguard and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Many reports take the form of military signals received by MoD

via a variety of RAF and RN stations. The most frequent method of reporting a UFO sighting was via a standard proforma, originally based on a USAF questionnaire. An early draft of this report form dated 1952-53, can be found at DEFE 31/118. A version of this questionnaire is still used today by the Ministry of Defence. The proforma contains 16 questions, a-q:

- (a) Date, time and duration of sighting
- (b) Description of object
- (c) Exact position observer
- (d) How observed
- (e) Direction in which object was first seen
- (f) Angle of sight
- (g) Distance
- (h) Movements
- (j) Meteorological conditions during observations
- (k) Nearby objects
- (l) To whom reported (police, military organisations, the press etc)
- (m) Name and address of informant
- (n) Any background on the informant that may be volunteered
- (o) Other witnesses
- (p) date and time of receipt of report
- (q) Is a reply requested?

Five separate file series contain the key documented UFO sightings from 1962 in approximate chronological order:

AIR 2/16918 features numerous sighting reports and correspondence from members of the public to the Air Ministry secretariat S6, between 1961 and 1963. On the reorganization of MoD in 1964 a new Secretariat, S4 (Air), took over responsibility for UFO matters. UFO reports and correspondence from 1967 can be found at AIR 2/18115 and AIR 2/18116, 1967-68 at AIR 2/18117, and 1968-69 and AIR 2/18183. AIR 2/18871 contains reports and newspaper cuttings from 1972, while AIR 2/18872 consists of a collection of UFO reports and correspondence 1972-1973; AIR 2/18873, 1973-1974; and AIR 2/18874 likewise for 1974-1975. A series of files containing UFO reports runs from February 1974 until December 1976 and begins at AIR 2/18950. AIR 2/19126 contains a statistical analysis of UFO reports made to MoD between 1967 and 1973.

AIR 20 files include a number of Air Ministry UFO papers that escaped destruction before 1967. AIR 20/7390 contains reports of unidentified objects/aircraft made to Air Ministry between 1950 and 1954. AIR 20/9320, AIR 20/9321 and AIR 20/9322 contain Parliamentary Questions and briefings on UFOs reported in 1957, including reports of objects tracked by radar. AIR 20/9994 also contains papers from RAF radar

stations concerning 'reports of aerial phenomena' during 1957. A further series containing UFO sighting reports made to S4 (Air), filed in monthly folders covering the period August 1967 through to December 1973, begins at reference AIR 20/11887 and ends at AIR 20/12555.

A third series of files, at DEFE 24 contains reports and public correspondence from 1977 through the 1980s. DEFE 24/1206 covers 1977 and DEFE 24/1207, 1977-78. These files contain papers from a number of MoD secretariats. S4(Air) was succeeded by DS8 in 1979. In turn DS8's UFO responsibility passed to Sec(AS) in 1984. DEFE 24 also contains a series of 'edited copies' of UFO reports received by MoD, covering the years 1975-1980. These are duplicates of the main reports series, prepared at a time when the MoD first considered the release of UFO material to the public. The identities and home addresses of observers have been deleted from the edited reports. A MoD proposal to make this material available on request to public was reversed in 1984 by defence minister John Stanley on the grounds of cost (DEFE 24/1517).

DEFE 31 contains a series of UFO records created by the Defence Intelligence Staff branch DI55 and their predecessors, Air Ministry DDI (Tech). Policy files are DEFE 31/118 and DEFE 31/119. UFO report files include DEFE 31/171 (1975-76) and DEFE 31/163 through to DEFE 31/167 (1979).

A short series of RAF Air Defence/Operations UFO files include DEFE 71/3 (UFO reports 1975-77) and DEFE 71/4 (UFO reports 1977).

Details of some well-documented UFO sightings investigated by the MoD can be found by searching the reports files. AIR 2/18564 and AIR 20/9320 contain reports from RAF Lakenheath-Bentwaters and RAF West Freugh, Scotland, from 1957. This sighting, although only recorded by radars, created a major stir in Whitehall when civilian operators leaked details to the national media. The story led to questions in Parliament and at the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC); a development that undoubtedly resulted in the permanent preservation of the intelligence report on the case. In the case of the Lakenheath incident, which occurred in August 1956, records were 'lost' as the report was successfully hidden from public scrutiny until 1969 when its existence emerged as one of the 'unexplained' USAF UFO reports listed in the Condon study. The DDI Tech report on the West Freugh

incident, dated 30 April 1957, contains in its conclusions what is probably the closest the MoD ever got to recognizing that some UFOs remained inexplicable and could, as a result, be a potential threat to defence. Their report stated: 'It is concluded that the incident was due to the presence of five reflecting objects of unidentified type and origin. It is considered unlikely that they were conventional aircraft, meteorological balloons or charged clouds.' (AIR 20/9321)

AIR 20/11889 and AIR 20/11890 contain papers and reports on a 'flying cross' sighted by police officers and other witnesses in Devon, Sussex and elsewhere during October 1967. Papers from 1967-68 also contain details of field investigations of selected UFO reports carried out by S4(Air) and DI55. A number of records contain large numbers of reports made on a single night, often quickly explained as sightings of bolide meteors and/or re-entries of man-made satellites and other 'space junk'. DEFE 24/1212, for instance, contains some 20 sightings reported to MoD on the evening of 31 December 1978 from many parts of the British Isles. The source of this 'flap' was identified by the RAF's early warning base at Fylingdales, North Yorkshire, as the re-entry into Earth's atmosphere of the Russian satellite Cosmos 1068. Nevertheless, an examination of the reports made to the RAF by members of the public and police officers reveals a variety of descriptions of the debris, including: 'cigar shaped, very bright, with lighted windows' (Manchester), 'similar to a German V2 rocket at a height of 1000 ft' (Bradford) and 'train-shaped, 120 ft long tapering at the front with 40 plus bright lights all along the side' (Newmarket).

AIR 2/19083 contains brief details of the so-called Berwyn Mountains UFO incident, reported in North Wales in January 1974. AIR 2/19125 is a collection of UFO sightings compiled by staff at RAF Patrington in North Yorkshire – referred to as 'reports of unusual occurrences (UFO)'. This includes details of sightings made by civilians, police, and various flight personnel from the station between 1968 and 1973.

AVIA 65/33 contains papers and photographs of Project Y (1953-55), a Canadian project to design a saucer-shaped vertical take off (VTOL) aircraft. This file shows that both the Air Ministry and Ministry of Supply wished to develop ideas for saucer-shaped aircraft but no progress was made due to cost and technical

difficulties. Further papers on 'unorthodox aircraft' designs, including flying saucers, from 1949-52 can be found at DEFE 41/117 and DEFE 41/118.

BJ 5/311 contains papers collected by the Meteorological Office relating to UFO reports and policy 1968-1970. The Met Office have provided technical advice to the Air Staff secretariat on UFO matters since 1950, but this is the only surviving file containing evidence of their input to official policy.

DEFE 71/33 contains a brief discussion between RAF, Air Traffic Control and the Defence Intelligence Staff concerning UFOs as a potential hazard to civil aviation, 1977-78.

AIR 2/19119 and AIR 2/19117 contains papers relating to the MoD's involvement in two BBC productions on UFOs. In 1972 the head of S4 (Air), Anthony Davies, appeared on a UFO debate screened by BBC2's *Man Alive* series. He was also interviewed by BBC Radio Oxford for a programme broadcast later that year. DEFE 24/1565 contains a transcript of the head of S4 (Air)'s contribution on a Yorkshire TV programme on UFOs in 1979.

Ministry of Defence Archives

The Ministry of Defence hold a further 160-180 UFO-related files dating from 1984 to the present day. Since 2005, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) they have continued to release information to requestors and added material to their FOI publication scheme. In 2007 the ministry announced these would be released in batches from spring 2008 over a three year period. Personal details of those who made the reports would be removed from the versions opened at the TNA under Section 40 of the FOIA (which covers Data Protection). This and any other information withheld, under national security and other exemptions to the act, will become available in due course when the papers reach the 30 years of age.

One of the first UFO files to be released under the FOIA in 2001 was that containing papers on the famous Rendlesham Forest incident, often called 'Britain's Roswell'. The sightings took place over two nights late in December, 1980 at RAF Woodbridge, Suffolk, an airbase loaned to the USAF. Mysterious lights were seen to land in the forest beyond the perimeter of the base and a group of airmen went to investigate. They reported seeing lights they were unable to

identify moving through the trees. The next day marks were allegedly found on the ground and on trees in the forest where the men claimed the UFO had landed. Two nights later UFOs were again sighted from the base and the deputy base commander, Lt Col Charles Halt, took a team of hand-picked men into the woods to investigate. During the expedition Halt saw several unidentified lights and made a live tape recording of the incident.

