

# BUFORA

THE  
BRITISH UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT  
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION



## SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Edited and produced by Lionel Beer and behalf of BUFORA. Published 21st August 1971.  
15 Freshwater Court, Crawford Street, London, W1H 1HS.

As the Spring and Summer BUFORA JOURNALS were run together and the RESEARCH BULLETIN is being discontinued for the present (due to Stephen Smith's forthcoming marriage), it was felt that members would welcome a Summer Newsletter to keep them up to date with recent events.

### ADMINISTRATION

There have been a few alterations to the Executive Committee. As you may have noted from the Journal Stephen Smith has resigned from the post of Director of Research, as he felt he couldn't give sufficient time to the job at present. On 5th June, Capt. Ivar Mackay presented his written resignation to the committee and requested that the full text of his resignation be read to the AGM, which will be done. Ivar has kindly consented to continue with certain duties and has organised an excellent programme of meetings for the coming season. Miss Janet Gregory resigned in June due to pressure of her freelance commitments, now that she is working in London. Both Stephen and Ivar have served several years and have contributed generously in both terms of time and in more practical directions. Stephen gave commendable service as Treasurer, prior to running the research side. The Chairman's duties are numerous, and I should particularly like to mention that Ivar made a major contribution at the New Year Show in December 1968, and has provided a home for some of BUFORA's assorted properties.

At the time of writing at the end of July, the present BUFORA Executive Committee stands as follows:

Acting Chairman:	Lionel Beer
Acting Vice-Chairman:	Norman Oliver
Hon. Secretary:	Miss Betty Wood
Hon. Treasurer:	Arnold West
Membership Secretary:	Mrs Anne Harcourt
Assistant Secretary:	Miss Pam Kennedy
Journal Editor:	John Cleary-Baker
Investigations Co-ordinator:	Omar Fowler
Committee Member:	Brian Simmonds
New Co-options (3rd July):	Lincoln Richford Peter Wain

Miss Christine Henning continues to act as Publicity Secretary, answering requests for information about the Association.

Although the current BUFORA Executive Committee is below its full capacity, it is not below strength, and following the last meeting on 3rd July, one felt with some satisfaction that the Association was fielding a strong administrative team.

### RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

Dr Geoffrey Doel, BUFORA Vice-President, has agreed to look after the photographic department again for the time being.

The post of Director of Research has been left vacant, but it is hoped to fill it soon with someone with sufficient time to devote to this important position.

Omar Fowler is in the process of handing over the job of Investigations Co-ordinator to Mr Tim O'Brien, a retired oil executive. Omar has served a good term in this office over the past two years, and the Association owes him a debt for his quiet but efficient organisation. The hand over date has been agreed for 1st September, after which time



present but Ernst hopes to re-awaken interest later in the year. For anyone who would like to write, the address is: Ernst Linder, Chairman - Ifologiska Sällskapet, Linnegatan 102, 11523 Stockholm, Sweden.

## PROJECT WARMINSTER

On 3rd July the Executive Committee agreed to sponsor up to £100 from BUFORA funds for PROJECT WARMINSTER which is being directed by John Cleary-Baker, with Arnold West acting as Co-ordinator. £50 was voted towards the cost including site rental, of a caravan for residential and administrative use at Warminster. The caravan was obtained and refurbished through the courtesy of Arnold West and currently resides at the Woodcock Caravan Estate at Warminster. The remaining £50 was voted to cover administrative expenses including the issuing of leaflets and information. I had hoped to give you an interim report on the Project, but at the time of writing nothing has come through yet.

Also located near Warminster, but independently sponsored by members of the Bedfordshire UFO Society is a caravan containing a battery of chart recorders for monitoring meteorological conditions, magnetic fluctuations, VLF radio waves and electrostatic variation in the atmosphere. In fact all these are related to fields of disturbance that it has been postulated a UFO might give rise to. Although the electronic equipment and recorders need regular attention, being still in the "field trial" stage, they are none-the-less operational, and I for one was most impressed. I feel that the BUFOS enterprise means we have reached square two on the way to solving the UFO problem. If visual observers at Warminster conduct regular disciplined watches, so that nothing unusual is missed, then if something unusual is seen, and it also shows up on the BUFOS charts as an extra large "squiggle", then we may well be making progress!

