

### The Alderney, Channel Islands UFO Incident of April 23, 2007.

Alderney is the most northerly of the Channel Islands, and third in size after the much larger islands of Jersey and Guernsey. The island is located about 10 miles from the French coast, with Cap de la Hague usually within clear sight at the northern end of the Cherbourg peninsula.

The island has a small airport, for its population of around 2,000 residents, but with many additional visitors during the summer months. The airport is used by the Guernsey based airline Aurigny Air Services, flying on routes mostly from Guernsey to the UK, and with frequent inter-island services linking Jersey, Guernsey, and Alderney. For the island routes, and for the Alderney link with Southampton, the airline uses a fleet of Britten Norman 'Trislander' aircraft, a three engined, 15 passenger seat version of the original twin engined 'Islander' aircraft.

It was on Monday, April 23rd, 2007, during a flight with five passengers from Southampton to Alderney, when pilot Captain Ray Bowyer noticed an unusual bright light low in the sky ahead of his Trislander aircraft. The weather at the time was fine with good visibility, and a light wind.

At around 3 p.m. and with the aircraft about 30 miles north of Alderney, Captain Bowyer was unable to identify the light source, thinking at first that it was perhaps a reflection of sunlight from a glasshouse in Guernsey, much further away and slightly to the southwest of his position.

As he continued the flight southwards the large bright light remained stationary, and Captain Bowyer then used binoculars to study the light in more detail. He found it to be quite well defined and bright yellow, a cigar-shaped object with pointed ends. The object was emitting light, and there was a dark grey band downwards about two thirds of the way along towards the right hand side of the shape. He then drew a sketch of the appearance, comparing the size with that of a Boeing 737 type aircraft. Passengers on the aircraft were also able to see the luminous object as it remained in an apparently stationary position. The object was below the level of the aircraft, and the pilot lowered the nose of the plane slightly to give the passengers a better view.

Captain Bowyer then contacted Jersey Airport, to ask if there was other air traffic in that area. The response was that there was no air traffic ahead in that direction. However, some kind of radar contact was registered about two miles south of Les Casquets, a group of rocks with a lighthouse, about seven miles to the west of Alderney. From this information Captain Bowyer estimated that the object, in that same direction, was about 40 miles away, and must be far larger than he at first thought - perhaps as much as half a mile or a mile wide.

As the aircraft came closer after a few minutes, a second apparently identical object was seen beyond the first one, and more to the southwest towards Guernsey. The aircraft at this time was flying at an altitude of around 4,000 feet, and Captain Bowyer estimated that both of the objects seen were at a lower altitude of about 2,000 feet.

Another passenger aircraft, flying to the south of Sark - about 20 miles to the south of Alderney, and on its way to Jersey, then also provided confirmation of the sighting. The Blue Islands Jetstream aircraft was at an altitude of 3,500 feet, and the pilot's sighting was of one of the objects behind the aircraft, in a northwesterly direction. The estimated altitude was about 1,500 feet below the aircraft, with the object sightings by the two pilots being from almost opposite sides.

Approaching his descent into Alderney, and with the nearest of the two objects appearing much larger than when first seen, Captain Bowyer considered flying closer to investigate. He felt very disturbed in that situation, however, and thinking of his passengers he decided to continue with the landing as planned. The sighting had lasted for about 15 minutes.

Other confirmation of the sighting emerged when BBC Radio Guernsey reported that two visitors staying in Sark at the time had been out for a walk that afternoon, and had returned to their hotel asking what the two bright yellow objects were in the sky, as they looked from their viewpoint towards Alderney.

During his sighting, Captain Bowyer had described the objects to air traffic control, and he later completed an incident report for the Civil Aviation Authority. A letter from the Blue Islands pilot was also sent to the C.A.A, and a report from Jersey Airport Radar Control, which had saved a radar recording of the incident. This showed that the objects had been on radar for 55 minutes, slow movement north and south observed during that time. The Ministry of Defence were also informed, and began an investigation, and Dr David Clarke of Sheffield Hallam University, being also an investigator and writer on the subject of UFO reports, led a separate investigation of the reports.

The first reported news of the incident was published in the Guernsey Press on April 26th. It was unclear at first if the objects had been picked up on radar, because there was no air traffic control confirmation of this. It was soon confirmed, however, that the two objects were recorded on Jersey Airport's primary, low level radar system, not on the secondary radar used for air traffic control, which it was stated would have screened out stationary objects.

Several explanations were put forward in attempts to explain the sightings. The first suggestion, by two astronomers, was that the sightings were probably caused by 'sun dog' effects. These are usually seen as a coloured patch of light, not far from the sun, and produced by sunlight refraction through ice crystals in high altitude cloud.

The reports clearly did not support such an explanation. Most importantly, the objects were reported to be at low altitude, lower than the aircraft, and at an altitude of about 2,000 feet as confirmed by both pilots. The sightings were also from almost opposite directions, with Captain Bowyer and his passengers looking southwards, and the other pilot looking towards the northwest.