Early in January 1981 Halt produced an official report on the incidents, titled 'Unexplained Lights' that was sent to Defence Secretariat 8 (DS8) at Whitehall. Halt's original typewritten report and the follow-up inquiries made by MoD can be seen at reference DEFE 24/1512. A file dedicated to the Rendlesham incident was subsequently opened by DS8's successor branch, Sec(AS) in 1984. This contains Halt's memo and briefings prepared for a Parliamentary question tabled by Major Patrick Wall MP in October 1983 when the story was published by the *News of the World*. The remainder of the file covers internal discussion of the case and correspondence from the public between 1983 and 1995. The Rendlesham file will be amongst the first of the new UFO material opened at the National Archives from 2008.

Further information on UFOs released by the MoD can be accessed online via their FOI Publication Scheme at:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FreedomOfInformation/PublicationScheme>

This includes a recent policy statement on UFOs, a copy of the Flying Saucer Working Party report of 1951 and responses to a number of FOI requests received by the MoD from members of the public since 2005.

A comprehensive tabulated list of UFO sightings reported to MoD's Directorate of Air Staff (DAS), between 1997 and 2007, is available via the Publication Scheme here:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FreedomOfInformation/PublicationScheme/SearchPublicationScheme/UfoReports19972007InTheUk.htm>

The MoD website also contains a pdf copy of the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) study 'UAPs in the UK Air Defence Region', completed in 2000 and released as a result of an FOI request in May 2006: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FreedomOfInformation/PublicationScheme/SearchPublicationScheme/UapInTheUkAirDefenceRegionExecutiveSummary.htm>

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From Magonia 5, 1980

FROM CONSPIRATORS TO CONTACTEES

THE WORLD OF CONSPIRACY

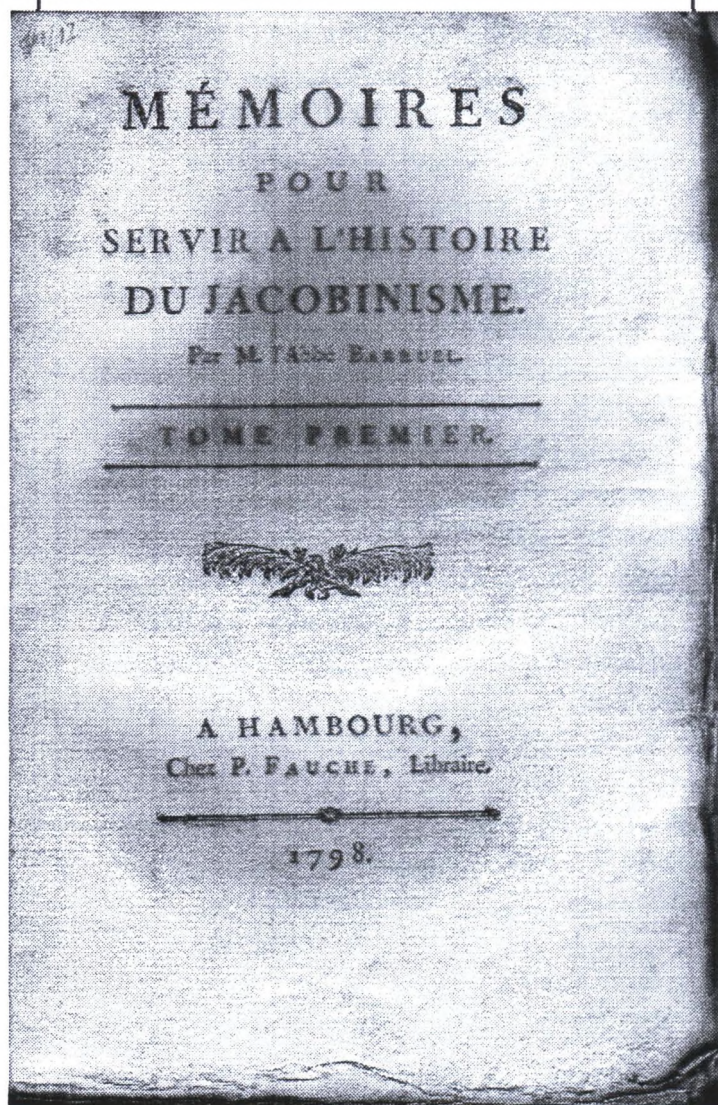
THEORIES

ROGER SANDELL

Like ufology, the idea that the contemporary world is controlled by vast, unsuspected conspiratorial organisations, is one which is chiefly broadcast by obscure groups and individuals, via duplicated or cheaply printed journals. To an outsider the ideas advanced by conspiracy seem bizarre indeed. To take a few examples:

- Gary Allen, the John Birch society's leading commentator, believes the USSR is secretly controlled by the Rockefeller family [1];
- Carl Oglesby, a former chairperson of the American New-Left group, Students for a Democratic Society, argues that the US political assassinations of the 1960s and the Watergate crisis were part of a gigantic struggle for control of the USA between New York bankers and Texas oilmen [2].
- Nesta H. Webster, the 1920s writer who originated much of modern conspiracy theorizing, claimed that modern revolutionary movements are manipulated by a centuries-old occult conspiracy originating with the mediaeval Knights Templar and the Order of Assassins [3].
- Walter Bowart, an American journalist, believes that the CIA controls the USA by means of a secret army of zombie agents who have been submitted to mind controlling operations [4].
- The anonymous author of *The Gemstone File*, an alleged secret history of

modern America distributed by underground bookshops here and in the USA, claims that the Vietnam war was fought to preserve the monopoly of the world heroin market by Aristotle Onassis [5].



Clearly, the ideas of the conspiracy theorists bear little relationship to generally accepted ideas of world events. Some of them seem so absurd as to cast doubt on the sanity of their advocates. However, the

conspiracist tradition is not simply the product of isolated paranoids, but has a long political history.

The story of conspiracy theorizing starts on the 1790s. The French Revolution, because of its totally

unprecedented nature, had an impact it is hard to conceive of today. Suddenly, all over Europe, the whole fabric of society seemed threatened, and existing ideas seemed inadequate to explain what had happened. In England the results included official repression, and a sudden growth of cults based on the apocalyptic passages of the Bible. [6]

Another result was the appearance in 1797 of books entitled *Mémoires pour Servir à l'Histoire du Jacobinisme* by Augustin du Barruel, a French priest, and *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against all Religions and Governments*, by John Robison, a Scottish mathematician. Both these books offered a simple explanation for the French Revolution: the French monarchy fell as a result of a conspiracy hatched by the Freemasons and similar secret societies. Both Barruel and Robison focussed on one particular name - that of the Illuminati. [7]

This group was a secret society founded in Bavaria in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt, a university professor. Its aim was to spread the 18th century Enlightenment doctrines of human equality and rationality, and it attracted a fairly wide following, until it was suppressed by

the Bavarian authorities in 1785. However, according to Barruel and Robison the illuminati had not ceased to exist in 1785 but had merely gone underground. The leaders of the French Revolution were Freemasons and Illuminati, or their agents and dupes, carrying out a secret plot to overthrow Europe's monarchies and the Christian religion.

What was the truth behind these ideas? Modern Freemasonry had originated in England in the early 18th century, and from there had spread to Europe. In both England and France its oath and regulations enjoined loyalty to church and state, and its membership included members of the Royal Families of both Britain and France, as well as Protestant and catholic clergy. It is possible to find evidence of political activity by 18th century Lodges, but this is localized and certainly not evidence of a radical conspiracy. (In fact early English and French Masonry seems to have been influenced by the Jacobites, supporters of the exiled Catholic Stuart claimant to the British throne.)

The opening stages of the French Revolution were accompanied by hopes of a new spirit of cooperation between social classes, and some masons hailed this spirit as a vindication of the Masonic ideals of human brotherhood. However, as the Revolution progressed its victims included prominent Masons, and the destruction of the French aristocracy brought Masonic activity in France to a virtual halt.