Readers are therefore strongly recommended to hear David Viewing's talk at Kensington Library on 4th September, when he is expected to describe the BUFOS instrumentation and discuss potential experiments for recording UFO "events".

## Dr. James E. McDonald

### OBITUARY

It was with both shock and surprise that we learned of the death of Dr James (Jim) E McDonald, 51, who was one of the world's leading scientific exponents on UFOs. His body was found in an Arizona desert area near the bridge at Canyon Del Oro, next to Ina Road on Interstate 10 near Tucson, at about 11 am. on Sunday 13th June. A .38 caliber revolver was found lying near his body together with a note, indicating that he had committed suicide. Tucson police records indicated that McDonald was blinded when he shot himself in the head at his home on 9th April, and he also left a note at the time of the first shooting. Detectives said he apparently killed himself for personal reasons, and the cause has been attributed to a critical domestic problem. Dr McDonald was a senior physicist at the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. He probably did more than any other person to convince the scientific community that UFOs were a problem worthy of serious study and spoke to hundreds of official, scientific and non-technical groups on ufology. He was highly critical of the Condon Report and stated before the November 1969 AAAS UFO symposium that the Report only included a tiny fraction of the most puzzling UFO reports and that its level of scientific argumentation was wholly unsatisfactory. In 1967 he wrote to U. Thant urging that the United Nations Organisation sponsored research into the UFO enigma. On 3rd March this year, he testified before a House of Representatives transportation sub-committee in Washington D.C. about the possible environmental hazards of a large fleet of Supersonic Transport Planes (SST) flying through the stratosphere. He said that the altitude the SSTs flew at could result in the reduction of ozone, which screens out the sun's ultra-violet radiation. This, he said, could increase the incidence of skin cancer in the USA by about 10,000 new cases a year. He was the author of "Physics of Cloud Modification" and numerous other papers. He left a widow, four daughters and two sons. His death is a distressing and major loss in the field of UFO research.



Acknowledgement: SPACELINK correspondents, Gil Bernier and Allen Benz for airmailing obituary and biographical details.

THE NATIONAL SKY WATCH and comments on sky watching

Although BUFORA and COS-MOS played a large part in arranging the annual exercise this year, it was a good example of inter-group co-operation and one feels the credit must be shared amongst all those individuals, representing about ten organisations, who took part in this joint effort. But why didn't someone phone in from Warminster - I cannot believe that there was no one down there watching? Perhaps next year members of Contact (UK) will also feel able to co-operate?

Many people, including myself have doubts about the value of sky watching, but this is partly because some watchers appear to think it is sufficient to shamle around in a scientifically undisciplined manner. If a watch is to be of value, it needs to be continuous, with observers looking to different points of the compass respectively, and changing shifts at regular intervals. While a trained observer can at best watch 1,000 degrees of sky, a good elevation might provide 4,100 degrees to observe. Therefore the ideal scheme is a shift of four observers, sitting comfortably in a reclining position. A fifth observer, not necessarily in the middle, could be assigned to watch the sky directly overhead. An essential item of equipment is a tripod mounted (not hand-held) camera ready for instant use. A good pair of binoculars will often identify "lights on the horizon" and eliminate car headlights/aeroplanes etc, at an early stage. Where only a handful of people are available, their watching potential is obviously very limited, but they can still follow the same principles, and perhaps watch in rotating shifts with two people facing in opposite directions on duty, and the remaining 1, 2, or 3 persons relaxing or keeping a casual observation. The national sky watch organised by Edgar Hatvany in June 1968 was particularly successful, with several minor "events" being logged. Consequently, a number of previously sceptical delegates at the Bristol UFO conference organised by Graham Knewstubb and BFSB in July 1968, were persuaded as to the merits of co-ordinated sky-watching.

Following the success of this year's national sky watch, Lincoln Richford has accepted the position of organiser for next year's exercise. To facilitate early planning, a date has been nominated for 1972, so please make a note in your diary!

