

## **Investigations Diary 19: UFO Investigation in the 21st Century - where do we go from here?**

*by Gloria Heather Dixon*

UFO Investigation in the 21st Century - where do we go from here?

The last Investigations Diary was carried in UFO TIMES, issue 45 published in October of 1997. From the beginning of 1998 the BUFORA Bulletin took the place of UFO TIMES. Therefore, this will be the first time that I have written an Investigations Diary for the last two years. I hope that I can bring you up to date with the state of play within the NIC (National Investigations Committee) with regard to sightings, the Postal Training Course and some interpretation of the UFO subject at large.

The BUFORA NIC now has twenty-one investigators consisting of thirteen Accredited Investigators and eight Provisional Investigators. Dave Pointon, the National Co-ordinator of the PTC has had to step down from this role due to family and work commitments. However, Dave still remains in his role as Deputy Director of Investigations. With regard to the PTC and as a temporary measure I have taken over the administration of the PTC together with Judy Jaafar, who has kindly agreed to help tutor this course with me. Judy also remains as Secretary to the NIC.

Before documenting details of some the sightings coming into BUFORA during the last year I would like to give our members and readers some wide ranging information and definition relating to sightings and the UFO subject at large.

There is no doubt that the high profile of this subject has started to slide and it is also evident that more and more nonsense and lack of logic is developing around the subject. This is getting us all precisely nowhere in our understanding of the issues involved with the UFO mystery.

What is becoming increasingly clear is the fact that we need look at another part of the equation and explore the reasons this subject captivates the imagination of people, particularly one which is open to such individual beliefs. . Does an association with the pot-pourri mixture that appears to surround UFO subject fulfil an inner need for both researchers and witnesses and does this explain why there is a lack of any real understanding or indeed a need to understand what these phenomena are and mean in terms of human issues? Many anomalies have been dumped into the UFO pot during recent years including remote viewing, close encounter experiences, aliens, ghosts, visions, near-death experiences and all manner of what used to be understood as paranormal or anomalous events. This is creating more confusion and continuing divides within the UFO community in general and therefore not actually isolating what constitutes a UFO sighting or event. Here we are getting into very stormy waters.

Let us first look at the word UFO meaning unidentified flying object. Unidentified that is, until it is actually investigated by various UFO researchers and organisations within exceedingly varied resources. This is very significant because the structures and investigative procedures of the individual UFO group are very dependent upon

the belief system of the investigators themselves. Therefore this will directly affect the way the UFO sighting report is followed up and whether the report will actually be explained in rational terms.

Ninety-five per cent of all sighting reports can be explained; how often have we all heard this expression and indeed used it ourselves as investigators and researchers. Unfortunately, although this may be true, with an even higher percentage probably being the case, it is rare that we can actually definitively explain this high a percentage of reports that come into BUFORA and organisations for some of the reasons listed below.

(1) The case has been reported a long time after the sighting or event therefore it is difficult to check with the specific agencies that could help. In addition to this, there is the problem of witness memory being accurate a long time after the event and there is also the consideration of how the ever present UFO imagery has been absorbed and used in perceptions of some long ago remembered sightings

(2) The various agencies, such as airports, military bases, police, coastguard etc., who could help identify the sighting are often unhelpful or disinterested about responding to our enquiries. They have had more correspondence and telephone calls from 'UFO investigators' over the last few years than they are interested in dealing with and in some cases view us as cranks which is, in my view, totally understandable. The Ministry of Defence sends out their standard letter to most enquiries made by UFO researchers so it is often a time wasting exercise when we write to them.