In spite of these facts the ideas of Robison and Barruel soon gained quite a wide following. Some writers twisted them into even stranger versions. One pamphlet of the 1790s claimed that the Masons were the descendants of the mediaeval Knights Templar, and that the French Revolution was revenge for the persecution of the Templars by the French monarchy, four hundred years before.

The Revolution was followed by the Napoleon Wars, and the fall of Napoleon was followed by the restoration of reactionary regimes across Europe. In this climate of repression, radicals in various countries chose to organize themselves into bodies with passwords, initiation rituals, and secret meetings. In Italy in the 1820s the ideal of Italian unity was nourished by



It was in Tsarist Russia where modern antisemitism reached its definitive form. The failure of the revolt of 1905 was followed by officially encouraged pogroms and antisemitic propaganda, notably a document entitled *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

the *Carbonari* or Charcoal Burners, a secret society which like Freemasonry made grandiose claims to great antiquity. In 19th century Russia and Ireland secret societies became focal points for anti-government activities. Even in England the early trade unions practiced Masonic-type oaths and initiations.

As a result the spectre of international conspiracy continued to haunt the defenders of the established order. In 1820 Count Metternich, the Austrian statesman, called for an international conference to discuss means of combating the secret societies. In 1852 Disraeli, the future Prime Minister, could write of the antiquity and malevolence of the societies in these words:

"The origin of the secret societies that prevail in Europe is very remote. It is

probable that they were originally confederations of conquered races organized in great measure by the abrogated hierarchies ... the two characteristics of these confederations which now cover Europe like a network, are war against property and a hatred of the Semitic revelation [i.e. Christianity]. These are the legacies of their founders; a propriety despoiled and the servants of altars that have been overthrown. By the second half of the 19th century a sinister new element was entering the world of the conspiracy theorists. A German novel of 1868, *Biarritz* by Herman Goedesche, describes how the heroes hide in the Jewish cemetery in Prague, and witness a secret meeting between the devil and the Elders of the twelve Jewish tribes. At the meeting those present describe how the Jews are to use their money and influence to make themselves rulers of the world. (As we shall see, this is by no means the last example of a thriller writer

drawing on conspiracy theories for their plots.) [8]

By the mid-19th century the Jews - non-Christian, urban, and only recently liberated from civic disabilities - were in several countries coming to be seen as the major enemy by the rural-based forces of reaction and clericalism. As *Biarritz* shows, this anti-Semitism combined the mediaeval ideas of the Jew as Satan's ally, with the idea of the evil secret society manipulating political events. However, such ideas were not the sole preserve of trashy novelists. By 1893 it was possible for the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Mauritius to end a denunciation of Freemasonry by claiming that the Masons were simply the tools of the Jews, and in his final words horrifyingly to anticipate Hitler: "Do not hope, O Jews. to be able to escape the calamity that threatens you ... we do not wish to be the slaves of the Jews ... we shall forget our political differences to stand firm against the enemies of God. Victory is certain."

At the same time in France the grotesque hoaxes of Leo Taxil found a ready audience amongst the clergy. Taxil, who claimed to be a Masonic defector, described the personal appearance of Satan at Masonic rituals - apparently he took the form of a crocodile and played the piano -

and the secret laboratories under Gibraltar where demons manufactured plague germs to wipe out Catholic Europe. Taxil turned out to be an anticlericist who concocted his tales to expose the gullibility of his opponents.

It was in Tsarist Russia where modern antisemitism reached its definitive form. The failure of the revolt of 1905 was followed by officially encouraged pogroms and antisemitic propaganda, notably a document entitled *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. According to its publisher Sergei Nilus, a landowner who became a religious maniac after losing his fortune, this book was the secret minutes of a meeting of Jewish leaders to plan world domination. The plan involved the encouragement of vice and atheism to depolarize Europe, and the use of revolutionary movements and financial manipulation to bring about the final collapse of national governments and their replacement by a Jewish world empire. This work, in reality a forgery by the Russian secret police, was taken seriously by the Tsar himself, and soon became a favourite text of the Russian ultra-right. As we shall see later it was to exert a malevolent influence far beyond Russia.

Although Russia was unique in pre-1914 Europe in the extent to which anti-Semitism and belief in conspiracies received official sanction, the same ideas were prevalent in many other places. While the Dreyfus case rocked turn of the century France, right-wingers proclaimed that the crisis was the work of 'The Syndicate', a sinister force envisioned as an alliance of Jews, Masons, radicals and German agents. [7]

In Britain the early twentieth century was a period of social crisis. Mounting international tension and the revolt of labour, women and Ireland challenged the fabric of society. One result of this (outlined in other articles in *MUFOB* and *Magonia*) was the outbreak of panics centred on spies, foreign invasions and mystery airships. Another was the increased popularity of antisemitic and conspiratorial ideas. An extremely popular thriller of this period, *When it was Dark* by Guy Thorne, describes the plot of a Jewish millionaire to destroy Christianity by manufacturing fake archaeological data on the life of Jesus. [10] Rudyard Kipling's historical novel for children, *Pook of Pook's Hill* includes a scene in which Jewish moneylenders of mediaeval Europe meet to plan the continent's destiny. Even radical propaganda against the Boer War



One of the major disseminators of conspiracy theory in this era, and a great influence on later theorizing, was Nesta H. Webster



developed antisemitic overtones in some cases describing the war as the work of Jewish financiers.

The years 1914 to 1920 saw world war followed by revolution and unrest across Europe. As the old order crumbled its defenders, like the victims of the French Revolution, looked to conspiracy theories for an explanation of what was happening. Copies of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were distributed to soldiers of the Tsarist armies in the Russian Civil War. Field Marshal Ludendorf, the Kaiser's warlord, blamed the collapse of Germany on a conspiracy of Jews, Freemasons and Jesuits.

England was by no means immune to these attitudes; journals frequently expressed suspicions concerning the 'Hidden Hand' that was allegedly sabotaging the war effort. When the Russian Revolution arrived an official Foreign Office report included remarks that the Bolsheviks were 'International Jews'. Just how widely these beliefs were accepted can be seen from the first chapter of John Buchan's famous thriller *The*

Thirty-Nine Steps. Colonel Scudder, the secret agent, explains that behind every major company in Europe there is a "Jew in a wheelchair with a face like a rattlesnake", and that the cause of World War I is that "the Jew has his knife into the Russian Empire".

One of the major disseminators of conspiracy theory in this era, and a great influence on later theorizing, was Nesta H. Webster, author of *World Revolution; the Plot Against Civilisation* and *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, published in the 1920s. In these books the themes of previous conspiracy theorists are put together in an extraordinary synthesis. The ultimate origin of twentieth-century revolutionary movements is alleged to be a mediaeval sect of fanatical Moslems known as the Order of Assassins. The Assassins succeeded in subverting the crusading Knights Templar who brought their ideas back to Europe, where they formed the basis of Freemasonry. The Masons and Weishaupt's Illuminati had led the French and Bolshevik revolutions. Socialists, the IRA and other radical movements were controlled by the same Satanic conspirators, together with their more recent allies the Zionists and the German General Staff.

It is a further indication of the mental climate of the period that Mrs Webster was invited to lecture to groups of Army officers on more than one occasion, and that in 1920 a leading MP writing on Bolshevism could claim that: "This conspiracy against civilisation [dates] from the days of Weishaupt ... as a modern historian Mrs Webster has so ably shown, it played a recognisable role on the French Revolution." [11] The author of those words was Winston Churchill.

As the Red Army emerged victorious from the Russian Civil War, the Tsarist émigrés scattered to many countries. Some of them formed focal points for the distribution of anti-Semitic propaganda. Their efforts fell on receptive ground. In America, Henry Ford was sufficiently impressed to hire a team of detectives to attempt to track down the Elders of Zion. In Britain the *Protocols* were taken seriously by the most respected sections of the press. In 1920 *The Times* editorialised: "Have we, by straining every fibre of our national body, escaped a *Pax Germanicus* only to fall into a *Pax Judaica*. The Elders of Zion, as represented in their Protocols, are by no means kinder taskmasters than William II and his henchmen". (It is only fair to add that the following years *The*

Times published a series of articles exposing the fraudulent nature of the *Protocols*.)