1972 NATIONAL SKY WATCH EXERCISE: The night of Saturday/Sunday, 24/25th June 1972.

PUBLICITY

I supplied details of BUFORA for this item which appeared in TIME OUT (published by Time Out In London, WC1) 11-17th June, but cannot take responsibility for the actual wording. While this magazine might not be my first choice for advertising, this entry was included free and brought the Association a number of enquiries. Our thanks go to Rosemary Pettit.

Also in my role as BUFORA's acting Publicity Officer (having declined a formal appointment) I had the opportunity to set up the publicity for the National Sky Watch article which appeared in THE GUARDIAN on Monday 28th June this year, and was able to brief Christopher Ford at my flat with the able assistance of Lincoln Richford. I hope members agree that it is an interesting piece of publicity, and I would like to thank everyone for their co-operation. However I award a kick in the pants to a tactless gentleman at Guildford, who said it was just a social occasion. He appears to have missed the point of the exercise.

While all publicity in a serious vein is useful, at present we have no room for complacency. If BUFORA is to make a worthwhile contribution to UFO research, besides merely investigating and recording sightings, we must present a critical scientific image in order to attract and retain participating members with technical "know-how". It is an unpalatable reality that we have discouraged some potentially useful people by our middle-along approach. Perhaps after this year's A.G.M. we can get down to formulating a definite programme of research? Members are invited to send in practical proposals.

"SAUCER NEWS" FOLDS

Further evidence that flying saucer magazine publishing is an unprofitable pastime comes in the current issue of Ray Palmer's FLYING SAUCERS (No.73). In an editorial, Gray Barker says that his SAUCER NEWS magazine has had to be discontinued for financial reasons and that subscriptions would be honoured and fulfilled by FLYING SAUCERS. He has now joined the editorial staff of FLYING SAUCERS, which is still the world's largest circulation 'saucer' magazine, even though sales have dropped off in the post-Condon era.

**Flying Saucers**

British Unidentified Flying Object Research Association, c/o Lionel Beer, 15 Freshwater Court, Crawford St., W1 (01-723 0305)

BUFORA investigates U.F.O.s—mysterious aerial objects—and compiles information on the 100,000 sightings on record. National sky-watch on June 26/27th. Warminster, in Wiltshire, is a centre of intense U.F.O. activity, and projects, this summer, will concentrate on this area. A new electronic observation system has been developed for this purpose. Publishes a quarterly journal, and Research bulletin. Also Spacelink.

present but Ernst hopes to re-awaken interest later in the year. For anyone who would like to write, the address is: Ernst Linder, Chairman - Ifologiska Sallskapet, Linnegatan 102, 11523 Stockholm, Sweden.

## PROJECT WARMINSTER

On 3rd July the Executive Committee agreed to sponsor up to £100 from BUFORA funds for PROJECT WARMINSTER which is being directed by John Cleary-Baker, with Arnold West acting as Co-ordinator. £50 was voted towards the cost including site rental, of a caravan for residential and administrative use at Warminster. The caravan was obtained and refurbished through the courtesy of Arnold West and currently resides at the Woodcock Caravan Estate at Warminster. The remaining £50 was voted to cover administrative expenses including the issuing of leaflets and information. I had hoped to give you an interim report on the Project, but at the time of writing nothing has come through yet.

Also located near Warminster, but independently sponsored by members of the Bedfordshire UFO Society is a caravan containing a battery of chart recorders for monitoring meteorological conditions, magnetic fluctuations, VLF radio waves and electrostatic variation in the atmosphere. In fact all these are related to fields of disturbance that it has been postulated a UFO might give rise to. Although the electronic equipment and recorders need regular attention, being still in the "field trial" stage, they are none-the-less operational, and I for one was most impressed. I feel that the BUFOS enterprise means we have reached square two on the way to solving the UFO problem. If visual observers at Warminster conduct regular disciplined watches, so that nothing unusual is missed, then if something unusual is seen, and it also shows up on the BUFOS charts as an extra large "squiggle", then we may well be making progress!

Readers are therefore strongly recommended to hear David Viewing's talk at Kensington Library on 4th September, when he is expected to describe the BUFOS instrumentation and discuss potential experiments for recording UFO "events".

