

CATEGORY ARCHIVES: RANGLES, JENNY

Recent UK Contact Reports

Jenny Randles

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IN AN EARLY MUFOB (NUMBER 7, SUMMER 1977) JENNY RANGLES MUSES ON SOME BRITISH CASES WHICH BLURRED THE LINES BETWEEN CLOSE ENCOUNTER, CONTACTEE AND ABDUCTEE

When I first came naively onto the UFO scene some seven or eight years ago it was through the customary grounding in paperbacks, where I was continually told that UFOs were spacecraft from somewhere, even though I soon discovered the contactees themselves could never agree from where! It is probably this indoctrination in the ETH that attracts people to the subject in the first place. It is also a factor which puts them off when they find that ETH theories tend to have holes in them big enough to fly Starship Enterprise (or Capt. Kirk's ego) through. Many others are not put off, because they just refuse to accept the truth. In this sense truth is a relative term. If Joe Soap wishes to believe in something then he does. Whether or not this is 'true' in a material sense does not matter it is true so far as Joe is concerned, and that is the important point'.

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A similar situation seems to arise in relation to some UFO witnesses, who experience subjective events in a highly personalised manner. We have had many examples of 'Psychic Contactees' recently, and I feel their study is important to our awakening understanding of the phenomenon.

A typical example is the story of Mrs Lainchbury from Little Lever, near Bolton, Greater Manchester (1) In 1964 she claims that she was first approached by a being wearing a suit of black rings. He visited her following a malfunction of his craft, which Mrs Lainchbury witnessed. In this initial visit and subsequent ones over a period of three years, the entity, joined later by three others, just materialised and dematerialised in the bedroom. Their origin was given as Pluto, which name was formed by letters in mid-air. The whole experience seems 'unreal' and yet the original sighting apparently left physical traces in the form of burn marks on outside paintwork which have been attested to by many witnesses. They appeared suddenly over the night when the object supposedly malfunctioned.

We must obviously ask about the above case "Did Mrs Lainchbury build this story out of a possibly genuine UFO Sighting?" The alternative, assuming she is not lying, is that the affair did happen as a 'real' event; the entities did appear in physical form in her bedroom. It seems to make little sense if this point is accepted to believe that they genuinely came from Pluto, where life forms of their apparent type could not exist. One might argue that they had constructed a scenario for Mrs Lainchbury – either changing to a physical form acceptable to her, or lying about their origin. The question then is, why do so? And why direct this deception at this elderly lady?

A case very similar to this concerns a Mrs H, a middle-aged housewife living in Belfast (2). She lives in an area where the current [1977] violence is at its height, and she is obviously under great pressure in raising her family. Has this led her to construct an involvement with benevolent space-beings as a personal security for her family?

Mrs H claims that in 1969 she first visited a spacecraft by being 'lifted out of her own body' (cf. astral projection). She was taken from her bed into a huge spacecraft where many entities in bright clothes showed her around. Since then she says she has been back many times, and has been taken all over Ireland in the craft. She has been told many things and has been asked to write a book to try and solve the sectarian strife. She has so far refrained from this; fearing reprisals on her family, but seems to be driving herself, or is being driven, towards this goal. The question which remains is whether this is a personal motivation which is taking an external form, or if there is some objective, external cause.

When the previous cases are studied in detail they do not display typical ufological factors. One might well be tempted to dismiss them as 'irrelevant'. However it must be borne in mind that these experiences were undergone by sincere individuals who had no desire for publicity – indeed quite the reverse, One cannot furnish a simple explanation for them, although one might suspect a psychological one at the root. It is as important to remember that they are meaningful to both witnesses. By any definition they are a type of UFO report, and

worthy of our attention.

We now move to a case which has many typical ufological features, but is also highly subjective. This is the case of Mr L from West Yorkshire (3). In February 1976 he claims, in similar manner to Mrs H, that he was transported from bed into a spacecraft. He underwent a medical examination by entities which he described in terms remarkably reminiscent of those allegedly encountered by the Hills (4). The beings were indifferent, but very arrogant, claiming that the witness was "an insignificant being such as a worm". At the close of the encounter he was left paralysed on his bed, while the entities simply disappeared.

If we consider the case in detail too many correlations with the Hills' story emerge. There has been no evidence found to support the idea that the witness had studied this encounter to the extent needed to gain the information which overlapped. On the other hand there is medical evidence to suggest that this was a hypnogogic experience. Here we must ask how it could be that such a 'classic' UFO encounter may be almost entirely subjective.

Finally let us look at two cases from what appears to have been a recent British wave. To any initial view they are objective and important UFO events. But it is interesting to note that although the scene in both cases is the real world (ie outside the witnesses bedroom), and despite the incidence of more than one witness in each case, there are striking parallels with our previous 'Psychic Contactees'.#

On September 3, 1976 an elderly woman and her eighteen year old niece saw a grounded UFO at the little village of Fencehouses, Co. Durham (5). It was a very small object, about three-and-a-half feet by five feet, with a smooth glassy surface that the older woman says she touched. On top was a small orange dome, and it was sitting on sledge-like runners of steel or chrome. The witnesses were attracted towards it and appeared to enter a hypnotic state where time stood still. They met two tiny beings with long hair, but no communication ensued. They then lost all sense of time, and the object shot upwards making a humming noise.

A more renowned case concerns Mrs Joyce Bowles and Mr Ted Pratt, who on November 14, 1976 confronted a landed UFO by the side of the Winchester bypass near Chilcomb (6). Their car swerved across the road and apparently hit an invisible barrier. A bearded entity then walked over to the car and looked in. As he did so the engine, which had stalled, started to life. The witnesses do not know how the entity or object disappeared – it was just gone. The area was examined within twenty-four hours, and despite numerous car tracks on the soft earth by the roadside there was no trace of any object having landed at the place where it was supposedly seen. The case has become even more confused since, with claims that the two witnesses were abducted onto a craft and their car teleported several miles. Additionslaly stories are now emerging of 'psychic' experiences by Mrs Bowles before the original event, including the appearance of ghost-like 'spacemen' inside her house (7).

It is too easy to equate not thinking with having an open mind!

Quite clearly, what at first are two 'normal' close encounters become subjective cases of a high degree of strangeness. However one cannot adopt a straightforward hallucinatory explanation for a case involving two witnesses.

One of the prerequisites for serious involvement in ufology is an open mind. Most ufologists do not appear to have one, even some of those who think that they do. This does not mean that one is not allowed to think, it is too easy to equate not thinking with having an open mind. The rearguard action one faces from those trying desperately to defend the ETH is amazing, and yet by my own admission we cannot just discount it. Nevertheless I have long since seen it as a more remote possibility.

Until very recently my mind turned towards interdimensional ideas for the origin of UFOs. I fell in love with the Flatland analogy, where we consider a being on a flat surface. A three dimensional object passing through the surface would only be detected at the moment it passed through the creatures two dimensional sensory field. It would be unsensed when it was above or below the surface; suddenly appear, change shape and disappear as it passed through. This seems to fit the phenomenon rather too well to be sheer coincidence and I feel that some intermixing of a dimensional scale is a probable source of some UFO phenomena.