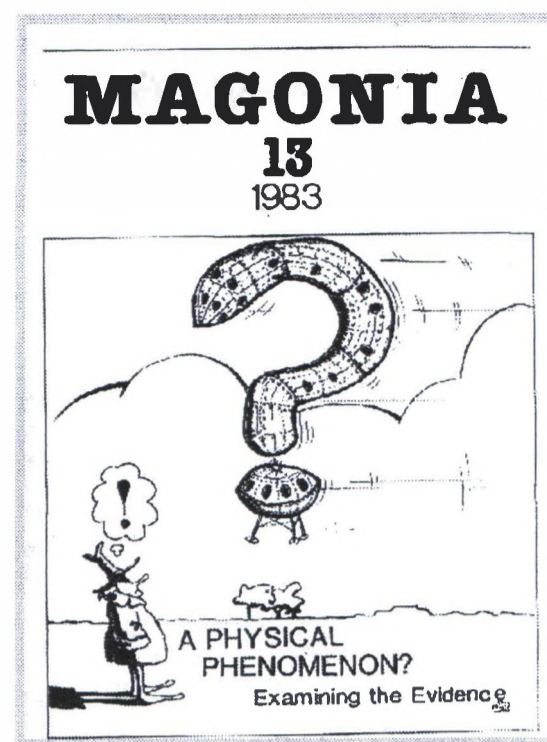
In Germany their publication gave a considerable boost to the embryonic Nazi Party. The results of antisemitism in Germany meant that the type of ideas dealt with in this article became largely the preserve of the openly Nazi groups, like the National Front in Britain [12]. However the last few years seem to have seen a revival in conspiracy theorising. One source of this seems to have been the conflict between traditionalists and liberals in the Roman Catholic church. Opponents of church reform have in some countries like France, disseminated anti-Masonic and antisemitic propaganda of the nineteenth century variety, and claimed that Masons have taken over the Church.

However the main source of modern conspiracy theorising is the USA. This is hardly surprising. The political assassinations of the 1960s left many unanswered questions; the Watergate scandal revealed a network of criminal conspiracy extending into the White House, and was followed by revelations about the CIA concerning the use of illegal drugs, assassination plots and deals with gangsters that seemed as fantastic as the strangest ideas of the conspiracy theorists. Jimmy Carter, whose election had seemed to promise a break from this political underworld, turned out to be a member of the Trilateral Commission, a semisecret club of politicians and wealthy men, sponsored by the Rockefellers. [13]

Many different groups have responded to these events with conspiratorial interpretations. The John Birch Society, once purely an extreme anti-Communist organisation, has discovered the works of Nesta Webster and earlier conspiracy theorists such as Barruel and Robison. The Society now proclaims Communism to be the creation of international bankers, and the Trilateral Commission to be the latest face of the Illuminati. On the Left some writers have abandoned traditional socialist ideas of how society functions in favour of an analysis of American society that sees it controlled by intelligence agencies and super-capitalists. [14] Robert Alton Wilson's *Illuminatus*, a bizarre science fiction novel incorporating left and right wing conspiracy lore has become a bestseller.

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14. For left-wing conspiratorial interpretations of American political assassinations, see: Yazijian and Blumenthal, *Government by Gunplay*, Signet, NY, 1976. Similar interpretations of Watergate and some criticisms from a traditional left viewpoint can be found in: Steve Weissman: *Big Brother and the Holding Company*, Ramparts Press, California, 1974



25 YEARS AGO

The early part the 1980s was something of a golden age for ufology. The silly obsessions with Roswell, abductions and government cover-ups had not yet taken hold of American ufology. In Britain BUFORA was going through one of its sensible phases, when the organisation was being largely run by ufologists - people who did actual investigations - rather than the wannabe management consultants who eventually finished it off.

One of the more attractive spin-offs from this era was the series of Anglo-French UFO conferences held for four years on alternate sides of the Channel, organised by Hilary Evens and Thierry Pinvidic. It was in the first of these, in Boulogne in 1983 that we first heard the phrase 'psychosocial ufology', and became acquainted with French researchers such as Claude Maugé, whose Boulogne presentation featured as the main article in *Magonia* 13. He looked at the pros and cons of the physical reality question in a serious and considered manner.

Italian researcher Paoli Toselli took a critical look at the reliability of eyewitness evidence, something that still splits the UFO world.

In the letters column, Colin Bord takes Paul Deveraux to task for his promotion of the Jennings photograph of light traces as an actual photograph of ball lightning. Bord clearly shows that this was in fact the result of a time exposure of a streetlight.

John Harney also takes a pop at Paul Deveraux for his over-literal interpretation of historical records in presenting a case for physical manifestations in connection with 'earthlights' and other tectonic phenomena and his assertion that UFO material is 'a very sensitive energy form' and information is transmitted to it from the observer 'by the process we call psychokinetic'.

As devoted readers of this column will know, The Pelican has long since solved the UFO so-called "mystery". There are two separate but related fields of study which may be described as ufology, but very few people pursue them. One kind of study uses the physical sciences to investigate UFO reports to try to discover the physical stimuli which produce them. For example, a "strange" light in the sky reported by a number of witnesses might be identified as the planet Venus. The other kind uses the social sciences and involves psychologists, sociologists and folklorists in the study of ufologists and UFO groups, and their beliefs and motivations.

Both kinds of study, if carried out with appropriate scientific or academic rigour, incur the condemnation of UFO enthusiasts, including those who like to consider themselves to be Serious Ufologists.

Certain cases become known as "classics", sometimes because there were multiple independent witnesses, and sometimes because Serious Ufologists, with impressive scientific or technical credentials, investigated them and solemnly pronounced them to be inexplicable.

An interesting multiple witness event which quickly became a classic took place in Arizona on 13 March 1997. This was in two parts: first, a formation of lights which was seen over Prescott at about 8.15 p.m., over Phoenix at 8.30 and over Tucson at 8.45; then at about 10 p.m. a string of lights appeared south-west of Phoenix, slowly sank down and disappeared.

Because many ufologists rejected possible explanations offered, this attained "classic" status, although it was eventually conceded by some Serious Ufologists, after intensive investigation and much agonising, that the second phase of the sightings was caused by flares dropped from aircraft. Sceptical ufologist Tim Printy noted: "Richard Motzer, of MUFON, had determined . . . that the lights were flares and said so in the Mufon journal. He drew a lot of criticism for this and was called, of course, a 'debunker' and a secret member of skeptical organizations. Even after the identification of the planes involved, Motzer was still vilified by other investigators when he should have been praised for his good work." (1)

As for the first phase of the

THE PELICAN WRITES



El Pelicano es fuerte en sus apreciaciones, pero muy razonable.

sightings, some Serious Ufologists proclaimed that the V-shaped formation of lights was an enormous triangular UFO. However, Tony Ortega, a journalist who actually investigated the sightings, identified the lights as aircraft flying in formation. He wrote an article in which he criticised the treatment of the case by NBC in a programme titled "10 Close Encounters Caught on Tape". (2) In the article, Ortega said that he had interviewed a young man who had seen the V-formation from his backyard and trained his Dobsonian telescope on it, which revealed it to be a formation of aircraft. He wrote: "When the young man, Mitch Stanley, tried to contact a city councilwoman making noise about the event, as well as a couple of UFO flim-flam men working the local scene he was rebuffed. I was the first reporter

to talk to him, and, as a telescope builder myself, I made a thorough examination of his instrument and his knowledge of it."

Some Serious Ufologists dismissed this explanation, saying that a formation of aircraft could not appear as a solid object, as described by some of the witnesses. Others took the simpler course of just ignoring it.

Does this mean that there was a high-flying formation of aircraft observed by Mitch Stanley, who somehow failed to notice the V-shaped UFO, or that he was lying about what he claimed to have seen through the telescope? It seems that having reluctantly agreed to flares as the explanation for the first set of sightings, Serious Ufologists were determined to hang on to the idea of the second set of sightings of a True UFO. Seeing a Classic case being completely junked was just too much to bear. Think of the comfort and joy it would bring to the skeptibunkers and noisy negativists!

Of course, the Serious Ufologists' error here is to entertain the notion that *some* UFO reports are sightings of alien craft and that their task is to recognise these and add them to the list of unexplained cases. The notion that the true explanations for sightings that remain unidentified after being investigated by Serious Ufologists is that they are alien craft, is what makes ufology a pseudoscience. The truth, of course, is that there are numerous true explanations and, in some cases such as the Berwyn Mountain incident, three or more true explanations. It is absurd to suppose, for example, that the cause of the RB47 incident will be the same as that of Socorro.

It is not just the nuts-and-bolts ETH Serious Ufologists who are rather flaky, but also those who seek more subtle explanations. As The Pelican has noted in one of his previous columns, all but a very few ufologists do not have a purely objective approach to the subject. And, of course, they usually get away with their dodgy hypotheses and tall stories.