## Dr. James E. McDonald

### OBITUARY

It was with both shock and surprise that we learned of the death of Dr James (Jim) E McDonald, 51, who was one of the world's leading scientific exponents on UFOs. His body was found in an Arizona desert area near the bridge at Canyon Del Oro, next to Ina Road on Interstate 10 near Tucson, at about 11 am. on Sunday 13th June. A .38 caliber revolver was found lying near his body together with a note, indicating that he had committed suicide. Tucson police records indicated that McDonald was blinded when he shot himself in the head at his home on 9th April, and he also left a note at the time of the first shooting. Detectives said he apparently killed himself for personal reasons, and the cause has been attributed to a critical domestic problem. Dr McDonald was a senior physicist at the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. He probably did more than any other person to convince the scientific community that UFOs were a problem worthy of serious study and spoke to hundreds of official, scientific and non-technical groups on ufology. He was highly critical of the Condon Report and stated before the November 1969 AAAS UFO symposium that the Report only included a tiny fraction of the most puzzling UFO reports and that its level of scientific argumentation was wholly unsatisfactory. In 1967 he wrote to U. Thant urging that the United Nations Organisation sponsored research into the UFO enigma. On 3rd March this year, he testified before a House of Representatives transportation sub-committee in Washington D.C. about the possible environmental hazards of a large fleet of Supersonic Transport Planes (SST) flying through the stratosphere. He said that the altitude the SSTs flew at could result in the reduction of ozone, which screens out the sun's ultra-violet radiation. This, he said, could increase the incidence of skin cancer in the USA by about 10,000 new cases a year. He was the author of "Physics of Cloud Modification" and numerous other papers. He left a widow, four daughters and two sons. His death is a distressing and major loss in the field of UFO research.



Acknowledgement: SPACELINK correspondents, Gil Bernier and Allen Benz for airmailing obituary and biographical details.

THE NATIONAL SKY WATCH and comments on sky watching

Although BUFORA and COS-MOS played a large part in arranging the annual exercise this year, it was a good example of inter-group co-operation and one feels the credit must be shared amongst all those individuals, representing about ten organisations, who took part in this joint effort. But why didn't someone phone in from Warminster - I cannot believe that there was no one down there watching? Perhaps next year members of Contact (UK) will also feel able to co-operate?

Many people, including myself have doubts about the value of sky watching, but this is partly because some watchers appear to think it is sufficient to shamle around in a scientifically undisciplined manner. If a watch is to be of value, it needs to be continuous, with observers looking to different points of the compass respectively, and changing shifts at regular intervals. While a trained observer can at best watch 1,000 degrees of sky, a good elevation might provide 4,100 degrees to observe. Therefore the ideal scheme is a shift of four observers, sitting comfortably in a reclining position. A fifth observer, not necessarily in the middle, could be assigned to watch the sky directly overhead. An essential item of equipment is a tripod mounted (not hand-held) camera ready for instant use. A good pair of binoculars will often identify "lights on the horizon" and eliminate car headlights/aeroplanes etc, at an early stage. Where only a handful of people are available, their watching potential is obviously very limited, but they can still follow the same principles, and perhaps watch in rotating shifts with two people facing in opposite directions on duty, and the remaining 1, 2, or 3 persons relaxing or keeping a casual observation. The national sky watch organised by Edgar Hatvany in June 1968 was particularly successful, with several minor "events" being logged. Consequently, a number of previously sceptical delegates at the Bristol UFO conference organised by Graham Knewstubb and BFSB in July 1968, were persuaded as to the merits of co-ordinated sky-watching.

Following the success of this year's national sky watch, Lincoln Richford has accepted the position of organiser for next year's exercise. To facilitate early planning, a date has been nominated for 1972, so please make a note in your diary!

1972 NATIONAL SKY WATCH EXERCISE: The night of Saturday/Sunday, 24/25th June 1972.

PUBLICITY

I supplied details of BUFORA for this item which appeared in TIME OUT (published by Time Out In London, WC1) 11-17th June, but cannot take responsibility for the actual wording. While this magazine might not be my first choice for advertising, this entry was included free and brought the Association a number of enquiries. Our thanks go to Rosemary Pettit.