Whatever theory is true, and it seems more likely that we do not have just one answer, it has to explain two factors. Firstly the apparent co-development of the phenomenon throughout history, since prehistoric times (8); and secondly the manner in which it reflects the social factors of the period, and is subjectively interpreted in line with these.

I hope this brief look at some of Britain's current close encounter cases has made you think. It would be very hard to accept these as evidence of any kind of objective phenomenon. One is led towards a subjective approach. Whether this is entirely a product of ourselves in the form of an unexplained psychological or sociological factor, or whether there is some objective external force which is manipulating our experiences, I do not know. Quite possibly we never shall. At the moment I tend to favour the latter possibility as a result of some personal experiences I have recently undergone (9), but I fully recognise even this evidence is not conclusive and could still point to an internal mechanism for the phenomenon.

It is important for us to continue our studies, whatever the source. There is some hope for the 'diehard' objective reality believers, as there are still radar/visual, photographic, and physical trace reports which seem to point in this direction. However many more such events are shown to have perfectly normal explanations; but there is sufficient reason to believe that there could be unexplained pt~yebal phenomena at work in the generation of these repotts. Further than that I do not think we can go. There is reason to suppose that the close-encounter event as described in this article may be an entirely different phenomenon to what we normally view as the UFO. If that is true then all our verbal battling concerning 'hardware' versus psychological explanations may be fruitless. We could be studying two different things, and both solutions could be correct.

1. Flying Saucer Review, 22,3.
2. A full report on this case has been produced by the Irish UFO Research Centre.
3. Northern UFO News, August 1976; Awareness, Autumn, 1976; BUFORA Journal, November-December, 1976.
4. FULLER, J G. The Interrupted Journey; BOWEN, C. The Humanoids
5. Northern UFO News, February 1977.
6. Flying Saucer Review, 22,5.
7. The News [precursor of Fortean Times], No. 3. for an account of poltergeist activity at Mrs Bowles home.
8. Flying Saucer Review, 15,6

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Getting It Right at East Gate

Jenny Randles

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Posted on [24/08/2009](#) by [johnr](#)

- This article refuting many of the claims made in Larry Warren's book *Left at East Gate*, appeared in *Magonia* 61, November 1997. It may not represent Jenny Randles' current thinking on the Rendlesham affair.

I first came across a young American called Larry Warren in the spring of 1983. He was 21 going on 22, living in New England and had just given a statement to authors Larry Fawcett and Barry Greenwood for their forthcoming book about American government UFO documents. This was to be published in 1984 as *Clear Intent*.

Warren was alleging that he was an eyewitness to what are now the infamous Rendlesham Forest encounters from December 1980. He was ex-USAF then based in the UK and had chosen to speak out once back home. In 1983 this was major news, because he was the first military witness to publicly do so. Indeed the case was not yet widely known to the British public and virtually unknown in the USA.

The only published references had come from my stories in *Flying Saucer Review* and a more detailed summer 1982 set of articles in the part-work *The Unexplained*. This was based on little more than a set of anecdotes collected from villagers in Suffolk by local paranormal researcher Brenda Butler and her friend (and BUFORA member) Dot Street.

Pretty well all we knew for certain was that in the few days immediately after Christmas 1980 something strange had been seen in the East Anglian sky, cutting the coast near Lowestoft. Civilians had witnessed it. Watton [radar station] had tracked it disappearing off screen into Rendlesham Forest as it went below radar coverage. Several locals had stories to tell of unusual military activity in the woods and of damage to the trees. However, the British government had constantly rejected all my efforts to get them to admit anything in writing between early 1981 and 1983. As a result much of the British UFO community thought Brenda, Dot and I were mad to keep pressing this case.

However, Brenda did have one USAF witness from the twin NATO air bases (Bentwaters and Woodbridge). He had befriended her and knew of her interest in the paranormal. On 6 January 1981 – only ten days or so after the events – he had confided in her about his alleged involvement in the amazing series of events that hid behind those tales of lights in the sky and holes in the forest.

This witness has always been a huge problem for me. To this day I have never met 'Steve Roberts' - as Brenda insisted we call him in our writings. He talked to Brenda but was reluctant to come forward afterwards, even though he was in Britain for several years. But there are some very interesting things about this mystery man's story. Roberts told Brenda what he did a full week before Charles Halt penned the now-famous memo to the British MoD about this case. He also gave the date of the first set of events in that conversation as the early hours of 26 December. This conflicted with all later testimony and I only became sure myself that the true date for the first sighting was indeed 26 December years later. One of the key witnesses (John Burroughs) assured me when we, met in Arizona that this was the correct night and Halt simply got his report wrong because he filed it from memory some weeks later. So Steve Roberts initially fed Brenda the correct date – even though (intriguingly) he altered it to 27 December in later conversations.

According to Roberts he was one of a security patrol that went out into the forest in response to a UFO that had "crashed" there. Once in the woods he saw a landed craft with strange little child-like beings suspended in beams of light. The overall wing commander – Brigadier General Gordon Williams – was out there in the woods and communicated with these beings using sign language as the USAF guarded the damaged craft. This was eventually repaired by the aliens and took off again. Frankly absurd as this story sounds, it struck a chord with me. When Brenda told it to me she could not have known that it matched precisely the story told to the staff at RAF Watton on Monday 29 December 1980. This was when USAF intelligence officers had visited them. That visit was to take away for study the film of all their radar trackings for the preceding weekend. I still have my notes penned from my first conversation in late January 1981 with that operator at Watton.

The radar operator explained how the intelligence officers had described the UFO coming into the forest, the aliens, the contact with the

base commander and other details that mirrored the story told to Brenda eight days later and independently by Steve Roberts. But the American intelligence guys also added various other things when talking to Watton. For instance, they told how a commanding officer was taken from a party on base and went into the woods to investigate. His equipment suffered electrical interference but he tape recorded live the encounter with UFOs. All of this evidence was only established as fact years later when Charles Halt became publicly associated with the case. In January 1981 it was as dubious as the aliens talking to Gordon Williams by sign language.

When Barry Greenwood first wrote to me in the spring of 1983 he sent me a copy of Larry Warren's statement. It was obvious that what Warren had to say was a close match to the stories fed to Brenda (via 'Steve Roberts') and to me (via Watton radar and USAF intelligence). Warren – to whom Greenwood and Fawcett were ascribing the pseudonym 'Art Wallace' because of fears for his safety – had a more graphic account to relate and mentioned no aliens at first. But in essence his tale of the landed craft and the high number of military personnel was consistent. Indeed, not long afterwards Warren added the involvement of little aliens and of the presence of Gordon Williams standing by them. These further enhanced the strangeness of his tale, which included interrogation in some vast underground complex, sighting an "alien" behind some screen, being shown film of the USAF links with aliens and much more that turned his story into possibly the most incredible UFO tale ever placed on record.

From the late eighties onward there were stories that Warren was planning a book, but its publication kept getting postponed. It finally appeared in June 1997. Since its publication I have been swamped by requests to comment on this 490-page epic – not only because of my long firsthand association with this case, but because it is generally less than favourably disposed towards my own involvement on the few occasions that it is discussed. The only "rival" book that seems to exist in so far as Warren and Robbins are concerned is *Sky Crash* – which Brenda Butler, Dot Street and I published in 1984. That has been out of print for a decade so is hardly a threat. Although they express several derogatory remarks bordering on the libellous (even calling it *Sky Trash* at one point!) there is a remarkable omission. In almost 500 pages there is not one reference by these authors to my own more recent book about this case – *From out of the Blue*. This is very odd. They certainly know about it, for it is listed by them in the bibliography (under an incorrect title!). This book was never published in the UK but is hardly unknown in the USA. It was reviewed in depth by the US UFO community and had two editions (a 1991 softback and a 1992 mass market paperback).