An entirely different suggestion, by a Flybe airline pilot on Channel Islands routes, was that the objects were perhaps secret military aircraft of some kind which had strayed into local airspace. It was mentioned that French military airspace begins 20 miles west of Guernsey, and British military airspace is 40 miles north of the island.

The objects seen did not appear to be near these areas, and Captain Bowyer was very concerned that there were such unknown objects at low altitude in busy Channel Islands airspace, which would be dangerous and illegal. He confirmed that the objects were unlike any aircraft, and that they were not unusual lenticular type clouds, or 'sun dogs'- which he had seen many times. The objects were not like any kind of natural phenomenon which he had observed during his 20 years of professional flying experience.

The Ministry of Defence announced, about a month after the incident, that its investigation of the sightings and radar tracking had been completed. The Ministry reported that there had been no threat to national UK defence, that what was seen was stationary - no object had moved towards the UK, and that the incident was in French airspace. This seemed to conflict with evidence that the objects were at a low level in local airspace, unless there was some movement out of this area.

It seems possible, however, that the Channel Islands incident could also have been recorded nearby in France, because there is a radar station near Cap de la Hague, not far from the nuclear reprocessing site there.

Another suggested connection with the sighting is that of possible 'earthlights'. The strongest British earth tremor for many years happened a few days later on April 28th, in the Folkestone area of Kent, causing a considerable amount of damage. Luminous objects or coloured effects in the sky have been reported on many occasions around the time of earthquakes or tremors. It was reported that a NASA geophysicist was also interested in investigating this possibility as a connection with the large luminous objects seen near Alderney. However, it is at present thought unlikely that earthlights could occur over water or the open sea, as in this case.

The incident attracted considerable attention in the national media, and was also reported by publications in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. On June 25th 2007, Captain Bowyer was interviewed in London for the US News Network CNN, and later the same day was

also interviewed for ITV Channel 4, with talk show hosts Richard Madeley and Judy Finigan.

With continued interest, a Washington, DC conference was held on November 12th at the National Press Club. This conference was attended by a number of pilots from other countries, including Captain Bowyer, with the pilots each presenting well substantiated reports of unknown objects seen from their aircraft.

One of the pilots taking part in this conference was retired Air France Captain Jean-Charles Duboc. He had already taken an interest in the Channel Islands sighting, because of his own similar daytime sighting experience of a huge unknown object near Paris on January 28th, 1994. This was during a flight from Nice to London, with the red disc-shaped object seen from a range of about 25 miles. This was also seen by other members of the crew, and was on French military radar for a short time. The object was at a slightly lower altitude than the aircraft, and the radar recorded the object's speed as 110 knots, reducing to a stationary position. The diameter was estimated to be about 1,000 feet, and towards the end of the sighting the edges of the object were seen to go suddenly out of focus before it disappeared.

The Channel Islands sighting has also remained unexplained after investigation, with the Ministry of Defence stating that its only concern is of any defence aspect, and that it does not attempt to identify the precise nature of each unknown sighting reported.

Geoff Falla.

References.

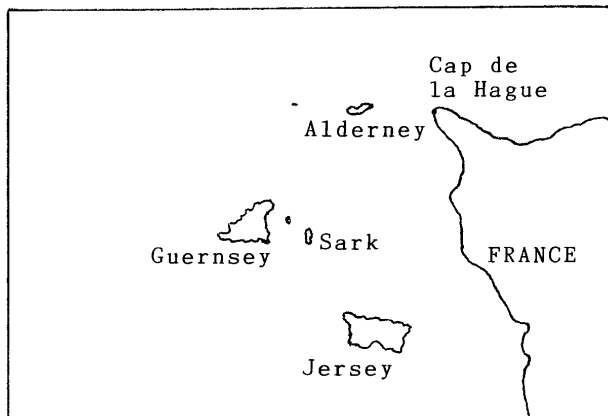
Guernsey Press, April 26th, 28th, May 2nd, 31st, 2007.

UFO Data Magazine, September/October 2007.

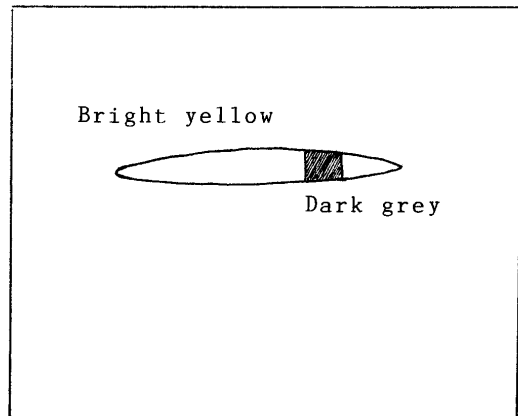
Washington DC National Press Club conference - UFO Data Magazine, January/February 2008.

Paris radar/visual report January 28th, 1994, Peter Sturrock, The UFO Enigma. ( Warner Books Inc., New York, 1999.)

Alderney UFO sighting April 23,2007.



The Channel Islands



Alderney object April 23,2007.  
( Two identical objects seen.)