

## **Investigations Diary 20**

*by Gloria Heather Dixon*

To begin this issue of the 'Diary' I would like to give details of the forthcoming NIC meeting, which is to be held in Doncaster, South Yorkshire on Saturday afternoon 30th September 2000. I would like to emphasise that this will be an important NIC meeting for all investigators including those who are enrolled on the PTC and I do hope that everyone invited will do their utmost to attend. The meeting will be an informal one and an opportunity for investigators to get together socially, therefore I do hope that as many of you as possible will wing their way to Doncaster on the 30th September.

### **POSTAL TRAINING COURSE**

I would like to welcome two newly accredited investigators to the NIC. They are Mick Broad of Sheffield, South Yorkshire and very recently Nicholas Kern from Mid Glamorgan. On behalf of the NIC, my congratulations to you both and welcome aboard. I do hope we may see you both at the forthcoming NIC meeting.

There are three members enrolled on the training course at the present time in various stages of the course with several new enquiries.

Before documenting a short synopsis of sightings coming into BUFORA, I would like to give our members an update to the photograph taken from a Virgin Atlantic aircraft in January of this year, which I referred to very briefly in the last Investigations Diary.

### **Virgin Atlantic Photograph - 3rd January 2000**

#### **Background Information**

In May of this year Michael Hudson at Central Office received a telephone call from a lady in Kent regarding a photograph that her husband had taken from a Virgin Atlantic flight on 3rd January 2000. Michael passed details to me in order to follow this up.

JS and DS are from Florida in the United States but JS has family here in England and they had been over to see her family in Kent. Their flight back to Orlando on 3rd January 2000 departed late from Gatwick at around 2.00-2.30 p.m. and DS states that between the takeoff and around 4pm he took about ten photographs from the window of the plane as he wanted photographs of clouds to use as backgrounds for his web pages. He comments that after taking a few of these photographs he noticed a brilliant light that seemed to be absorbed in the clouds that they were flying over. He immediately pointed this out to his wife and discussed how

beautiful this looked, but thought no more about it feeling that this must have been the Sun. Readers please keep this in mind.

Upon returning to the States they did not have the rolls of film developed until March and then quickly looked through these for the family shots. However, several weeks later DS collated his 'cloud photographs' and it was then he saw an image that the camera had captured beyond and just over the wing of the plane. In DS' words this was an image, which appeared to be 'bursting through the clouds, captured by the camera and missed in the blink of an eye'.

He stated that he had the flash covered due to taking photographs through glass, which creates glare and felt that he could come up with nothing that could explain what it was that appeared in the photograph. He made preparations to send a package to MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) in the US, when due to an unfortunate family bereavement he and his wife had to return to England, which is where enquiries led them to BUFORA.

Due to his request that this photograph is not shown in any publication, I am afraid that it cannot be shown in the Bulletin, but the essence of the photograph shows the wing of the aircraft and above this is the proverbial 'flying saucer' shaped image with rays of light appearing to emanate from this onto the blanket of cloud beneath. It is a good picture, which illustrates the problems that are prevalent in many other images presented to BUFORA and other UFO organisations.

A BUFORA questionnaire was completed by both husband and wife and returned to me. Bill Rose kindly agreed to analyse this photograph and the text of his appraisal follows:

**VIRGIN ATLANTIC PHOTOGRAPH: 03-01-2000    An appraisal by  
Bill Rose, July 2000-08-13**

The 10 x 8" colour prints provided to me for evaluation are of good quality and they show how well the average "off-the-shelf" 35mm compact AF camera can perform.

The image is reasonable sharp considering it was made through an aircraft's window and the exposure is acceptable bearing in mind the tricky lighting. The field of view suggests that the lens had a focal length of about 35-40mm which also ties in with information provided.

No details have been given about the film stock used, so I am guessing it was an ISO-100-200 colour negative material. I also note that the flash was sensibly covered. One print shows (faintly) the name and UK address of JS etched into the surface (from an overlay) and there is some creasing. However, these features have no bearing on the pictures or their content.