(3) We then move on to a significant problem that is not understood by some investigators. This problem encompasses reports of unusual lights in the sky (LITS). These account for a large percentage of all UFO reports and have to be very carefully evaluated in trying to elicit factual information from the witness. In some of these cases, witnesses have actually only observed what they term as unusual lights, but will go on to talk about objects as well as lights. Careful questioning will establish that they have not actually observed a structured object' but only lights in the sky. The image of an object to which these lights are attached emerges only as their brain completes the picture to add definition to the lights and create a solid image. An example of this are laser light displays, as the lights rotate and move within the clouds often with inner and outer circles this will give the illusion to people that these lights are actually part of an object although they never really observe an object only the lights. Furthermore these displays can be seen within a radius of many miles cutting out the possibility of being able to locate the source of the show. A case from London last year clearly illustrates this point. The person concerned had captured laser lights on his camcorder and was convinced he had taken video footage of an object not of this earth. Of course he had never observed an object either on or off camera. This case was followed up by two BUFORA investigators, Judy Jaafar and Malcolm Robinson, who after viewing the footage explained to him that these were laser lights. Unfortunately the witness did not wish to hear that the lights he had captured on his video camera had a perfectly rational explanation. This has become a fairly common problem with photographs taken by people, who are convinced they have caught a UFO on camera. To give a further illustration of this lights in the sky problem I would like to mention a worried call I received from the police in Cleveland during December of last year. They had received several calls from people in Middlesbrough

reporting UFOs on the Estan Hills. From the description the police gave me the reports were highly indicative of a laser light display, but they informed me that they would have known about this and insisted this was not the case. I explained it was probably unlikely they would know about various light shows and it was approaching Christmas when there would be many light shows on-going. One of the witnesses called me and I asked where the nearest pub, or nightspot would be. He suggested a pub in Guisborough, several miles to the south east of the Eston Hills. I asked him to get in touch with them and check out whether there was a light show going on. He called me back to tell me this was indeed the case. Mission accomplished and the police were none the wiser! Simple and mundane answers to perceptions of spaceships and flying saucers..

(4) Sometimes investigators are not aware of the amount of traffic technologically, astronomically and atmospherically, that can be seen in our skies, hence some sighting reports remain unexplained, when with the correct knowledge and consultation in the specialist areas, they would have an accurate evaluation or at least a realistic possible cause of the source of the sighting.

I hope this gives our members some idea of the problems that prevent a reliable assessment of the REAL figures coming into organisations, that remain as UFOs, which of course is not synonymous with an alien spacecraft or flying saucer. UFO is indeed a very unfortunate term and has led to much misinterpretation as to what actually constitutes a UFO. The term represents many things to many people and has become immersed and absorbed into the culture of alien encounters. If we can stand back and look at the subject without preconceived notions and with an understanding that UFO actually means an unidentified flying object or more succinctly unidentified aerial phenomena, we could change the way we view our perceptions of the word UFO.

Let us take a look at some statistics logged for 1999. I know that these have already been documented in the AGM Investigations report, but please bear with me. BUFORA logged 217 reports for 1999, which shows a decrease in sighting reports to BUFORA during last year. During 1998, there were 293 reports logged, which indicates a twenty-five percent decrease in reports to BUFORA for 1999 in comparison to 1998. Many of these have been explained, but within the resources that we have there is a residual that do remain unknown at this time.

Of these reports 28 can be defined as high strangeness or close encounter experiences, so therefore we are looking at about twelve and half per cent of reports last year as being perceived in the more exotic framework of alien encounters. This indicates a steady increase in this type of report. In 1997/1998 the more extraordinary range of reports were logged at about 10% of the total figure. There is no doubt that BUFORA continues to receive a diverse spectrum of reports that lie within many areas of extraordinary human experiences, reported to our organisation, due in part to a perception of these experiences as being linked and related to the UFO mystery.

About thirty reports from 1999 were not recent sightings and some of these included reports from the 60s, 70s and 80s, and it is interesting to note that people will make reports that can go back thirty or forty years. This can be very problematic for the investigator to check and they are time consuming, so priorities have to be made as to

whether the case could be exceptional enough to warrant this type of investigation and research. In addition questions should be asked as to whether this will add some valuable or vital information to our knowledge of this subject for research purposes.