Also in my role as BUFORA's acting Publicity Officer (having declined a formal appointment) I had the opportunity to set up the publicity for the National Sky Watch article which appeared in THE GUARDIAN on Monday 28th June this year, and was able to brief Christopher Ford at my flat with the able assistance of Lincoln Richford. I hope members agree that it is an interesting piece of publicity, and I would like to thank everyone for their co-operation. However I award a kick in the pants to a tactless gentleman at Guildford, who said it was just a social occasion. He appears to have missed the point of the exercise.

While all publicity in a serious vein is useful, at present we have no room for complacency. If BUFORA is to make a worthwhile contribution to UFO research, besides merely investigating and recording sightings, we must present a critical scientific image in order to attract and retain participating members with technical "know-how". It is an unpalatable reality that we have discouraged some potentially useful people by our middle-along approach. Perhaps after this year's A.G.M. we can get down to formulating a definite programme of research? Members are invited to send in practical proposals.

"SAUCER NEWS" FOLDS

Further evidence that flying saucer magazine publishing is an unprofitable pastime comes in the current issue of Ray Palmer's FLYING SAUCERS (No.73). In an editorial, Gray Barker says that his SAUCER NEWS magazine has had to be discontinued for financial reasons and that subscriptions would be honoured and fulfilled by FLYING SAUCERS. He has now joined the editorial staff of FLYING SAUCERS, which is still the world's largest circulation 'saucer' magazine, even though sales have dropped off in the post-Condon era.

**Flying Saucers**

**British Unidentified Flying Object Research Association, c/o Lionel Beer, 15 Freshwater Court, Crawford St., W1 (01-723 0305)**

BUFORA investigates U.F.O.s—mysterious aerial objects—and compiles information on the 100,000 sightings on record. National sky-watch on June 26/27th. Warminster, in Wiltshire, is a centre of intense U.F.O. activity, and projects, this summer, will concentrate on this area. A new electronic observation system has been developed for this purpose. Publishes a quarterly journal, and Research bulletin. Also Spacelink.

REPORT ON THE NATIONAL SKY WATCH by Lincoln Richford

On June 26/27th, 16 watching posts were established around the U.K. ranging from Portadown in Northern Ireland to Biggin Hill in Surrey with a "Central Control" telephone point in London, which operated throughout the night to receive reports from the posts. With the exception of one, all reports were identified as being of mundane origin. The exception came from Graham Barker of the Sheffield UFO Group, who saw a bright light in the north-east sky near Sheffield at 14.30 hours on 26th June. The object, resembling Venus, was observed for 14 minutes. Another object, "very white and luminescent, similar to a smoke ring" was seen moving towards it at an angle of 45 degrees. Graham rang nearby R.A.F. Station, Finningley, while the object was still in view, who said they did not have any planes in the area. The R.A.F. phoned back two hours later to explain that it was in fact aircraft refuelling. When it was pointed out that the object had been stationary for 14 minutes, the reply was, "Oh dear, it can't be that then". The disappearance of the objects occurred when cloud came over, and when it cleared the objects were no longer visible. Further investigations of the sighting are being carried out by the Sheffield Group. We understand from the R.A.F. that the Ministry of Defence are looking into the report, and no doubt we can expect an "explanation" in due course.

At 19.15 hours, SIGAP at Point no.5 on Pewley Downs, Guildford, were the first group to phone in. They had 15 people, including reporter, Christopher Ford from THE GUARDIAN, whose write-up appeared the following Monday. Unfortunately SIGAP experienced cloudy weather most of the night, as indeed did many other points around the country.

Around midnight, <sup>Lionel Beer,</sup> BUFORA acting chairman, who spent his night with the SIRIUS group at Bard Hill, Salthouse, Norfolk, reported two orange flares to the north-west, which were thought at the time to be possible flares from the North Sea gas rigs. The flares were seen on the far horizon and appeared to be stationary. However a press report in the following Monday's EASTERN DAILY PRESS of Norwich, seemed to point to them being distress signals from an 18 foot cruiser the "Falcon" which ran aground just before midnight on the 26th. As far as weather was concerned, SIRIUS had picked the prime spot overlooking the sea, and enjoyed a clear sky throughout the night.