One notable example is 'respected' scientist and ufologist Jacques Vallée. The Pelican has noticed that he has several times told a little anecdote about his early work at Paris observatory, tracking satellites. In one interview he claims that he and his colleagues "started tracking objects that were not satellites, were fairly elusive, and so we decided that we would pay attention to those

objects even though they were not on the schedule of normal satellites."

He then goes on to allege that: "And one night we got eleven data points on one of these objects--it was very bright. It was also retrograde. This was at a time when there was no rocket powerful enough to launch a retrograde satellite, a satellite that goes around opposite to the rotation of the earth, which takes a lot more energy than the direct direction. And the man in charge of the project confiscated the tape and erased it the next morning."

Now this claim raises some questions. The first is the obvious one asked by the interviewer: "Why did he destroy it?" Vallée replied that it was "fear of ridicule". But, The Pelican's percipient readers will ask: If these objects could be tracked by the Paris observatory, then surely they could also be tracked by other observatories and, as the one in question was described by Vallée as being of first magnitude and as bright as Sirius, it could also easily have been tracked by amateur astronomers?

Indeed, Vallée claimed that he later discovered that the same object had been tracked by other observatories and photographed by American tracking stations. Other questions which occur to The Pelican are:

- How does a moron get appointed as the leader of a team of professional astronomers tracking satellites
- Why should anyone be afraid of ridicule if they have accurately recorded data, confirmed by a number of teams of professional observers, so that there is no doubt about its authenticity?
- Is there any truth in this anecdote, or is it just another ufological tall story?

The attentive reader will notice that there is something else about this anecdote which it shares with other amazing UFO stories which apparently demonstrate the truth of the ETH. It is, of course, the lack of technical detail, and the lack of any reference to where this may be obtained. It will be argued, inevitably, that this has been kept secret, despite the alleged mystery satellite's being "as bright as Sirius" and having been tracked by several observatories.

Indeed, most of the Classic UFO cases are notably lacking in precise details, so that investigators have to make do with rough estimates. There are

often multiple witnesses, but rarely multiple *independent* witnesses.

Some ufologists, then -- Serious or otherwise -- examine UFO abduction reports in the hope of gaining decisive evidence. These have the advantage that the relevant information is available to the enthusiastic amateur, and can not be kept secret like that obtained by government agencies with their radars and other remote-sensing devices. Many abductionists (abductologists?) ferociously attack the authors of papers which seek to explain abductions in psychological terms, notably as the effects of sleep paralysis, with the details being drawn from popular culture, together with the leading questions asked by the abduction enthusiasts. They object that many abductions take place while the subjects are awake. But couldn't it be true that, in some cases, the abductees are not really awake when they have their experiences, but only think they are? The following account, which does not involve an alien abduction scenario, should give believers in alien abductions pause for thought:

I was abducted in broad daylight from a MacDonaldis

"I was abducted in broad daylight from a McDonalds.

"This was in Minnesota about 25 years ago. I got up from a nap one day and walked down to a McDonalds where I always went because all my friends hung out there. As I was standing in line to get my coffee I suddenly fell backwards for no apparent reason right onto the guy who was standing behind me. A second later I was lying on my back, back in my bed at home. But I was lying on top of the guy I had fallen onto at the McDonalds. He had my arms pinned and he was sniggering in my ear. I was pretty much paralyzed. There was someone else in the room, too. This guy paced back and forth slowly, not looking at me or the other guy, seeming to be waiting for something to happen. He looked depressed. The guy holding me down kept sniggering in my ear and seemed to be enjoying the fact I was

paralyzed. I was completely terrified, to say the least, and couldn't even struggle. "This went on only a short time, though, maybe a quarter minute at most, and then they both suddenly evaporated. I was there alone lying on my bed. I could move now, but was completely upset and in shock about what had just happened. It had all been completely vivid in all detail: I could see, hear and feel them perfectly clearly while it was going on. "I didn't learn about the phenomenon of sleep paralysis until quite a few years later, and used to just think of the incident as some kind of nightmare. Anyway, I know why "abductees" are loath to assume they are any kind of hallucination: they seem too vivid. We have the false preconception that hallucinations are supposed to be unrealistic somehow, have some dreamlike insubstantiality that gives them away as hallucinations, but they don't. What was especially peculiar was the "set up": the part where I hallucinated walking all the way to the McDonald's when I was actually still at home in bed. I suppose I really wanted to

go down there but got caught in some "interzone" where my neurotransmitters hadn't all shifted back into waking mode allowing me to hallucinate I was doing what I wanted to do. "Had it been two grey alien looking things instead of two humans, I'm sure I'd have been seriously considering that I'd been abducted by space aliens." (3)

Most UFO incidents, whether abductions or strange things in the sky, are not what they seem. Hoaxes, often quite elaborate and well organised, are more common than American Serious Ufologists like to believe. The Pelican can reveal that the US government, and other governments, are not going to disclose the evidence that UFOs are interstellar spacecraft, either now or at any time in the foreseeable future, for the simple reason that they possess no such evidence. It's true. Trust The Pelican and retain your sanity, and Make Ufology History.

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BOOK REVIEWS



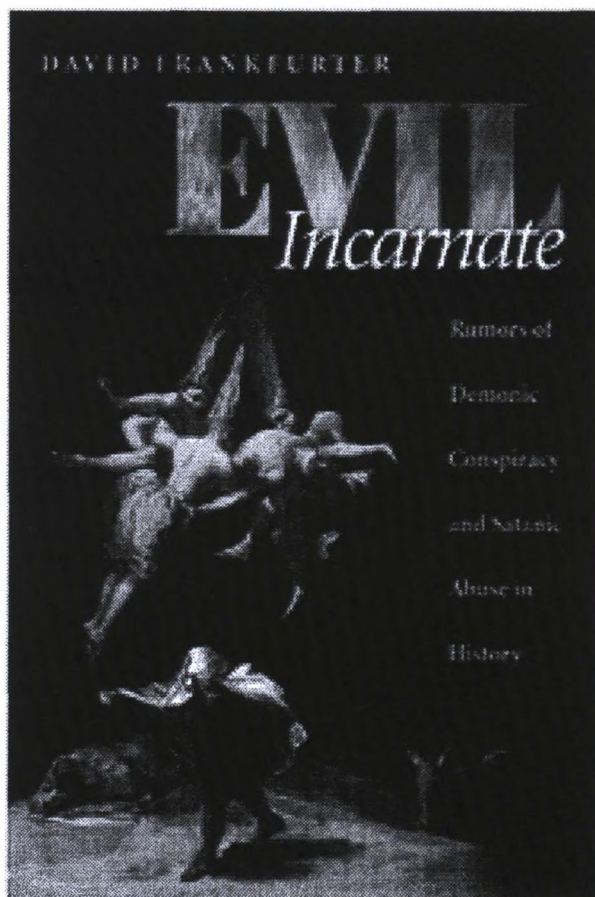
- **David Frankfurter.** *Evil Incarnate: rumours of demonic conspiracy and Satanic abuse in history.* Princeton University Press, 2006. \$29.95
- **Susan Faludi.** *The Terror Dream: what 9/11 revealed about America.* Atlantic Books, 2008 £12.99

In this important book David Frankfurter links together images of evil and obscene ritual from historical European witchcraft fears, contemporary witchcraft panics in the Third World and Satanic abuse allegations in the West. All are linked with the imagination of monstrous and terrible rituals which reverse the social order and invert the values of the ruling culture.

Echoing somewhat arguments made by John Rimmer in another context more than forty years ago, Frankfurter sees these images of 'the terrible others' as containing features which offer obscene parodies of the hegemonic culture of the period. In early modern Europe this was the ritual of the all embracing global church, in modern Africa the witches symbolically manipulate images of modernity like cosmetics and TV sets, products of the global capitalist culture.

The imagery derives from deep common themes of the human imagination, the antihuman forces which violate all true human bonds; they eat in excrement rather than void it out, they use children as nourishment rather than nourish them, they destroy crops instead of harvesting them etc. They are not just images of anti-society, but of anti-life.

In highly structured and controlled societies these fantasies, whether the confessions of witches or the 'recovered'



memories of satanic abuse victims offer windows onto the world of the 'terrible other', the chaotic forces of the wilderness, through which members of the society can stare with appalled fascination. The thought occurs to me that this portrayal of the wilderness is what informed the Roman circus, and what informs modern confessional TV, in which those that violate societies mores are paraded before the public, who are strengthened in their conviction that they themselves are part of the ordered and law abiding 'us', while allowing the prurient gaze into the lawless and terrible world of 'them'.