My initial feeling is that the lower and bright area below the aircraft's wing is caused by reflected sunlight, probably from an area of sea, exposed by a break in the clouds. The information provided by the photographer would indicate the aircraft had reached the Atlantic and at that time of day and on that date, the Sun would be low in the west.

This leads me to believe that the smaller and brighter (upper) light source shows the Sun just on the horizon, perhaps slightly obscured by cloud.

I have scanned this picture into TIF format and examined the object's appearance carefully looking at contrast levels, but nothing leads me to change my initial assessment.

The 'flying saucer' hovering above the wingtip is undoubtedly an optical ghost directly related to the extremely bright light source below the wing. In fact, after manipulating the image and adding some further enhancement, I believe the ghost image actually shows part of the Sun spread along the horizon in a band.

This (ghost image) phenomenon is quite common in difficult photographic situations and often occurs with time exposures at night, being generated by street lights and even the Moon when big differences in exposure values occur between a bright object and the surrounding area. More often than not, these secondary images and 'off-axis' flare are not visible at the time pictures are taken and only become apparent when the film has been processed. From a professional viewpoint, this effect can be a real nuisance and often requires retouching.

The faint wispy smudges above the UFO appear to be flare picked up by the aircraft's window (or perhaps a secondary window shield?).

Nevertheless this is a very interesting picture, which could easily find its way into a quality book like the UFO Encyclopaedia as a good example of this effect.

In some further comments Bill Rose states that after running an astronomy programme on the date this photograph was taken, with several appropriate locations, altitude and time variations, even with an hour each way, the Sun shows up in just the right place. One of the difficulties with assessment of this image was that it was stated that the photograph was taken between 3-4 p.m and therefore there was no definitive time. However JS was convinced that the photograph was taken at 3pm or very shortly afterwards.

Both JS and DS did not agree with the assessment on this photograph, as they both genuinely felt they had captured a 'UFO' on camera and after returning the photographs and evaluation to them on 6th July 2000, I have heard nothing further. I believe that they will have the photograph analysed by MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) in the United States, as DS had indicated that they were originally preparing to do this after showing it to a representative of MUFON, where DS commented that MUFON were very excited about the photograph. If they do proceed with this I do hope that BUFORA hears of the results of this analysis and whether they mirror those conducted by Bill Rose. MUFON should probably also have access to the original negative, which BUFORA did not, due to the fact this was with DS, who was in the United States at the time.

There is no doubt that there are many problems in trying to identify visual images of what people perceive to be 'UFO' images they have captured on camera or camcorders. Unfortunately, as BUFORA have discovered, it is very difficult to take away people's beliefs that they have captured an image of an 'alien spaceship' even

after photographic analysis has been carried out. Furthermore, the media continues to show video footage and photographs of alleged UFOs with very little scientific or convincing analysis to back up their claims, but which convinces some of the general public that there are many photographs of extraterrestrial spacecraft in our skies. This of course makes ever more sensational television programmes and muddies the waters of the real issues even further notwithstanding those, who wish to make money from people who do not understand the whole picture (pun intended). There are a great deal of problems with 'UFO' photographs including hoaxes in some photographic cases perpetrated by people for many different reasons including attention and financial gain.

To conclude and on behalf of the BUFORA NIC, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Bill Rose for his time and effort in identifying the image in this photograph.

**Location: Rotherham, South Yorkshire    Date: 15th March 2000**  
**Inv. Dave Sankey**

At about 7.15 p.m. JH was driving her daughter to a friend's home when they observed a light in the sky moving erratically and in a westerly direction. Her observation time was about thirty minutes and it then shot off at great speed. The weather was clear and dry with a breeze and no cloud cover. The BUFORA Questionnaire shows a drawing of a cylinder shaped object with a red and orange light at each end and notes that the lights/object was silent.