Whilst biased, of course, I have to say that I find it incredible that anybody could write such a huge text about this case and yet totally ignore the content of one of only two previous books penned about the matter. The total omission of any discussion of the second book (which I regard as far more accurate than *Sky Crash* for many reasons) is a serious indication of the shortcomings and bias of *Left at East Gate*.

Here I should add that I do have a third book about Rendlesham coming myself. This was written before I ever saw *Left at East Gate* (although I have added a few notes at page proof stage). My submitted title is *Friend or Foe?* – although I fear the publishers (Blandford) intend to give it a more zippy appellation. This is due to appear in early 1998 and is an expression of all that I can offer on this case from my 17 years of study. [This was published as *UFO Crash Landing - Friend or Foe?* in January 1998]

I was asked to write this new book. At first I said no, because I was aware of the coming of *Left at East Gate*. But I was persuaded that a book reviewing the wider range of evidence was needed and for a tiny sum spent a year putting it together. Having now read the book by Warren and Robbins I am very glad that I was talked into this. Whilst there are some things I may have said slightly differently if I had read that book first, there is much that needed to be reported about this case that simply is not in *Left at East Gate*.

Is he a genuine witness to a peripheral event, one of these 'wannabees' or someone exaggerating the truth or even making it up?

Now that I have a very clear view of the case I can look back at *Sky Crash* in a new light. It is obvious to me that some of it went astray, but we did have quite a bit that was right in there as well. Unfortunately, I suspect we simply did not have the evidence from the key witnesses at that time because they were still in the military. In fact it is a fascinating exercise re-reading *Sky Crash* in the light of what we now know. One of the key witnesses – John Burroughs (the only man involved on both main nights) – told me in 1989 he had not read the book until then because another witness (I can guess who) told him it was 'trash'. When he did so he stayed up all night to finish it. He told me he was very surprised to find that the truth was in there mixed with bogus yarns that we had been told by 'wannabees' off base who were not involved in the case but wished that they had been. Later Charles Halt told me something similar.

Placing Larry Warren's story into the right slot is far from easy. Is he a genuine witness to a peripheral event, one of these 'wannabees' or someone exaggerating the truth or even making it up? *From out of the Blue* is more accurate than *Sky Crash* because it was written later with the evidence of more witnesses. I have the chronology more correct in there (although I now know not exactly correct) and the general outline of the two main events is fairly set. But there is much that I now have in more detail and that is why *Friend or Foe?* puts the case into what I believe to be the true perspective. I leave open precisely how we should slot Warren's account into the story – largely because his tale does not well match the bulk of the evidence from all the other witnesses with whom I have spoken.

Whilst it would be impossible to briefly describe this huge case, here is a summary of what I believe to be the key features. These can then be compared with the story in Larry Warren's book and its readers can try (as I have had to try) to figure out where he fits in. The scenarios that follow are based on my conversations with about half a dozen key military and a similar number of key civilian witnesses. There were more people involved that I have not talked with, but my sources include two of the four USAF personnel who saw the UFO on night one, for example, and are, I believe, sufficient to be reasonably certain that I now have a picture very close to what took place.

From 9.08 p.m. on 25 December to 3 a.m. on 26 December 1980 numerous light phenomena appeared over East Anglia. All of these events are related in my view. There were various civilian witnesses. Between 2 and 3 a.m. the main military encounter occurred outside

Woodbridge. There were four military witnesses and I know the names of them all. Two of these four went into the forest and encountered a UFO just above the ground. I have spoken with them both. The UFO was tracked on radar by several sites and seen on departure. The men were disorientated and a search was mounted after radio contact was lost on base. There is a possibility of a time lapse. NO aliens were seen, but the UFO was extraordinary and distorted space and time as well as swamping the forest with an electrical field.

Early on 26 December the British police visited the traces found in the forest. Infra-red radiation was detected by an A-10 sent on an over-flight. The official investigation began. There may have been sightings that night, but I have not talked to any witnesses (unless Warren is one). On Saturday 27 December an officers' party at Woody's was interrupted by the return of the UFOs, as reported by night security chief Lt Bruce Englund. Colonel Halt was charged with the responsibility to go into the forest and sort things out because the commander (Ted Conrad) ordered him to do so. He took Englund, Greg Nevells (from the disaster preparedness team) and several others. John Burroughs – one of the two key witnesses from the first sighting – went out there too. He had haunted the woods all weekend convinced the UFO would return. Halt took light-alls and a tape recorder to gather notes more easily because it was windy. They took samples and photographs of the traces but the lights seen that night had now gone. UFOs returned at 1.48 a.m. and 90 minutes followed during which Halt and his team chased them through the forest. These included 'laser beams' beamed towards the ground – including into the secured area on the base. Again no aliens were seen and no solid craft – just amazing light phenomena.

Where Warren was (along with the witnesses that he cites in his support) is not clear from any statements given to me by the witnesses that I have encountered. They all say he was not with them and some are doubtful he was out there at all. Halt, for instance, notes that Warren could not have been on duty after only three weeks on base because it was a NATO regulation that a six-week training course be followed before this status was approved. Halt told me he has seen the records that confirm this, but Warren publishes contrary reports in his book which appear to refute Halt's claim. This is a huge impasse.

I have preferred to build my outline of what occurred around the testimony of those witnesses who all tell me a consistent story

In *Left at East Gate* Warren quotes Halt as expressing doubts about his story. Halt has had similar things to say to me. He told me that before reading the book he knew Warren was not involved with him on the night of 27/28 December, nor on duty. But he gave him the benefit of the doubt and thought he might have been there on the less well known third night. However, after reading the book the Colonel says it is clear that Warren is alleging that he was there on the same night as Halt. This he struggles to accommodate.

I have preferred to build my outline of what occurred around the testimony of those witnesses who all tell me a consistent story. Halt says that this is his primary concern as well. He and these men know they saw fantastic things. It is hard enough living with that in the military and trying to be believed. Halt, Burroughs, Penniston (in my view the three crucial witnesses to this case) are all adamant that there were no aliens, that the craft was less solid than some media yarns profess and that Brigadier General Gordon Williams was definitely not there. "If he had been it would have changed everything," John Burroughs told me. Halt adds that he talked to Williams afterwards and he was as keen as anyone to discover what happened. He acted in no way like a witness. Halt knows this man was not anywhere near the base at the time, he argues.

Left at East Gate is a strange book. I can understand why people unfamiliar with the case will be awed by it, because Warren and Robbins tell a fantastic tale that is just what people want to hear. It is exactly what you would expect to be turned into a movie. But will this benefit ufology? The big question is why the three initial sources of information – Steve Roberts, Watton radar and Larry Warren all provide the more fantastic version of events. My guess has always been that Roberts fed his line to a paranormal enthusiast hoping that a wild version of the truth would kill off any immediate serious attention from people who mattered. Ufologists are not people who matter since they are generally only listened to by other ufologists and tabloid newspapers. The staff at Watton would – in my estimation – never have been told about aliens communicating with a wing commander whilst repairing their craft if this had really happened. They had absolutely no need to know and the radar film could have been taken from them on any pretext. To be told this was to me a dead giveaway that this story was disinformation.