The E.S.D. group, post no.12 at Dunmow, Essex, sighted a large bright light at 23.15 hours, "like the interior of a brightly lit window of a house", low on the horizon and rising vertically from west to north-east. Viewed through a refracting telescope, it appeared to be either an aircraft or helicopter taking off near the Stansted Airport area. Congratulations are due to Edward Harris for maintaining very close contact with "Central Control" throughout the watch; a lesson for the two groups who did not bother to 'phone in at all.

The sky watch overall, can be considered a success. Most of the groups observed meteors, satellites and aircraft, and many also saw Jupiter and Mars. Anthony Pace of Newchapel Observatory made an important point in his report: "Although the results of the Newchapel watch were negative, it gave us practical experience in observing aircraft and their pattern of lights, and we experimented by taking spectrographs of street lamps."

The importance of practical experience in observing the sky cannot be stressed too much. Any ufologist worth his salt, must certainly spend some time sky-watching. How for example, is one to evaluate a "light-in-the-sky" report, if one has never observed a satellite or meteor etc? (or a distress flare - L.B.)

Finally our thanks go to all who took part; and to those who did not - see you next year!

RECENT REPORT: The BOURNEMOUTH EVENING ECHO, 9 August 1971, carries a photo which is a blow-up "of a very small part of the original frame", taken by Mr Brian George of Gough Crescent, Poole, from out of a window of his home. Mr George is said to have observed a "large white light moving slowly across the sky while looking out of the window." The actual image is very patchy, but I can best liken it to a cup slightly above a large saucer! (Acknowledgement: Peter L. Jones of Bournemouth)

ROOM FOR ONE MORE: A friend at work kindly passed me a clipping from the REDBRIDGE RECORDER of 22 July 1971. "Two strange silver objects moving across the morning sky have baffled 12-year-old Chadwell Heath schoolboy, Laurence Rampling..." Laurence was looking out of the window of his home in Chadwell Heath Lane when the objects suddenly appeared moving towards Romford. He thought that they were moving too fast for normal air transport.



Rabbits  
were  
seen...

The illustration appears to have been taken from SPACELINK...?

**R**OUGHLY 150 people, at 16 sites around Britain, gazed into the often cloudy heavens on Saturday night and through into Sunday morning. Reported sightings during the annual national skywatch of the British Unidentified Flying Object Research Association (hereinafter Bufora) amounted to one orange light, which was probably a helicopter, at Dunmow, the expected crop of satellites, which made for some folk the highlights of an astronomical occasion, a few meteors, and four rabbits.

"I don't know how they got in," said the skywatch organiser, Lincoln Richford, at 11 o'clock yesterday morning. "I'm a bit slow, I'm a bit tired." He spent his night at a central reporting point in London. The watchers, when they felt like pumping blood through their veins, relied on the serviceability of the nearest coinbox. Headquarters received about 35 calls.

The "event" of the weekend was outside the skywatch—described as a bright light in the sky near Sheffield early on Saturday afternoon, stationary for 14 minutes until approached by something like a smoke-ring, and unexplained so far by the RAF. Yet the watch was a success of sorts: "We got the groups out, they phoned in, we got the practice."

Gentlemen in England then abed may scoff if they wish. Bufora is used to it. But, since the first reported sighting of "flying saucers" in America 24 years ago, a weight of evidence has accumulated which scientists can neither explain nor entirely explain away. One needs a very closed mind not to feel that, just possibly, there's something happening in our atmosphere not covered by the textbooks.