Dave makes the following comments in his follow up to this report:

There appears to be some confusion with the exact date and time given in both the initial letter to BUFORA dated 18/3/00 and the completed questionnaire. According to the initial letter the witness stated that the incident took place on Wednesday 15th March. Unfortunately no year was given. I took this to mean that the incident had transpired on 15th March 2000. This of course would be correct for Wednesday as documented in the initial letter. Unfortunately after receiving the completed questionnaire, I found that the sighting now occurred on a Tuesday with no date or month given, but the year was given as 19999. If we assume that the first date given as 15th in the initial letter is correct, then the 15th March 19999 would be a Monday? Further discrepancies are found with the time of the sighting between letter and questionnaire, and both drawings of the object's angle of alignment viewed at the time of the sighting, this being an important factor. I personally don't feel a need to contact the witness in connection with these discrepancies as after careful analysis, I feel the incident was a result of a misidentification, most probably a Police 'air Support Unit'. I have checked with the South Yorkshire Air Support Unit for the date, time, location given in the initial letter, but unfortunately, nothing matches. The area and location of the sighting could also be covered by a support unit from another county (The sighting appears to be in the vicinity of the M1 Motorway.)

The high degree of discrepancies in both letter and questionnaire hinder any further positive investigation taking place. It was also noted that the witness appears to already have a particular interest in this phenomenon and may already be influenced

towards a more biased judgement of the object's true identity. My only option is to contact further witnesses and establish the correct date time of the sighting.

Case Evaluation ' possible misidentification ' of known source, i.e. Police surveillance helicopter. Case on-going until further corroborative evidence is found to support this evaluation.

**Location: Wakefield, West Yorkshire    Date: 17th June 2000.**

On Saturday 17th June 2000 at 9.45 p.m., GD was saying goodbye to his parents, when he observed a fast moving bright green light with a trail, which described as egg/ball shaped and moving east to west just below the few clouds around. He described the light as travelling very quickly on a horizontal path with a misty green trail. This disappeared from sight and his observation time was between ten and fifteen seconds.

From his description, it was highly likely that GH had observed a bolide/fireball, which would be consistent with his observation time and also the colour green with a trail emanating from behind it. Green is a fairly common colour reported for bolides, although they can be observed in many colours usually with trails as GH had observed. An important point to remember here is that because we are only viewing the trajectory along our line of vision, meteors appear to adopt any direction or angle.

**Location: Sheffield, South Yorkshire    Date: 17th November 1998  
Inv. Dave Sankey**

In a residential suburb of Sheffield called 'Hunter's Bar' there is a strip of greenery about 300 yards wide by half a mile long, Endcliffe Park.

It was approximately 8.45 p.m. when ER was taking a walk in a southwesterly direction, when he noticed an object travelling towards him from the direction of the Peak District. He describes the light/object as a silvery white core of light travelling rapidly across the sky under patches of cloud cover. He goes on to explain that it seemed as if the light was inside a glass or crystal globe, almost as if the outer transparent shell was holding the inner light inside. Both aspects had a sharp distinctive silver blue glow. ER gauged the height of the object as about 600-800 feet, but this would be difficult to judge, as he had no frame of reference. He goes on to say, as it traversed from the hills in front of me I had the impression that it was losing altitude gradually. As it was passing overhead it made a 'dogleg' turn of about fifteen degrees. No arc, curved turn or banking occurred, just a simple geometric angle.

ER goes on to describe the angle of turn as being vertical as well as horizontal. He admits that this manoeuvre was very difficult to explain. He then had a brief glimpse of something more substantial, a definite pewter coloured 'machine', thirty to forty feet long with a tubular body with two tubular stumpy wings. He uses a frame of reference of a sophisticated plumber's T-Joint, or three smooth oil drums connected together. He also felt that it rose vertically very fast. The observation time was about

five seconds, a short time for such a vivid description, in addition to the one and half years before this was reported.

Dave makes the follows comments about this report received in a letter to BUFORA.