Of course, when Warren came forward the only military versions of the case on record (thanks to me!) were those from Roberts and Watton. Warren says he had not read them, but Barry Greenwood had. That's how he recognised Warren's story and why he wrote to me. You could – I guess – suggest that Warren saw the tales from Roberts and Watton and decided that his version would have to match them to be believed. He utterly refutes that and we must accept his word. But his account did match Roberts's account – an account that I now consider discredited. All the other versions I have heard since follow a different – less 'extraterrestrial' – path. This leaves me with a real problem evaluating Warren's story today.

Whilst I must judge the conflicting claims of Warren and the others without knowing who is right and who is wrong, that is not the case with some other aspects of *Left at East Gate*. For there are things in there which I can definitely refute from my first-hand perspective. For example, he makes the fantastic allegation (p. 128) that "two of the Sky Crash authors were affiliated with Britain's anti-nuclear movement". This ties in with his disbelief at our idea that the story about aliens might be disinformation to hide an accident with a nuclear weapon. Later the authors add (p.217) "Randles chooses to state and reiterate this theory and I could only speculate as to why". The clear impression gained from passages such as these is that I was in league with CND to use the Rendlesham case for some obscure purpose. That is outright rubbish. I can state assuredly that I am not – and have never been – associated with the anti-nuclear movement in even the most minor of ways. I cannot say whether this is true of Brenda or Dot, but in all the years I have known them it has never once come up in conversation and certainly had no role to play in the writing of *Sky Crash*. I wrote that book – turning my own knowledge and reams of hand-written notes from my colleagues into some sort of sense. If what they had written was influenced by anti-nuclear views I would have seen it and reported it. But there was never any trace of that.

Besides which, as Warren notes in his second quote above, the nuclear mishap theory was mine – nobody else’s – and was referenced by me on several occasions between 1981 and 1984 (e.g. a comment in OMNI magazine which is also discussed in *Left at East Gate*). This is firmly attributed to me personally.

My reasons for theorising along these lines were simple, yet at no time has Warren or Robbins ever asked me about them (as they have not asked me to confirm their ridiculous CND story).

Firstly, we had been told by numerous sources come 1983 that there were nuclear weapons on the base. This was emphatically denied by the USAF. That denial was a lie. More than ten years later (after the cessation of the Cold War and the closure of Bentwaters-Woodbridge) the truth emerged. This had indeed been one of the biggest nuclear stores in the UK. This amply demonstrates my feeling at the time that – with the huge public outcry over bringing Cruise missiles into Europe – it might have seemed appropriate to cover up an accident by creating a diversionary story so ludicrous nobody would believe it.

There had in fact been a near disaster in 1956 at a USAF base nearby when a store of weapons caught fire after a plane crash. The fact that nuclear weapons were at risk was denied for decades but finally admitted years later on retirement of one of the key players in the cover up. Nuclear bombs at risk are less likely to explode than to have their casings crack and leak radiation. This fitted the scenario in the forest as well.

When I developed this theory there were no public revelations from any of the military eyewitnesses – just the dubious saga fed out to Watton and Brenda Butler that smelled to me exactly like disinformation. But if UFOs were disinformation then what was this story trying to hide?

Moreover, forestry workers told me that they had heard about a “plane crash” from staff on the base and local man Ron Gladwell had told us about finding a crater in the forest indicating that something had fallen from the sky and hit the ground with a thump. Base staff were evidently filling this in. In *Left at East Gate* (p.216) Warren and Robbins use the fact that nobody supposedly saw a crater in the forest to denounce our ‘silly’ theory of a plane dropping a bomb. Evidently they missed Gladwell’s story even though it is in both *Sky Crash* and *From out of the Blue*.

I submit that – right or wrong – this idea about a nuclear accident was a wholly legitimate speculation to make in 1983 based on these incidents (plus the various signs of mild radiation being present in the forest). It is not a theory that I adhere to today, having now had the chance to hear the detailed stories of witnesses like John Burroughs and Jim Penniston. They got within a few feet of the UFO on the first night and it was no discarded bomb. But it was wholly appropriate to bring this idea into the debate at the time to show the problems with the evidence fed out to the UFO community.

There is also a series of claims about how Barry Greenwood sent me the Halt memo secured by CAUS in the USA. This was obtained wholly thanks to Warren, he says. Yet wicked Brenda and Dot (I don’t feature in this one – ironically – as you will see in a moment) – “sold the Halt document to the *News of the World* for £2000 – nearly five grand here... After that we broke off all contact with them”. (p.102).

Well, here are the facts. Barry Greenwood sent me the Halt memo and in exchange I sent him my letter from the MoD received a few weeks earlier and dated 13 April 1983. This was some weeks before the USAF admitted there was a case and it was used by CAUS to help in their quest for documents. The MoD document admitted for the first time anywhere that there was an incident in Rendlesham Forest and that “no explanation” had been found for it. Far from one-way traffic we exchanged data. I have maintained a correspondence with Barry ever since and we had dinner together when I was in Boston a year or two ago.

Brenda, Dot and I were given permission to use the document as we saw fit to press for the truth and I also was happy for them to use my MoD letter in whatever way they wished. What we did was to take it to the MoD in London and confront them directly with a file they had been denying to me (despite at least three written requests). I also set up a seminar at the next BUFORA conference to present the evidence to the UFO community (including Allen Hynek and many others). This basically let Brenda and Dot have their day after two years of ridicule from the UFO community chasing “the case that never was”.

Nor was this story sold for £2000. It was a lot more than that!

As a result of that seminar – attended it seems by a journalist incognito – the media discovered the existence of the memo and decided to go public. Harry Harris, a well-known figure in UFO circles, persuaded Brenda and Dot that the best option was to negotiate a deal with the paper keeping control of the story as otherwise they would print a garbled version of the truth picked up from the UFO community rumour mill. I agreed to go with Harry to the *News of the World* and brief them on the case. That is how the story on the front page of the *News of the World* in October 1983 came about.

Nor was this story sold for £2000. It was a lot more than that. But this money went to many people who were paid for their information on many subjects given to the paper. To my knowledge the document itself was not sold, since it was obviously not anyone’s to sell. I do know that the money Brenda and Dot received (a fraction of the overall sum the paper paid) was used by them to fund further research into this case. Over the years they – and I – have spent far more than any of us have ever got back. In this instance I see nothing wrong in what we did. It was the only way to keep control of the story.

In any case, the Halt memo was released by the MoD once they realised the document was in the public domain. That occurred when I

showed it to them in Whitehall two months before the News of the World story ever ran. Consequently, many ufologists wrote to the MoD and were sent their own copies quite freely. It is disgraceful that these authors have painted a picture of Brenda and Dot cheating American ufologists. I was just as 'guilty' and so was Harry Harris. But I bet they would not dare challenge him! The truth is this was an inexcusable misreport as to what really took place.