The major culprit for UFO sightings still remains as aircraft, both civilian and military. In the case of military aircraft there is no doubt that some UFO reports are actually secret testing of new military prototypes and there is no doubt that the governments and military establishments are quite content that these UFO reports are followed up by the voluntary organisations world wide. In fact I would say they encourage this. The second biggest culprit for UFO sightings is astronomical phenomena in the form of bright stars, planets and meteors. In fact if there was a 'UFO Misidentifications' equivalent of the 'Charts', then the top ten misidentifications could possibly run in the following order.

1. Military and Civilian Aircraft
2. Astronomical phenomena, bright stars, planets and meteors, bolides and fireballs.
3. Laser light displays, which can be seen within a thirty mile radius of the show.
4. Airships
5. Satellites and space debris re-entries.
6. Balloons, weather, prank, helium, etc.
- 6 Reflections emanating from ground lights, the sun, windows etc.
- 7 Mirage effects caused by temperature inversions
- 8 Flares
- 9 Birds

There are of course rarer misidentifications, such as the moon and other unusual atmospheric phenomena (UAP), an example of which is ball lightning, ever controversial, but certainly there are a tiny percentage of reports to BUFORA, which are certainly indicative of ball lightning. Earthlights could also be responsible for some UFO reports, often seen prior to seismic activity.

To muddy the waters further we now come to the close range sightings or close encounters experiences ...or alien abduction as they have come to be known by some in the UFO community and more often in the media. This of course makes really good coverage and sensationalism in the tabloids and various television late night discussion programmes notwithstanding some very real exploitations of the witnesses themselves, who are asked to appear in some of these programmes and in the press! Furthermore it adds to the ever powerful and persuasive imagery of the reality of alien abductions. Of course the big question that remains to be answered is whether the high strangeness cases reported to BUFORA and other UFO organisations have anything to do with UFOs at all or belong very firmly in the paranormal field of study, folklore and mysticism. People who undergo unusual experiences need to explore and identify what is happening to them but their perception of these experiences, reinforced by some investigators and exploited by the media does not create any real understanding at all of what these experiences are . In other words more questions than answers and meanwhile extraordinary human experiences go on and there is little that is meaningful emerging either scientifically or philosophically. These perplexing and profound experiences are all a question of present day interpretation of anomalous and inexplicable phenomena being perceived in today's Space Age and our view of the ever expanding universe, as we look to our skies in the hope of an answer and go on to access endless information on the subject via the internet and the various publications and programmes which surround us.

The grey aliens of today will no doubt become the folklore of tomorrow as we struggle to understand extraordinary experiences and beliefs and what they mean in

terms of human issues. UFO and alien encounters have taken over from traditional tales containing beliefs about ancient times. And so the modern day mythology has been born and in some ways these beliefs have formed the basis for new age religions, as we look to life from other planets to help us in this brave new world we have created. Our apprehensions and fears about our environment, new medical technology, cloning and genetic manipulation are ever evident and no doubt many of us have real reservations about the moral and ethical implications of all this and worrying concerns about a futuristic world scenario

Is it possible that some of these experiences are an ever elusive connection with an external source operating just beyond the parameters of our view of reality, or can these inexplicable events be explained in terms of the unexplored potential of the human consciousness? Roger Penrose, the British Physicist in his best selling book 'The Emperor's New Mind' looks at the vast panorama of modern science and asserts that for all its power and richness this knowledge could not possibly account for the ultimate mystery of existence,... the human consciousness. This of course raises a whole host of other questions, but I believe there is no doubt that the richness and vastness of the human experience can and does in many ways transcend what modern science can explain. Therefore in order to address the nature of these strange experiences, we need to isolate the real mysteries from those that can be explained within the correct resources and scientific disciplines.