The image of the witch as an embodiment of anti-society means that these are presented as "others" who are not just people who happen to have different customs and beliefs to us, even ones we don't approve of, but are totally outside the human sphere. Time and again the message is given out "don't go down the road, the terrible others out there will eat you, or subject to hideous tortures".

The idea of the giant super conspiracy of evil helps explain the complexities of life, the rise of the modern, global world, with its evaporation of traditional boundaries, especially in the cosmopolitan cities with their commodity culture.

In modern Western society, the images

of evil which circulate among charismatic Christians in Africa or even America - cosmetics, television, mobile phones, various sexual 'deviations' - have little resonance, because they are part of, or largely adopted into, popular culture. We are forced further back onto the idea of children as images of undiluted innocence. Because our society cannot accept that children can have aggressive and sexual fantasies, then the stories more or less coerced out of them by adults, must be 'true' because no pure, innocent child could think such things. Children represent the future of the people, crimes against them are constructed in most cultures as acts of treason against humanity.

Faludi suggests that part of the appeal to therapists of stories of SRA was that they made sense of 'ordinary' abuse; they placed what seemed like random acts of ambiguous transgression into something wider, deeper and more clearly other. Of course we may argue that our society's obsession with sexual abuse blinds us to more 'ordinary' kinds of abuse. For example at a time in which our society (or at least its more insane political leaders) have reached such levels of paranoia that they propose banning images of naked children (there goes a good slice of European art), there is a curious indifference to the main criminal threat to the lives of young children in Britain today: their murder (often several at time) at the hands of estranged fathers. Presumably if these fathers had 'inappropriately touched' their kids or taken photographs of them naked in the swimming pool, rather than gassing, stabbing, hammering or burning them to death, society would be suitably outraged.

Themes of kidnap and violation are another source of permissible pornographic appeal, the fears that the terrible others are going to take 'our' women and children out

into the wilderness and do unspeakable things to them. This was theme of the first great wave of American alien abduction stories, those of white women kidnapped by native Americans, during the first two centuries of colonisation, which Faludi sees as having a traumatic effect on the American psyche. The stories had the same ambivalent appeal, in that they allowed society to say 'how terrible', and at the same time titillate themselves with pornographic imagery. They also imposed a cultural wound; fears among men of being unable to protect 'their' women folk from the terrible others, which surfaced at the time of 9/11 with quite irrelevant attacks on feminism. Behind this was perhaps the idea that by loosening its tight structures, society was inviting the forces of the wilderness into the new world garden.

These stories of course lead to modern alien abduction themes, which link some of these concerns together, though neither writer does more than mention them. The alien abductors are now seen as mainly threatening women, and they, like the native Americans, can invade the domestic hearth and take the vulnerable away. The aliens are witches of the modern technological age, the stories hold out a parody of modern bureaucratic mass society, and in an age in which many features of the human condition have been medicalised, in which the doctor not the priest is the agent of salvation, we have not anti-churches with anti-rituals and anti-priests, but anti-hospitals staffed by anti-doctors who perform anti-healing.

- **Mark Fraser (editor). *Big Cats in Britain Yearbook 2007*. CFZ Press, 2007.**
- **Marcus Williams. *Big Cats Loose in Britain*. CFZ Press, 2007**

Next to ghosts, mystery big cats are probably the most in-fashion Fortean phenomena in Britain today, and their hunting continues much of the open air adventure holiday atmosphere of the old style sky-watches. Like most Fortean phenomena they are heavy on 'eyewitness testimony' and short on unambiguous physical evidence. Fraser devotes 190 pages of his book to Big Cat accounts from Britain in 2006 alone, month by month. Much of Williams' book, originally compiled by him as a 14 year old schoolboy in 1987, is filled with similar reports.

These stories have been on for over 40 years now, since the Surrey Puma epidemic

Philip C Almond. *The Witches of Warboys: an extraordinary story of sorcery, sadism and satanic possession*. I. B. Tauris, 2008. £20.00

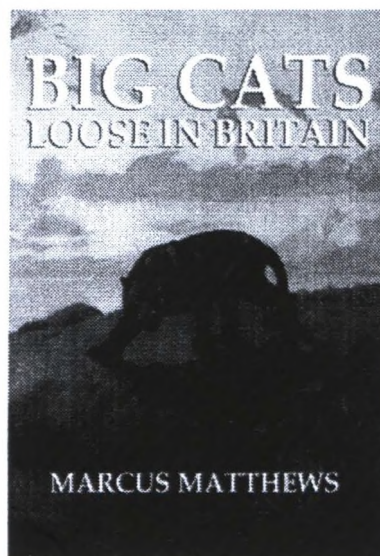
This story of Elizabethan witchcraft accusations, involving ancestors of both the poet Dryden and Oliver Cromwell shows the power of children to destroy peoples lives. When old Alice Samuels, said to about 80 but probably nearer 60, went to visit her rich neighbours, the Throckmorton's to commiserate with the illness of one of their children, the said child and accused her of being a witch. This is the start of a long complex story in which one after the other the Throckmorton children develops fits and accuse Alice and her husband and daughter of witchcraft, accusations which were to lead to the three's execution.

Almond narrates the story from its beginning to end, yet we never really understand why these accusations, which also included to bewitching to death of Lady Cromwell, a friend of the Throckmorton's, were made in the first place. Were the children attention seekers, were they put up to some of this by adults? The Throckmorton's were puritans, the Samuels were rough trade. Alice seems to have been a natural victim, abused by her husband and treated like dirt by her daughter. Was she seen as easy game by the children. Part of the problem with this account is that essentially it relies on a single source, a contemporaneous pamphlet. with some family background taken from the parish registers, so much of the background is missing. Perhaps if Almond had been able to examine all available documents from the period relating to Warboys, more might have been discovered.

of 1964, and the sheer numbers of reports make any 'paws and pelts' explanation very difficult to entertain. There are various such explanations, ranging from Di Francis's claim that they are a lost native species, Marcus Williams's that they are descendants of exotic cats imported by the Romans, to the belief that they are modern releases in the countryside.

The first two of these hypotheses really stumble on the lack of historical evidence. If there really were big cats in medieval times, like boars, bears and wolves they would have been hunted for sport, probably to extinction. No doubt the hunting of the largest cats would have been the exclusive prerogative of the King and his close favourites and special dogs would have been bread for the task.

Modern releases made sense in the 1970s, after the passing of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act, but 30 years on? We would have to assume some kind of ongoing conspiracy to import exotic cats from around the world and release them into the English countryside for the sheer hell of it. This would be a much more dangerous hoax than the manufacture of crop circles. While not



impossible - we should never set any limits to the depths of human stupidity and recklessness - it doesn't seem very probable. There are no confessions and again practically no physical evidence.

Indeed reading these books, one sees just how similar to other Fortean phenomena they

are, the physical evidence is always ambiguous: the marks on the ground which might be paw prints, the photographs which always show a blob in the background and never close detail, the animal kills and mutilations, the appeal to eyewitness authority (X is a real country person who couldn't possibly mistake a large domestic cat or a dog for a puma etc.). There are stories of road kills, but always the corpse mysteriously disappears or is inadvertently disposed of. There are even tales of mysterious white vans coming to collect the bodies, no doubt to transport them in black helicopters to the underground facility where they keep the stuffed aliens.

Given this background it is not surprising that some people evoke the supernatural or wild ufological phantoms, but that is definitely a route to



be resisted. The most probable explanation of such reports, is that while a very small proportion probably do refer to genuine escapes, releases, the vast majority are misidentifications and misperceptions of large pussy cats either homed or feral and a variety of dogs. As I have noted before, the real phenomenon or phenomena are the processes by which people lose the sense of what they are looking at.

The mystery cat, the alien big cat is a myth for our age, a vision of wildness intruding on what we conceive as the tamed world. They have a kind of green feeling about them, there is something romantic about the idea of wild nature having some last surprise, such that even England's green and pleasant land contains some beast of the ultimate wild. There are other darker echoes, the big cats and coming towards the suburbs of the great cities.