Something similar is seen on page 133 where Warren infers he gave the Halt audio tape to the American UFO community after getting it from a Japanese man who had been sold it by the British researchers for a large sum of money. I do not know if the tape was ever "sold to Japan" but I do know that I got a copy many months before this date that Warren here cites. Almost the first thing I did was to freely send a copy to Ray Boeche and MUFON in the USA – who will confirm that to anyone.

An even more absurd yarn appears on page 203. Here we see the claim that all attempts to talk to me were scuppered when I ran from Warren in fear at a UFO conference because I had discovered he called our book *Sky Trash!* Any reader of *Magonia* will no doubt see the flaw in that little fairy tale. From the number of letters I have blitzed upon the magazine after critical comments on one of my books my desire to defend my writings is very obvious. The very last thing I would do is flee from a critic. [I can vouch for this, Ed.]

Interestingly, the reader of *Left at East Gate* is left with the idea hanging that I could not answer the challenge so I simply ran away and that was the end of the matter. The conference involved was in June 1987 in Washington, I believe. It is never clear because Warren's chronology in the book can be out by months or years. I did find myself wondering how accurate were his records or his checks into the past if he cannot date MUFON conferences when these must presumably be well documented. What I do recall of Washington is being briefly introduced to Warren as I was rushing off to do a lecture and saying "hello" and promising to speak later. Which we did. In fact, I have had several meetings with Warren and have some on video tape. At none of them has he ever asked the questions I evidently ran from being asked at this conference nor has he sought to clarify any of the points he got so fundamentally wrong about my role in this case. Warren never makes clear to his readers that after I "fled" in terror we have had such productive conversations. Why?

Whatever his reasons it is not justifiable that he should lead his readers into a false impression of this situation. There is much else I could say – for example, his claim that Dot Street's interviews with him were grossly misreported in the book. What he may not know is that Dot taped these interviews and so his words from those early 1983 conversations are – it would seem – not the invention of *Sky Crash* as he alleges. If he believes otherwise he must presumably now charge Dot with faking these tapes. But why would she do it, since she was on very friendly terms with Warren at the time, as he admits in the book?

Other things that bothered me include the dating of Warren's encounter. I am as certain as I can be that the second night, when Halt was out there with a tape recorder, was the Saturday-Sunday 27-28 December. Warren has it here as the following night but says that he spent the prior afternoon in an Ipswich music store. I did find myself wondering whether Sunday opening of a small store would have been the practice – although the post-Christmas sales might have been a factor. Shops in 1980 were certainly open much less often on a Sunday than they are today.

There is also a curious attempt in the book to suggest that parts of Rendlesham Forest were flattened in 1987 as a result of not a hurricane (as most of us recall) but some sort of Orgone energy experiment. This seems to be building on Andy Collins's fantastic scenario as to the true origin of that fabled storm which he perceived as being due to a black magician (although curiously Collins followed that book with an attempt to link Orgone energy to UFOs and crop circles). All I will note is that to my recall the hurricane devastated large parts of southern England – not just Rendlesham Forest.

There are also several worrying errors in the text. Some of these (Major Dury several times instead of Drury) might be typographical. Others seem not – e.g. Oxford lighthouse (not Orford) – or even more hilariously – RAF Bodzy (when it is in fact RAF Bawdsey – as a glance at any map of the area would show). These to me represent both sloppiness and the real failing of this book. If the lighthouse explanation for this case were discussed (it is merely dismissed in passing) errors such as this would be unlikely. If the strange goings on at Orford Ness and at RAF Bawdsey were debated (as they ought to be since they are relevant to the case) the background to these places would presumably have been researched.

This is the problem; key theories tied to the case are not refuted by evidence. As with my nuclear weapons idea they are merely sneered at or ignored altogether. I assume that we are meant to believe that this was a bona fide alien contact – although with mind warping by the NSA, the Orgone energy excursion and one or two rambling diversions on the way I am not as clear on that as I should be. What exactly does Larry Warren believe happened on that night? After almost 500 pages I am not certain that I understand. Larry Warren's story is either truth or fiction or – possibly – something in between the two. He even speculates himself about his memory being altered by secret service interrogations. The sad thing is that *Left at East Gate* does not really help us to make an easy decision as to which is the most likely of these possibilities. Each option is also fraught with serious ramifications for the rest of the case.

I remain convinced that there is a significant close encounter at the heart of the Rendlesham Forest case. But I am far from convinced that any aliens were floating in light beams beneath a starship. And I am as sure as I can be that other – non-UFO – factors enter deeply into the equation as part of a remarkable set of events. The real key to this story does indeed lie on Orford Ness but not in the lighthouse.

I was mostly saddened by this book because it promised much and delivered little. I ended up more confused than when I read the first page. If I only ever had the chance to read this book on the incident I would probably agree with most people that this case is a load of nonsense. I can see why people would jump to that conclusion. Unfortunately, they would be very wrong to do so.

- *Larry Warren and Peter Roberts, Left at East Gate, Michael O'Mara, 1997.*
- *Jenny Randles, Dot Street and Brenda Butler, Sky Crash, a Cosmic Conspiracy. Neville Spearman, 1984.*
- *Randles, Jenny, From out of the Blue; the Incredible UFO Cover-up at Bentwaters NATO air base. Global Communications, 1991*

Posted in [1990s](#), [Randles, Jenny](#) | Tagged [rendlesham](#) | [1 Reply](#)

Not the E.T.H. Jenny Randles



Posted on [09/05/2009](#) by [johnr](#)

This article was first published in [Magonia 17, October 1984](#), which was a special issue reviewing the current status of the extraterrestrial hypothesis. Related articles include:

- [People of a Different Shape](#), by Peter Rogerson
- [A Plea for the ETH](#), by John Harney

I was surprised but very pleased that MAGONIA has decided to descend from the heights of psycho-social theorising (at least for one issue) and face the very real problems still proffered by the possibility that some UFOs just might be alien. I have a feeling that we have all rather got carried away with our theories regarding a wholly subjective solution to the UFO enigma. We are getting dangerously close to the point where we were willing subconsciously to distort the facts if they challenged our newly won and much vaunted theories. Anything which even hinted at some sort of exotic UFO reality was not to be regarded with the slightest trust, nor afforded more than a cursory or derisory glance.

I know that I nearly fell into that trap myself, for I swam with the torrents of raging subjectivity for several years, up to the last two or three. In working on my last couple of books I went back to basics and reappraised a few things in my own mind. I also started to listen to UFO witnesses for a change. That was a rather eye-opening thing to do; for I discovered that I had been preaching to them, largely from ignorance, saying "Sorry – despite what you think you saw that night two years ago you did not really see it at all, you only imagined it, but in such a way that it seemed very real". Again and again witnesses would stare back at me and say, "But if you had been there, you would know:"

Then it occurred to me that I was foisting my conviction that their encounter could not be describing reality, onto them. But with what right? A dozen witnesses who were generally fine observers, clearly sane and intelligent, and obviously sincere, were telling me each year that what they saw was as real as the nine o'clock bus. And a dozen armchair theorists (me included) were telling them that this just could not be.