Jumping ahead here on the issue of high strangeness events, I would like to talk briefly about the use of hypnosis, which is sometimes used as a tool to extract information about close encounter events. It is becoming increasingly evident with the medical literature to hand on recovered and false memories that there are major problems with using hypnosis to elicit accurate and objective information about close encounter experiences. There is also the possibility that this could cause psychological harm to the witness and this is why the BUFORA NIC holds a continuing moratorium on its use by all investigators. This has been in effect since 1988 and was pioneered by Jenny Randles.

To give you some insight into research by psychologists studying this area of the human mind, I would like to illustrate the research being conducted into the fallibility of hypnosis and memory retrieval.

In an article in Scientific American in 1997 Dr. Elizabeth Loftus, Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington states that "Researchers are showing how suggestion and imagination can create 'memories 'of events that did not actually occur" and in an article from the International Journal of Peer Commentary and Review, Elizabeth F. Loftus and Steven E. Clark, comment that 'it is not surprising that the number of abduction stories has increased at an exponential rate as the abduction myth is weaved ever deeper into our cultural fabric.

On the question of hypnosis they write ..... 'decades of research on hypnotically induced memory reveal that hypnosis does not result in increased memory accuracy but merely increased output. Hypnotically induced testimony has been ruled inadmissible in most courts, because it greatly increases the witness's vulnerability to suggestion and because it based on a false theory of memory.

An extract from the British Journal of Psychiatry on the psychology of memory states.

It is popularly believed that memory operates as a video recorder with events being recorded and stored, awaiting recovery essentially as they were laid down. Memory is, however, a much more complex and less efficient process. Bartlett showed that biographical memory is essentially a re-constructive process in which only some elements of past experience are stored and are retrievable. Far from being recovered unchanged, he demonstrated that memories may be reconstructed and elaborated by all kinds of subsequent influences.

It is obviously becoming more and more apparent that we need to understand the functions of memory and memory retrieval in a much more comprehensive way in order to realise the unreliability of hypnosis and accurate memory retrieval specifically in relation to an understanding of close encounter experiences

During the last few years BUFORA and other UFO organisations have received an escalation of reports of inexplicable sightings and curious human experiences from people searching for an answer to these compelling and profound events. Encounters with ghosts and paranormal activity are often interpreted as alien contact, as powerful imagery enters our consciousness and produces culturally visual models that we access in trying to comprehend what these experiences mean.

And so to some of the sightings that have been received by BUFORA. I will continue to document sightings in future issues of the Bulletin in order to give you some continuity on sightings reports as they come in. I thought it might be interesting in this issue of the Investigation Diary to look at some of the more curious reports and have chosen a random selection of these. To begin thought, I thought I would give details of a case investigated last year by AI Mick Broad of Sheffield. This case does indeed add a note of humour, which may be inherently familiar to some BUFORA investigatorsJ

Location: Doncaster Date: #10th September 1999 Inv. Mick Broad

A report was made by Mr. R. to BUFORA on 15th September relating to a sighting of five lights in the sky, which the witness described as being like stars, but moving. Mick forwarded a questionnaire to the witness and at the end of October received a late evening telephone call from Mr. R indicating that this report was the 'tip of the iceberg'. The witness went on to elaborate on these comments with further details of how his wife, father and himself may have been abducted by aliens, which would account for subsequent strange encounters. He claimed his father had a separate abduction some years ago.

Mr. R also went on to tell Mick about one incident that happened to him whilst driving his Ford Granada Car when a UFO landed nearby and a twelve foot naked alien ran alongside his car at speeds of 120mph, looking at him with vivid blue eyes. He also claimed to have become a mechanic overnight due to this encounter, but did not know what a heater matrix was when asked by Mick! He went on to claim that the lights he saw were not in our atmosphere, but actually travelling star to star distances of 30 million light years in seconds. He also claims to scan the airwaves, collects UFO books and has a book on how to cook in space.

In his report, Mick commented that in his opinion Mr. R had some social problems, as he had become verbally aggressive when questioned on any subject, subsequently withdrawing from the investigation after he realised that Mick had detected a hoax. Mick made some recommendations in his report as to the location that this file should be placed! As he is an ex-Police Officer, I feel he has interpreted this situation very well!