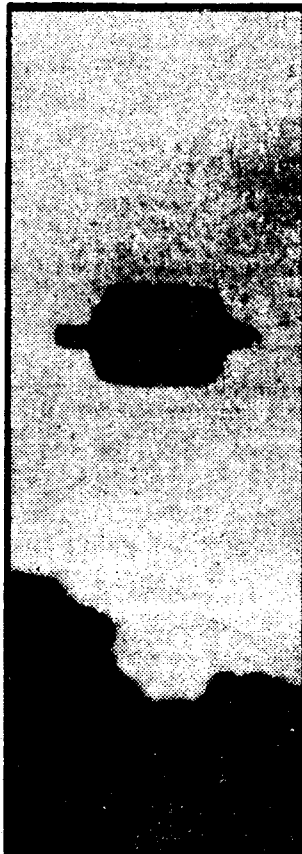
The oddest thing about the ufologists on Pewley Downs, just outside Guildford, was their evenness. They were indeed rather pointedly orthodox people, often with a scientific bent: a man in plastics who used to be a pilot, an aircraft engineer, an antique dealer who was once in the Indian army, a police cadet, a short-haired undergraduate, a local paper journalist, a man in computers—in sum a slightly conservative group, and not necessarily with a small "c."

They were there to watch for UFOs, but also to get used to natural phenomena and to develop the teamwork needed in the event of a "flap," which is UFO language for an outburst of inexplicable activity. Perhaps the second cause was best served. In spite of intermittent rain the view was marvellous. Jupiter brought jollity. There were stars and ordinary aircraft. Satellites were seen, though not by my blurred and bemused eyes. (Just try staring into the night sky when you're not quite sure what you're looking for.)

A practical experiment was

# Spirits and the sky

CHRISTOPHER  
FORD on a  
UFO hunt



carried out. There had been a sighting from the downs of a sausage-shaped light over by Hindhead, ten miles away. A group drove there and let off three rockets. We saw them, through binoculars, as merely the briefest sparks. So shop-bought fireworks were certainly not the explanation. They'll try fiercer rockets next year.

It looked a fair example of the approach. Bufora does not encourage visionary gullibility. "We have a sighting, it's recorded," explained Ivar Mackay, a past chairman, "and then we try to explain it away." Remembering my function, he added apologetically: "We can't conjure them up..." He had brought a UFO detector, more properly an electro-magnetic field detector.

"It's a social occasion. I don't really expect to see anything," somebody admitted. "When the army go on manoeuvres they don't expect to fight the Russians," added another: a typical simile? There was more talk about "preparing for a flap." The

words "interdimensional" and "extraterrestrial" were aired. It was cold. Soup was brewed in the Bufora mobile research van. Shamefully, the press alone seemed to have brought something stronger.

There was time to test people's faith. Nobody took an overtly spiritual view of UFOs, though the Surrey group I was with have a clergyman rather noticeably on their board of consultants. "We're not hippies, we're not Jesus - is - coming - down - on - a - saucer," said Ivar Mackay, the former Indian army man. "There are so many of these gimmicky ideas going round. But there's a massive weight of evidence that unidentifieds do exist in our atmosphere and are seen from time to time, sometimes very close. I'm not so interested in lights in the sky, I'm more interested when people are buzzed on roads."

Omar Fowler, pilot turned businessman, Bufora's national coordinator, was still more cautious: "I believe there are things flying about. I've interviewed so many people, they can't all be liars or unbalanced. Judging by our present-day knowledge it's impossible for a spacecraft to travel from another galaxy. There are so many theories. I'm just interested in finding out."

He reckons that perhaps half a dozen of the reports of actual landings in Britain in the past five years sound as if they might be authentic, but he thinks people tend to keep quiet for fear of ridicule. He agrees that there are the sensation-seekers, too.

"I believe in instruments, I don't like witnesses at all," declared Edgar Hatvany, a voluble Czech-born BOAC engineer who used to organise the national skywatch. "You can never, never rely on witnesses. But nearly every 24 hours on average someone in Britain sees something sufficiently remarkable that he does something about it. You go to investigate, you go to someone's door and find he's a doctor or something—why should he make it up?"

Hatvany has seen things he can't explain. His colleagues, even those who have not, share the faith; a lot of Christians, after all, believe in miracles without having seen any. Bufora, with its magazines and study-groups, goes doggedly on even if support for the skywatch itself tends to dwindle. But are the UFOs benevolent, hostile, or merely exploratory? Nobody knows, and if they have private theories they weren't telling me about them.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, etc." might be Bufora's motto. Laugh them all away if you are bold and sure enough. After half the night on Pewley Downs I am not. "Don't criticise what you can't understand": Bob Dylan isn't yet in the standard dictionaries of quotations, but perhaps he ought to be.