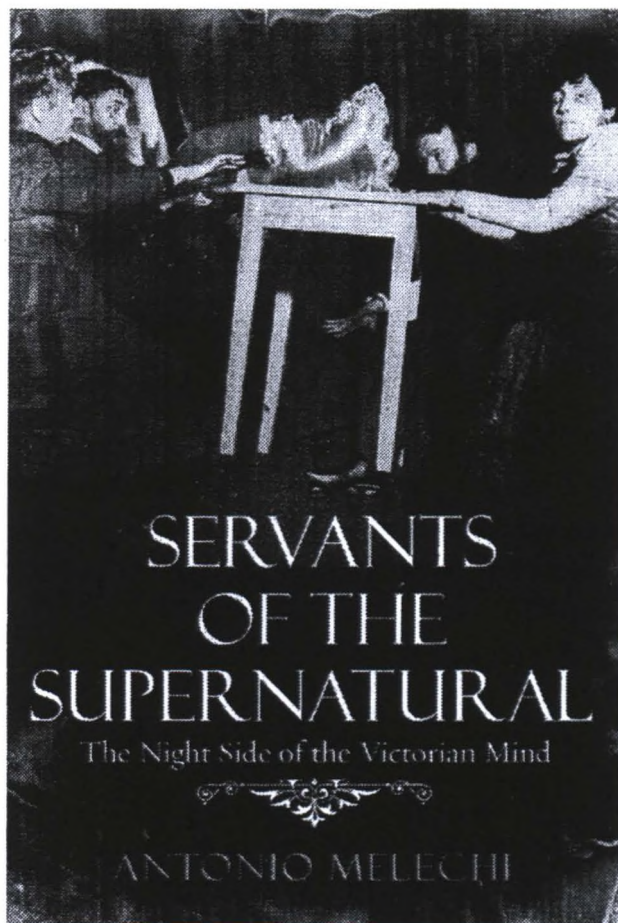
The city was once seen as the *citivas* whose walls protected its inhabitants from the wild terrors outside, now cities are themselves seen as savage and wild places, urban jungles, fit places for jungle beasts to roam. Then have you noticed how many melanistic leopards - 'black panthers' - are reported, compared with the much more common spotted leopard. Along with tawny pumas, not many snow-white cats or striped tigers. Like the Greys in the flying saucers these are exotic, alien, foreigners, at once alluring and menacing, images of the 'other'. Is it significant that these stories began at a time of mass immigration, and are now resurging at another time of mass fears over 'the others'?

Are we then going to see these connections more explicit, with tabloid claims of exotic bog cats being smuggled into Britain through the Channel tunnel by gangs of Romanian gypsies?

Antonio Melechi. *Servants of the Supernatural: the night side of the Victorian mind*. William Heinemann, 2008. £20

In popular history spiritualism and psychical research derive from the much vaunted Hydesville rappings; this book however explores their roots in the mesmeric and hypnosis movements of the first half of the nineteenth century. It centres around the life and controversial career of the mesmeric pioneer John Elliotson, and those who followed in his footsteps, producing all kinds of weird exhibitions and strange phenomena.

At the heart of many of the these



performances were the 'servants of the supernatural', literally domestic servants, often like the Okey sisters performers in mesmeric trances, but also perhaps like Harriet Martineau's maid Jane Arrowsmith, the ones doing the mesmerising.

These performances contained in embryo most of the later (alleged) phenomena studied by psychical research, such as clairvoyance, telepathy and spirit guides. Interpretations varied, many such as Elliotson attributed the mesmeric effects to some new and mysterious physical force, they were materialists who were also attracted to phrenology. Others looked to more spiritual solutions.

Magonia readers, looking at many of the performances by the servants of the supernatural, will note features not commented on directly by Melechi, such as the similarities to the performances of those who claimed to be under the spells of witches, or possessed by spirits, there are also distinct similarities to modern claims of 'electromagnetic sensitivity', wherein we can see a modern continuation of the idea of electricity as a mysterious occult force.

The question remains as to what these trances and performances were, "genuine" altered states of consciousness or acting out a role. Perhaps there is not such a dichotomy here as we might think, in that what is involved is a state of total absorption in a given role. These roles and performances like the 'hysteria' they were often supposed to cure were protests against the physical and social constrictions of women's bodies and

minds. The subordinate women such as the Okeys were able for a limited time to escape their backgrounds by becoming performers in the 19th century equivalent of *Big Brother*.

If the first part of this book was fascinating, I found Melechi rather less assured in his discussion of post 1848 spiritualism and psychical research, largely because the topic is just too large for the space allocated. The role of performance clearly comes into the discussion, and the use of spiritualism as a highway out of confined and boring situations. It propels Daniel Home from a probable future working in a store or a low grade class-room in some dull American Mid-West small town, to being a honoured guest of royalty. It takes Leonara Piper out of her boring old rut of domestic life to meet some of the leading intellectuals of her time. Similarly becoming the conduit for 'spirit guides' of a particularly exalted character allows Rev Stainton Moses to articulate ideas and beliefs which would not exactly befit a Church of England clergyman of the period.

The account ends with the most enigmatic of all these mediums, Mrs Piper who greatly impressed the likes of Richard Hodgson, William James and Oliver Lodge but who failed to impress psychologists Stanley Hall and Amy Tanner. All that is left to us are contradictory texts which people will evaluate in terms of their own temperaments and beliefs, and which can never lead to resolution. Melechi does hint at a way she could have acquired information without resorting the supernormal powers. Given the extreme conditions that were set up, the only possible source of information was the investigators themselves. Melechi suggests that when she was in a 'trance' those around her let their guard down and talked among themselves as she wasn't there.

But I wonder if this was only when she was in trance? Perhaps at an unconscious level these SPR grandees saw her as their employee and hence their servant, and on occasion just fell back into the habit of talking in front of their servant as she were not there, as their class were habituated to do in front of the housemaid. For all their hard line conscious precautions, including the employing of private detectives to follow her (proof of course that they did not regard her as their social equal) they couldn't overcome their own unconscious prejudices and habits.

an alien who's who

Martin S. Kottmeyer, Editor

Martin S Kottmeyer (editor). *An Alien Who's Who*. Foreword by Greg Bishop, illustrations by Charles Berlin. Anomalist books, 2008. £10.50

Prolific Magonia contributor Martin Kottmeyer has assembled an extensive collections of the names of aliens allegedly encountered, channelled etc. by contactees and abductees. For each are given their alleged home, and a synopsis of their messages. The result is an enormous testimony to the poverty of the human imagination, or at least the poverty of the imagination of the sort of people who become UFO contactees. There is sameness about most the names (Acor, Acta, Adela, Affa, Adam Altar and just plain Altar...the way through to Zolton, Zoosh, Zorotus and last but by no means least Zyloo). Their messages never produce a single original thought, always the same old recycled Theosophy and new age babble.

Of course some of these people's imagination was so limited that coming up with names like Jemi, The Jilsron and Jitro Cletaw was too much effort. They could use biblical John, Jonah and the like, or just common or garden names. Perhaps the laziest was Christa Tilson who came up with "The Doctor", presumably assuming no one else watched *Dr Who*.

Displaying rather more imagination were various jokers at the time of the 1897 airship who came up with names like Higlio Hogag and Mrs Neptuniandustireceas!

Presumably as sop to the sort of people who believe in contactees and chandlers there is an introduction by Greg Bishop which tries to hint that some of these messages come from a vague elsewhere, but not any of the messages listed here you can be sure. Needless to say Kottmeyer himself does not engage in that sort of speculation.

Also useful for those who want more exotic names for their children, puppies or pop groups (try Sharri and the Shannondoans).

Frank C Feschino Jnr. *Shoot Them Down: the flying saucer air wars of 1952*. The author, 2007. £22.50

The first portion of this book is, I suppose, the sort of thing which would have impressed me had I read it forty years ago as an impressionable teenage UFO buff. The author has clearly done quite a bit of research into the UFO wave of the summer of 1952 and presents some superficially interesting cases. From the vantage point of 2008 we can tell that many of these, even from the details produced here, were classic cases of bright astronomical objects and autokinesis, others being balloons and meteorites.

The reader can also detect between the lines, the atmosphere of anxiety, bordering on hysteria, in which this great UFO flap took place. An atmosphere in which any ambiguous light in the sky could be seen either as a Soviet fighter or Martian bomber. The two menaces seem to have been interchangeable, as the USA felt besieged by shadowy enemies, and an undefined sense of threat.