Location: South Vietnam Date: 1970 Inv. Gloria Dixon

This case came to BUFORA via a letter from South Australia at the end of 1996. JB wrote to BUFORA after reading John Spencer's UFO Encyclopedia. His letter reveals some information about a very unusual incident during a patrol of a five-man team in Lone-Jon Island, Vietnam in 1970. According to his letter JB claims they were stalked and chased by circles of four inch by four inch bright lights with 'black eyes', which zigzagged, diving and hovering as close as five feet away. When the team returned fire at these lights/objects, they turned glowing red and the 'black eye' part glowed bright green. These incidents occurred during daylight and at night over a five day operation and JB went on to say that he had two very good slides of these lights, five lights captured on one slide and two lights, at seven feet away, on the other slide.

This was a very frightening experience for all five men in the team and when they reported the events to their Company Headquarters they were told to forget the incident. However, they were then questioned by CIA personnel from Saigon at a debriefing four weeks later and their equipment from that day was searched by American Military Police and two men, who stated they were from Alaska Barge Company stationed in Vung Yau, Vietnam. JB commented in his letter to BUFORA that he believed these two men were with the CIA.

Several months later, JB's parents were questioned by two Americans asking for any film that he may have sent to them, which was deemed to be classified material. His father refused and told them to go away or he would call the police.

JB then went on to say that he would document six other events from his notes and forward them on to BUFORA and could we put him in touch with David Summers a man who he described as knowing about this subject, who apparently resides in Australia.

His letter also gave details of a mobile phone number.

The follow-up to this letter was very unsatisfactory and so unfortunately, we shall never know how much substance there was to this report. I responded with a letter to JB enclosing a BUFORA Questionnaire and asking if he would consider sending us some prints of these lights he had captured. As I did not know of David Summers I gave him details for Keith Basterfield an Australian researcher and also emailed Keith to let him know of this report with the mobile phone number etc. However, I never heard from him again and Keith Basterfield was unable to get in touch with him via his contact address or mobile. So this fascinating story unfortunately remains just that because without any response, corroboration or checks with the witness or his

colleagues during that time, it is impossible to make any kind of assessment on this report. He did however quote his military number in his letter to BUFORA

Location: Cardiff Date: 1st May 2000 Inv. Nicholas Kern

Just after 03.00am in the early hours of Monday 1st May 2000, MC was awoken by a strange sound and got out of bed where she observed a circular object with flashing lights flying past. She felt this was not a helicopter or a plane and emailed BUFORA enquiries. This sighting report was passed to investigator Nicholas Kern in Mid-Glamorgan.

In his excellent report, Nicholas points out some of the features of this area, particularly the fact that Cardiff Airport is nine miles Southwest of the sighting location with RAF St. Athan also in the area. Eastmoors Heliport lies to the east of the location of the sighting catering also for the South Wales Police Helicopters, in addition to routine helicopter traffic.

In his conclusions Nicholas states that although he cannot definitively identify the object observed, he feels all the available evidence indicates that this was an airship, specifically with the description given by the witness. Its relatively slow speed and height are very indicative of this solution together with the noise emitted by the object, which was described as a muted hum. Nicholas also makes a significant point that the time of day is very relevant in this case, as although the witness appeared intelligent and rational, when someone is suddenly awoken in the early hours of the morning, their senses are not yet fully alert. He comments that had she been fully awake and had more time to observe what she had seen she may well have realised the identity of the object. I fully agree with his evaluation and comments.