If you really think through this situation you may get a hint of the magnitude of error I believe we have been making. But I think I now understand why we have been making it. Quite simply we have always assumed that the world comprises black and white choices. In truth it rarely does. The question of UFO reality does not consist of either John Smith saw a real, objective, exotic craft that flew through the air, landed somewhere, and then stayed there until its next flight past an unsuspecting witness; or else he merely dreamt/hallucinated/imagined/archetypally reconstituted/birth trauma dramatised this, when nothing was actually there at all.

Whenever you keep hedging around a question in many different ways but still end up with paradoxes in return, then quite simply you have asked the wrong question. That is a basic scientific principle. We have never resolved this clearly because exotic UFOs are neither objectively real nor subjectively real. They are something else altogether. They are what I call 'Quasi-Conscious Experiences'. They form their very own niche on the spectrum of reality.

We, as ufologists, have been acting rather like chemists in the last century, struggling with the embryonic periodical table of elements. We have this 'thing' called mercury which is a whopping great anomaly. But we have only two elements on our table clearly defined: hydrogen at the 'light' end and lead at the 'heavy' end. Mercury has certain characteristics of lead so we might choose to call it 'funny lead'. Others may argue that it is too 'light' to be lead and call it 'funny hydrogen'. The debate rages and goes nowhere.

From our cushion of years this looks stupid because we know mercury is mercury and not any sort of hydrogen or lead. But only the clear development of the table of elements demonstrates this. I think we are now similarly failing to see that the UFO close encounter, as a facet of QC-Experience is neither a strange kind of subjective reality, nor an extreme form of objective reality – but something in between and altogether different.

Once we accept this gradation of reality some remarkable things start to happen. We can slot particular experiences into their correct

little niche and clearly define their parameters. What is more, we can predict sorts of experiences and their properties which seem to fit into the gaps in our gradation – just as the chemists were able to define the properties of rare elements which completed the Periodic Table. It is in this way that the QC-Experience is seen to be a necessary feature of the spectrum of reality. If nobody had ever experienced anything like it, we would be rather puzzled because the way phenomena blend into one another, as we move from objectivity to subjectivity, clearly shows that it ought to exist.

If we take total objectivity at one extreme, for example posting a letter in a bright red postbox. This is objective, everybody who approaches it sees the same red box. But the complete extreme of total objectivity is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve, because our mind and perceptions experience the box, and (however slightly) distort our interpretation of it. We may perhaps feel a strong empathy, or antipathy, to the colour red. This will distort our view to some extent.

At the other extreme of the spectrum is total subjectivity; again hard to achieve in practice, but most dreams come close. The imagery is wholly imagined and personal to us. But just as emotions affecting our colour concept of the postbox produce a slight step down from total objectivity, so can external data intrude into our dreams, and thus create a step down from total subjectivity.

These two step-downs enable us to see how the extremes begin to blend together, and the image of the spectrum of reality becomes clear. At some point, of course, there needs to be a 50/50 halfway house, where there are equal levels of subjectivity and objectivity. But there are also many shades in between.

Our present need is to slot the vast wealth of what we call 'paranormal' phenomena into their correct places on the spectrum of reality. One phenomena we can place is the lucid dream [1], that strange experience where the person knows they are dreaming as the dream unfolds, and this realisation allows a certain conscious control over the dream imagery, and also sharpens the focus of the dream-making: it becomes dramatically more 'real' or lucid – hence the name.

It was my own personal experience of these magical things, plus later reading and research into them, which helped clarify my ideas about the spectrum of reality. The lucid dream has a place between the subjective end of the spectrum and the halfway house. It may be perhaps 60% subjective and 40% objective – although these are no more than figures at this stage of the game and ought not to be taken too literally.

The lucid dream seems so real because it contains such a relatively high degree of 'objectivity', but it is still recognisable as a dream because it lies on the subjective side of the halfway house. We can define it as a subjective experience with a (say) 40% level of objective data intruding; thus allowing the 'waking consciousness' to partly control and adapt the environment created by the 'sleeping unconscious'. In other words, the dreamer emerges from a sleep/dream state, close to 100% subjectivity, with the dream landscape thus intact, but the new level of objective override moulds and shapes this.

Now, if you have accepted my argument so far you will see that some sort of phenomenon must exist that fits the point on the spectrum between halfway house and the objective end of the spectrum. In many respects this is a mirror-image of the lucid dream, and it is what I recognise immediately as the Quasi-Conscious Experience. The term 'waking lucid dream' may well be apt.

Here the person emerges from normal waking reality, and steps down towards the subjective end of the spectrum, with the intrusion of a 40% subjective over-ride. Consequently the landscape which finds itself moulded and shaped is originally an objective one – the 'real' world. In the QC-Experience, or Waking Lucid Dream, the percipient finds subconscious data flooding in to a 40% level, to such an extent that it changes the perceived environment to a considerable extent.

In the lucid dream the balance favoured subjectivity and the step down occurred from the dream state, so the percipient believes the new experience to be a dream, but much more real. In the QC-Experience the opposite is true. The balance favours objectivity and the step down was from the 'real' world. Now the percipient believes the new experience is real, but more dream-like. UFO close encounters display this dream-like aura well – I call it the 'Oz Factor' [2]. It is, in my view, just the symptom which denotes the stepdown towards subjectivity.

I have tried to put these ideas across to ufology for the last couple of years, but with limited success. This is probably because it is a complex thing which is much easier to grasp in my case because: a] it has developed over a long period, and b] I have experienced several of the different niches on the spectrum of reality.

But I am quite excited by it, because it seems to be making sense out of so much that previously left me baffled and confused. In no way am I suggesting this as some sort of dramatic discovery. To me it is only something reasonably obvious that many people must have seen before. Nor does it solve the problem of precisely what UFOs are (except that they are neither real nor unreal – but a bit of both). However, I think it opens up new avenues of exploration.

You see, UFOs are many things, and I want it clearly understood that I am here discussing what I term 'Exotic UFOs' (principally close encounters). UAPs – Unidentified Atmospheric Phenomena – are entirely different, and are objective. They really exist, in every sense of the word real, and are natural physical mysteries on the threshold of science. There are almost certainly several different UAP types that are reported as UFOs; earthlights may well be one, extreme forms of ball lightning are another probably kind. I need to make this very plain, because certain reviews of my two latest books – including one in Magonia – have referred to my alleged theory that UAPs are alien. That is nonsensical, UAPs are earthbound, natural and in no sense controlled by intelligences of any description. The evidence that they exist is, to me, irrefutable.

The 'Exotic UFOs' are actually a very small residue out of the total of UFO reports; a fairly obvious fact when you realise that up to 90% of UFO reports are IFOs, and possibly up to 90% of the remainder are UAPs. The left-overs are few and far between, but in global terms they are still a large number of experiences.

Exotic UFOs are not spaceships. That fact is reasonably obvious once you see that, a] we have no photographs of UFOs landed or involved in creating close encounters and b] we have no photographs of alien entities, and c] nobody has yet witnessed somebody else undergoing an alien contact of any kind. You can backtrack as much as you like with convoluted hypotheses, but there is really no way out.

Similarly, Exotic UFOs are not totally subjective experiences of any kind. I say that because they contain far too many obscure but repetitive motifs; because they generate real physiological effects which are unlikely to be psychosomatic; because there are physical effects (e.g. car stops) which demonstrate some form of energy exchange; and because animals get disturbed by them too. I leave aside the thorny question of multiple witness close encounters, although enough exist with sufficient overlap to worry any truly open-minded adherent of the psycho sociological school.