Feschino devotes considerable space to reports of poorly explained air crashes which he seeks to link to the UFO wave. While the vast majority of these were no doubt caused by the usual suspects of poor equipment, bad maintenance and tired pilots, the two might just be connected, though not in the way suggested by Feschino. If pilots were seeing all sorts of ambiguous lights in the sky as mysterious



menaces, and on occasions shooting at them, then maybe not all those lights were safely distant stars and planets; some might have been other US aircraft. An epidemic of 'friendly fire' incidents in the skies of the US would definitely not be the sort of thing you want to have broadcast. Just possibly this was one of the reasons why the ETH was hyped at this point, pilots may have been rather more cautious about firing on suspected Martian spaceships than suspected Soviet aircraft.

There is extensive coverage of the Flatwoods story, with witnesses being reinterviewed but of course, this means substituting fifty year old 'memories' for contemporaneous reports. The result is that the Flatwoods monster gets reinvisioned as a cross between one of H G. Wells' Martians and a Dalek, the influence of both being clear.

Flatwoods sets Feschino off into a fantasy realm in which the US Air Force has a shoot out with alien spaceships, this being the cause of a fatal air accident on the same day. No actual evidence for this exists of course, and the book thereafter descends into what, even forty years ago, I would have recognised as a farrago of nonsense. Amazingly, the said farrago of nonsense is endorsed by none other than freelance engineer, professional after-dinner speaker and nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman ((it says so on the cover, and this claim is presumably based on his work on a variety of cancelled advanced projects from 1956-70 in the aerospace industry and some freelance work thereafter)

As an after dinner speaker Friedman is primarily an entertainer and not a scientist, and we have no doubt that he gives the various Elks, Foresters and Rotarians, etc. who hire him their money's worth. However it is difficult to understand why anyone in ufology takes him seriously after endorsing nonsense like this.

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Stanton T. Friedman. *Flying Saucers and Science*, New Page Books, Franklin Lakes, NJ, 2008. £11.99

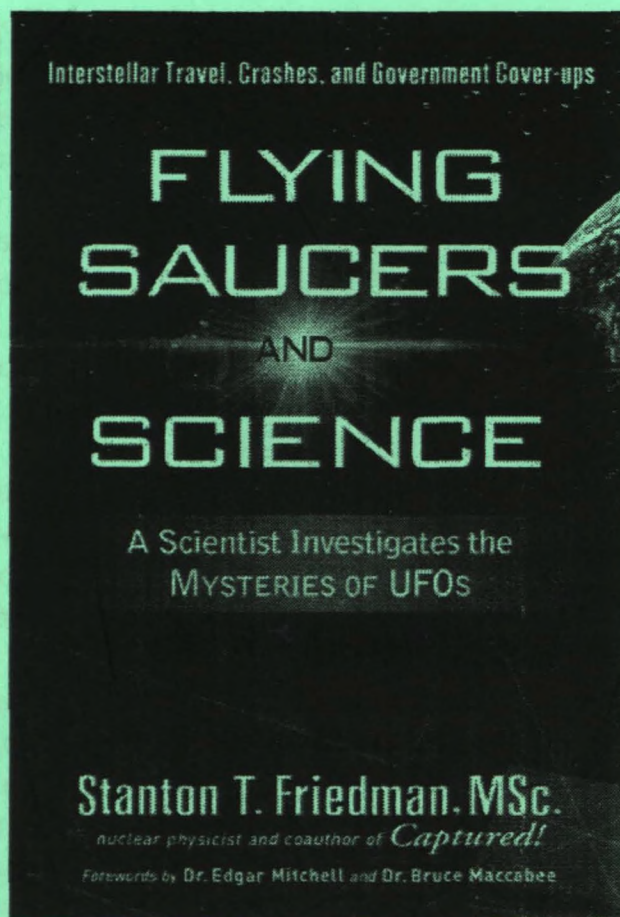
The title suggests that this book should be placed on the Popular Science shelf in your local bookshop rather than Body, Mind and Spirit (or similar phrase), the shelf reserved for books of a distinctly nutty flavour. So, does it live up to its implied claim to be scientific?

Science, of course, has to be logical, but in Chapter 1, 'The Case for the ET Origin of Flying Saucers', Friedman's distinctive technique for applying elementary logic to ufology becomes amusingly apparent. He emphasises that most UFOs are not ET spacecraft. He then warns us: "There are some logical traps awaiting the unwary here. Some people want to claim: 'Isn't it reasonable to say that, if most UFOs can eventually be identified, all can be?' Think about that for a minute. Would it be reasonable to say that because most people are not 7 feet tall, no one is?"

Well, it would be reasonable if there were constant reports and rumours of people over 7 feet tall but no actual proof that such people existed. Imagine a group of enthusiasts who have a thing about tallness trying and failing to find a genuine 7-footer. Visits to basketball matches fail to find any such people. The nearest thing to physical evidence is a few fuzzy photos, almost certainly fakes. Medical experts wishing to study such people offer large amounts of money, but there are no takers. In such circumstances, would it not be reasonable to assume that 7-footers probably do not exist?

Friedman then makes the perfectly logical suggestion that we should concentrate on reports which "remain unidentified after investigation by competent investigators", and that the best place to search for such reports is in the large-scale scientific studies "almost never mentioned by the UFO debunkers".

The first such study he discusses is *Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14*, which was completed in May 1955. He argues that the statistics show that a large percentage of the reports are unknowns, apart from those for which there is insufficient information, and that the statistics were deliberately misinterpreted to hide this fact so that the authors could conclude that "...on the basis of this evaluation of the information, it is considered to be highly improbable that any of the reports of unidentified aerial objects examined in this study represent



observations of technological developments outside the range of present-day scientific knowledge".

His main criticism of this and other more or less scientific UFO studies seems to be that they generally fail to endorse his belief that some UFOs are interstellar spacecraft. He avoids detailed discussion of particular cases, and thus does not need to mention that most of the really interesting UFO reports are highly controversial, and usually less convincing when their details are subjected to critical examination.

Along with all but a very few North American Serious Ufologists, Friedman praises the work of the late Dr James E. McDonald, for to them he is a kind of secular saint of ufology. Also, like the other Serious Ufologists, Friedman fails to mention that scientists possessing the relevant qualifications who studied McDonald's UFO papers did not agree with his interpretations of the sightings and radar records which he described.

Chapter 2 is devoted to arguing that interstellar travel is possible, which deals with the objections of some sceptics who argue that the very idea is absurd because of the vast distances involved. I have to agree with Friedman on this subject (although I would not like to get bogged down in the technical details). It is indeed true, as he asserts, that many sceptics fail to consider all the relevant details and fail to get their sums right. They are reminiscent of the early 19th century engineers who confidently asserted that it would not be possible for steamships to

cross the Atlantic because they would not be able to carry enough coal.

However, it seems to me that this question is not strictly relevant to the question of the possible ET origin of some UFOs, because the task of ET enthusiasts is to find unquestionably authentic UFO sightings where the only possible answer is an ET craft. How they get here is not our problem.

Also, where they come from is not our problem, at least unless and until we establish that the alien ET craft really exist. But Friedman persists in dealing with matters which form the background of the UFO controversy, rather than the UFO reports themselves. These include SETI, which he calls "Silly Effort To Investigate", as he thinks it unlikely to produce results as it makes unwarranted assumptions about ET activities and "the generally unscientific basis for the SETI movement, and the strong negativity of its comments about UFOs, despite its clear ignorance of the subject".

As Friedman is apparently so convinced that some UFOs are ET spacecraft, readers may wonder why he does not produce the compelling evidence which distinguishes sightings of these craft from the great mass of misperceptions, misidentifications and hoaxes. The answer, of course, is what he calls the 'Cosmic Watergate'. "This means that some few people within the governments of major countries have known since at least 1947 that indeed *some* UFOs are intelligently controlled extraterrestrial spacecraft." He then goes on to give examples of secrets being successfully kept for many years, but these are all matters over which governments have control, such as the development of new aircraft and weapons systems. He does not explain how ET craft, which can presumably appear at any time to any organisation or individual, could be kept secret for over 60 years.

Other chapters include the inevitable topics of MJ-12 and Roswell, as well as discussions of the attitudes of scientists and journalists to the subject.

In his introduction, Friedman tells us that this book is intended to stimulate, enlighten and entertain. If you don't agree with him, so that you are not enlightened by this book, then you are a "noisy negativist" or even a "nasty, noisy negativist". So there! - John Harney

All reviews by Peter Rogerson except where stated