Location: Carmondean, Livingston, Scotland Date: 12th October 1999 Inv. George Niedzwiedz

In a letter to BUFORA dated 17th October 1999 and a subsequent telephone call from me, Mr. L. gives details of a very unusual incident, which occurred during the evening of 12th October 1999. He was out walking his dogs at about 7pm in a field, which is next to Deans High School, Livingston. It was dark and there are also some woods here. He then saw something in the distance on the open ground, which he initially thought was another person walking their dog. However the figure seemed to be coming closer and he noticed that the figure was a luminous yellow in colour. He describes the figure as being very tall possibly close to seven feet with the luminous yellow colour on the head, hands and feet. His dogs started barking at the figure and one ran away. At this point Mr. L comments that he was no more than eight to ten feet from the figure and he called out 'hello, can I help you'. The figure appeared to turn his head, but there was no response and Mr. L became more aware of the luminosity emanating from the head, hands and feet of this figure. At this point the witness felt frightened and decided he was going to get away from there as quickly as he could.

During my telephone call with Mr. L. it became apparent that this incident had been disturbing for him and when I spoke with his wife, she claimed that when her husband had returned from his walk, he was very upset and felt that he had seen something very unusual.

George Niedzwiedz followed up this case with a Questionnaire and a telephone call, but due to other commitments at that time could not follow this up any further so it was passed to David Colman of Scottish Unexplained Phenomena Research, who is in the area. He has visited with the witness and been to the area.

Mr. L. was certainly aware of the Robert Taylor incident from 1979, but not in any great detail. Certainly Livingston and the surrounding areas of Central Scotland have generated many unusual reports of unidentified phenomena. However nothing further has come to light in this report to date. I will update readers when there has been some further investigation into this incident.

Location: Hedgerley, Buckinghamshire Date: 1974/1975

I received a telephone call on 24th May 2000 from CM regarding an unusual incident that occurred in Hedgerley, Buckinghamshire in 1974 or 1975. The witness is unsure of the year. At the time CM was ten years old at the time and his mother had collected both he and his twin brother from school. They lived on a farm and upon walking down the path to their front door, they observed a silver saucer shaped object hovering above their home which they estimated to be about twelve feet across and at an approximate height of forty feet. CM claims they saw two silver coloured figures on top of the object.

According to CM their mother saw this first and panicked pushing both boys to the ground. They heard a humming noise for about thirty seconds while it was hovering above the house and then it disappeared. CM actually has no memory of this event, but it is remembered very clearly by his mother and twin brother and there have been discussions about this incident over the years.

A questionnaire has been forwarded to CM, but to date this has not been returned. Obviously it is crucial to get corroboration from both the brother and mother and CM is trying to establish the specific year of this sighting and course a more specific date. This sighting will be updated as and when further information comes in.

Location: Manningtree, Essex Date: 13th October 1999 Approx. date.

SR and his son were out by the river, near a new bridge being constructed in Manningtree at about 8.10pm. He was looking for rabbits and shining his night light on them. He then noticed an unusually large object in the sky, which he describes as three quarters the size of a football pitch. Of course estimation of height and size is always difficult particularly as it was dark. As the witness had been in the RAF he was puzzled by the size. He then turned back to his son and the rabbits, but about twenty minutes later turned to his right and saw the object again. He estimated it to be only about fifty feet above the ground and heading directly towards them. He felt that it was about to crash and grabbed his son running across the field with him while the object was directly overhead. He then describes the object rising up over some trees and moving out of sight.

The witness estimated the speed to be about twenty to forty MPH with a green/yellow light at the front and back. His drawing depicts a cigar shaped object. There has been



no definitive explanation for this object, but I would suspect he might have observing an airship.

To conclude this rather lengthy diary for this issue, I would just like to comment that the last two or three weeks have seen an increase in sightings reports to BUFORA particularly the high strangeness reports of perceived abduction claims. We have also received a report and photograph of an unusual anomaly taken from a Virgin Transatlantic flight in January of this year. There will be more on this, as it is followed up and when some analysis has been conducted on the photograph. Analysis will also be conducted in the United States, as the photographer is an American, but the photograph was taken about an hour to an hour and half into their flight from Gatwick back to the States, which why they contacted BUFORA.