An interesting documented account, unfortunately the witness never completed the standard BUFORA Questionnaire. The brief description given in the initial letter to BUFORA goes into great detail explaining the sighting, and the witness' recollection of the events are remarkably fresh, particularly as the event took place in November 1998. Nevertheless the brief description given by the witness of the object's shape appears to be vaguely familiar with the U.S. SR 71 Blackbird. Unfortunately the reported flight characteristics and performed manoeuvre do not conform to the standard flight patterns of 'know aircraft signatures'. In particular the extremely low altitude and complete silence would be a pre-requisite for a stealth type defence suppression or reconnaissance vehicle. The safety aspect should also be taken into consideration considering the final over-flight was reportedly over a busy built up area and for a known aircraft to perform such manoeuvres would be against official policy, unless deemed necessary. Of course it has been known in the past for military aircraft to breach these regulations, one good case in particular is the Howden Moor incident. Unfortunately in this case the witness reports that the object was 'silent' throughout the duration of the sighting, a feature I find extremely hard to comprehend, unless we are dealing with a completely new propulsion system or the witness may have experienced some form of illusionary event.

In retrospect the case as it presently stands is only based on supposition and is only worth pursuing if either contact is made with the witness or further corroborative evidence is found from a completely different source.

Case evaluation: Insufficient data to form an evaluation. Case closed until further data is produced.

It may also be a remote possibility that this report is a hoax, as ER has not bothered to return a completed questionnaire to David and neither have we access to a telephone number. In addition, and as David has pointed out we have the length of time before he reported this sighting and the intricate detail in his letter to an event that occurred eighteen months prior to him writing to BUFORA so therefore it is possible that his memory of this observation has been somewhat contaminated with the subject imagery surrounding us.

## **Close Encounter Experiences and Study**

As I reported in the previous Investigations Diary there has been an increase in high strangeness sightings and experiences being reported to BUFORA. So far this year there have been eighty-one sightings reported to BUFORA eleven of which have been logged in the more exotic framework of perceptions of alien encounters and abductions. Several of these were reported via BUFORA enquiries at Central Office. Three people would not give their details, but just wished to talk, others are very disturbed about memories of what they perceive to be alien abductions. One witness emailed BUFORA to discuss strange experiences that had occurred throughout his life

and commented that he had had operations on his nasal cavities confirmed by doctors, but which his mother said he had never had. A lady from the Suffolk area is convinced that she has had many extraordinary experiences and is presently very disturbed by them. Another long letter and diary was sent to BUFORA by a seventeen year old teenager, who in his words 'feels he is going crazy'. He describes a catalogue of what he perceives to be strange and disturbing experiences in the form of dreams and images. He admits to being obsessed with the UFO subject with his room decorated with all manner of visual images of aliens as well as reading all the usual magazines and books on the subject, in particular Communion by Whitley Streiber, which he then began to relate to in a big way. I have sent him an appropriate letter explaining about the powerful imagery and to try to put his mind at rest with the option to call and talk with me, but with permission needed from his parents or guardians, as he is under eighteen years of age.

This is an area that all investigators now need to address as soon as possible, to decide whether support can or should be offered by BUFORA investigators, remembering that some of these reports may fall outside of our remit as UFO investigators. There are major problems with these reports, not least of which may encompass mental health problems in some cases. We need to tread very carefully here. Tony Eccles has followed up on one of these reports where there is a high probability that this case needs to be assessed within the mental health field of study and therefore we remain in uncharted waters with these areas of investigation and research and we are limited with the support we are able to offer. There is also the possibility that in a few cases there are people perpetrating a hoax for various reasons. All investigators must be extremely cautious with their approach to these reports for many reasons, including the possible legal implications should we have problems with a close encounter witness. This is why it is essential that as many investigators as possible should try to attend the NIC meeting in Doncaster, where discussion and debate on these issues will be on the Agenda.

Comments from investigators and members would be appreciated with regard to the above issues.