What we end up with is something in-between. A QC-Experience does have heavy subjective overtones, simply by definition. The very thing which makes it different from normal objective reality is the over-ride by subjective data. What we have to do now is to decide the origin of this subjective over-ride.

It may come from inside ourselves, I accept that option. In a lucid dream the intrusion of objectivity is essentially self-oriented. But there is, to my mind, ample evidence that this is not always the case. Precognitive dreams, for example, seem to involve external objective data from the 'real world' (or 'real universe') – and this in a sense beyond the normal confines of space. In other words, information from an alien civilisation somewhere 'out there' is received subconsciously and intrudes into objective reality as a subjective data over-ride, thus changing our perception of reality, to create an alien or UFO reality.

The only reason I am taking the alien origin of the subjective data over-ride seriously is that it explains what we see much more simply. It explains why there are patterns and consistencies (the source is consistent); it explains why there are individual differences (the degree of pick-up and the way we integrate it into our experience will vary from person to person). It explains the form of the QC Experience – it is alien, because that is what lies at the heart of the message; I think it even explains the physical and physiological effects. It is my view that UAPs, or ambiguous IFOs, are at the root of most, if not all, close encounters. When UAPs are involved energy will be associated.

We have a situation like the following: Witness A sees a UAP and thinks "Oh my, a UFO". Energy is emitted and may or may not harm the witness or the environment. Meanwhile because he is naturally susceptible to switches of location on the spectrum of reality (in other words he is psychic) or because of some other unknown trigger, he steps down into a QC-Experience. The Oz Factor takes hold and he later describes his strange sensations and maybe even describes a time-lapse, due to his temporary slip out of normal objective reality into UFO Reality, where time is not as easily delineated. In the QC state the subjective data flows in from the alien source and moulds the external reality. If it is an orange ball of light (a UAP) this may become a spaceship, symbolising the information he is receiving in terms familiar and acceptable to his subconscious, just as when we receive objective facts in a precognitive way in a dream we tend to express them in dream symbols.

As the QC-Experience unfolds the witness believes he is perceiving reality exactly as before, unaware that he has slipped into another niche on the spectrum, where he is now subjectively dramatising received data and superimposing this on the UAP. The experience eventually ends, possibly when the UAP disappears, the aircraft flies away, or the satellite reentry burns up, or when whatever had been the initial stimulus no longer exists.

Of course, the essence of the episode lies in the witnesses mind, clothed in symbolism, and he may not, consciously, even realise that fact. When questioned he will tell what he believes he 'really' saw, but that is not terribly important. What is important is the inner substance of the message – the data which was responsible for the over-ride.

Perhaps we ought to be analysing UFO encounters rather like Jung analysed dreams. But we should do so recognising that we may be seeking something much more interesting than our own deeply hidden wishes or desires, or some archetypal facet of the human race. We may be decoding messages from an alien realm.

And so finally to answer the question really posed by this article: are the UFO phenomena alien in origin? If we mean in the traditional sense of gravity-powered space ships from Alpha Century my answer must be no. The ETH in that sense is dead. But I have a growing suspicion that the ETH in a more subtle – or Quasi Conscious) sense may yet provide a few surprises.

1. Celia Green; [Lucid Dreams](#). (Proceedings of the Institute of Psychophysical Research. vol. 1.) Institute of Psychophysical Research, Oxford, 1968.

2. Spencer, Lawrence R. [The Oz Factors: The Wizard of Oz as an Analogy to the Mysteries of Life](#) AuthorHouse, 1999

More Strange Awakenings. Jenny Randles

Posted on 01/05/2009 by [johnr](#)

FROM MUFOB NEW SERIES 13, WINTER 1978/9

This article follows on from [Keith Basterfield, Strange Awakenings](#)

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The UFO Investigators Network (UFOIN) was founded in spring 1977 to fill what many saw as a void in UFO investigations. The existence of such a freelance network in this country has had several effects, but most notably has paved the way for a more flexible approach towards UFO investigation. In this article I shall refer to the work of three investigation teams, in anticipation of more to follow. Case number one may seem ordinary, but I include it here because of the light it throws on the subsequent one, which is far from ordinary.

Carol Tounnesen came to UFOIN as a writer for the BBC who was going to produce a series of plays about UFOs; meantime she has found herself enmeshed in the web of UFO investigation.

Her first investigation concerned an event that took place at the overspill development of Killingworth, to the north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. All we know for sure about the date is that it was around February 1978, and occurred at 5am.

The prime witness is a nurse called Linda who was awoken, as was her [grand]mother in a separate bedroom, by a loud noise. The roaring noise grew louder, and they were convinced that a jet was about to crash into the house. The older lady decided to seek the dubious protection of her bedclothes, whilst Linda rushed to her bedroom window. As she pressed her face against the pane to look out, the noise changed suddenly and dramatically. It had been going for a minute or two, so this 'coincidence' is interesting. The noise became a high-pitched whining, and within a second or two a huge object sailed into view.

It was like a large cigar tube, the colour of polished metal, surrounded on its sides by myriads of tiny lights. The whole thing revolved on its axis and floated serenely by her window in a gap between her house and the one next door.

There is no doubt that this thing came within a few feet of where Linda stood. She says that had she reached out she was sure she could have touched it. The UFO then glided out of view beyond some more houses in the distance. The mother then promptly went back to sleep, while Linda was awake all night in utter panic. There were several other people in the house, and many hundreds in adjacent buildings, but no-one else saw this thing, and so far as we can tell nobody else heard it either.

So what are the explanations? A shared hallucination; certainly the experience was very personally oriented towards Linda. (who claims to have had no previous psychic experiences or encounters with mysterious phenomena), or could the catalyst have been Linda's mother? Maybe the transfer of experiences took place by a form of telepathy?

The noise in this case seems to have acted as a trigger to ensure that these witnesses experienced the phenomenon. This is something noticed in other cases. One such is that of the Lomax couple, elderly people who live in Essex, whose experiences were investigated by Andy Collins and Roy Lake.

Between 1975 and 1978 the Lomaxes have been plagued by 'the Noise'. This is apparently a peculiar sound that it is hard for them to describe, but seems to resemble aa rushing of swirling air that builds up and dies down in six seconds or so.

It becomes very loud and seems as if something is about to land on their roof, but then continues away. Both Mr and Mrs Lomax have heard it, together and separately, but nobody else in the neighbourhood, which consists of densely populated terraced houses, has done so.

These events become more interesting on consideration of Mrs Lomax's 'dream'. This concerns a ride in a UFO, and is archetypal in its description of occupants who are tall, with grey one-piece suits and long faces. The investigators were concerned to check for possible psychic experiences, of which there seemed to be several. Noises and footsteps have been heard inside the house when nobody else has been present; unexplained 'cold spots', TV and lights switching on and off or dimming on their own; radio sets giving out whistles or miscellaneous rude noises. In fact a fairly comprehensive catalogue of poltergeist-type events.

It matters little what interpretation is put on these events; one could claim that it is senility or imagination. But this is untenable, as the descriptions mirror so closely other well documented incidents. Or on the other hand one could suggest that spirit entities are to blame. One medium has suggested that it is a sign that close relatives of Mrs Lomax are looking after her and her husband, although one might think of more reassuring ways of putting this message across. More plausibly, these two events suggest that, like all other 'close encounters', the UFO phenomenon is an inherent facet of those experiencing it.

Finally we may consider the case of Rodney Stewart from South Shields. [The investigator's fuller account of this case may be read [HERE](#)] Rodney has a great interest in esoteric religions and UFOs. He is convinced that they are real solid machines, and has made several attempts to communicate with them through meditation, and on at least two occasions has 'summoned' mysterious objects. He also has an interesting background of odd and paranormal events. The investigator, Dirk van der Werff was impressed by Rodney's

sincerity and intelligence, and comments that at the time the events were taking place “Rodney was undergoing a very unhappy and emotional period due to a family upheaval...”

A complex puzzle; an indication that the UFO mystery embraces parapsysics and other psychic experiences. Maybe these cannot tell us the answers, but they seem to suggest that rather than looking out to the stars, we must look inwards – in to ourselves.



Posted in [1970s](#), [Randles, Jenny](#) | Tagged [false awakening](#) | [1 Reply](#)

A Lifetime of Curses. Les Maisey and Jenny Randles



Posted on [01/02/2009](#) by [johnr](#)

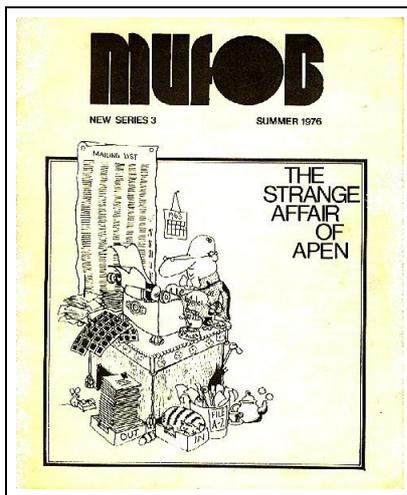
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The Strange Affair of APEN. Jenny Randles



Posted on [07/01/2009](#) by [johnr](#)



[MUFOB, new series 3, Summer 1976.](#)

There constantly seem to be rumours of links between UFO groups and individuals, and a number of shadowly extreme right-wing organisations. Here Jenny Randles looks at a group which troubled British ufologists in the 1970s with their disruptive antics and use of Nazi imagery

The UFO phenomenon is filled with complexities. Nobody really knows what is, and what is not, relevant to the overall mystery. What is clear is that we cannot afford to reject anything which might have a possible bearing on the eventual solution – this is true no matter how strange, or innocuous, this something might appear. In the field of contactee experiences it is now reasonably clear that all stories cannot be accepted at face value, but to reject them all out of hand would be equally foolish. It would appear that there is an element of deception about, be it perpetrated by alien intelligences or not. This has to be taken into account nowadays in all dealings with the UFO phenomenon.

Readers of Flying Saucer Review will be well acquainted with the long drawn out saga of the ‘Mysterious UMMO Affair’ (1). Regardless of what one might feel of these reports concerning alien intelligences depositing documentary evidence on peoples’ doorsteps by the totally terrestrial instrument of the postal services, it is important to note that this is not the only affair of its kind going on. In this country we have something similar, which whilst not going to the technological lengths which the UMMO personnel appear to, makes up for this with other strange attributes. This agency, whatever it may be, refers to itself as the Aerial Phenomenon Enquiry Network – or APEN.

As I write these lines contact with this ‘organisation’ has been going on for over two years, since the spring of 1974. Although great

amounts of correspondence has been sent to various 'contactees', never once has an address been given. Rather APEN hide behind innuendo and falsified names, covered by a bravado of brash statements concerning their aims and abilities.

APEN claims to be a UFO organisation on a world wide basis. They say that their membership is by invitation only. However, none of the dozen or so names, and voices on tape, which have been handed about, are familiar in any UFO context whatsoever. The organisation makes quite clear that it functions according to the ideals of the German Nazi party. They use complex methods of coding, have 'Supreme Commanders', issue directives to agents; and in often comical cross-correspondences battle with one another about the execution of various 'orders' without further question. They also emblazon their documents with official seals, and introduce tape recorded speeches with trumpet calls and German war broadcasts. They have also gone to the point of circulating to various people an article (on the theme of CIA cover-up operations) which they say comes from their magazine Pfeilspitze – German for 'Spearhead'.

Contact began very slowly with a trickle of letters, which at first claimed that they would reveal themselves in due course, and that they were in favour of local UFO groups co-operating. Interestingly, this was at the time when NUFON (Northern UFO Network) was a matter of days old, and was working towards this ideal. So far as is known, over the intervening years only groups within the NUFON system have been contacted, plus one or two individuals.

This is obviously an important fact to bear in mind. Certainly APEN have been selective in whom they approach. Not all groups have been contacted, though a large percentage have, and it would seem that their current aim is to widen the scope of their approaches. Generally contact takes place by means of letter. This is normally a short statement claiming that this, that, or the other, will be forwarded in due course, and enclosing photo-copies of newspaper articles (usually quite well-known ones) "for your group files". Normally the information is quite meaningless and banal.

On occasion there have been attempts at more close contact. One document was distributed which claimed to be a preliminary note on a contact and landing case in Wales. This contained the usual gibberish, and also requests for personnel and equipment to be despatched immediately. Nothing like your ordinary tape-recorders and cameras, however! APEN go in more for Land Rovers, infrared and ultraviolet sensors and stroboscopes. The arrogant tone of the directive is obviously designed to make the recipient believe that APEN really do possess this kind of equipment. They also note that their private phone link was used by the witness to this case. It seems that the aliens gave it to him, and told him to contact APEN, and APEN alone!

Cassette tapes have been sent to several people through the years. They are fairly predictable in content. Usually they consist of recordings of radio and TV broadcasts, often involving NUFON group members, which are interspersed with frantic appeals for inter-group unity and statements about UFO hostility. These are recorded by apparently multi-lingual speakers, of both sexes, who sometimes seem to be reading out prepared messages, and sometimes seem to be well on the way to inebriation.

All of this so far might make APEN appear to be a complete bunch of idiots or lunatics. It is certainly true that those who have experienced any form of contact from them (which now totals about eight to nine groups and at least as many individuals) have in the main found the APEN literature hilarious – light relief from investigation work. It was decided early on as a definite policy that NUFON would stop alluding to the APEN affair in its publication and those receiving the material would take no notice of its content. There were several pertinent reasons for this. The material was fast getting monotonous and we had more important things to write about. There was a feeling that we should not encourage the proliferation of this material by showing that it was having any effect on its recipients. Not least we felt that we should try to force APEN's hand into the open. If they were a genuine organisation they obviously would do so; if not, we had better things to do than play along with their game. However, despite this policy, APEN did not falter, and indeed became more daring in their exploits. It is because of these later activities that I feel it time the story should be brought out into the open. Whatever the true source of the affair, the lengths to which it is prepared to go should be known by serious ufologists.

Personal contact has developed. Individuals have been contacted and asked to act as 'go-betweens'. Nobody has yet accepted the offer when faced with the realities of APEN's past record. Beyond this point, telephone calls of a threatening nature (the usual MIB, "we will put a stop to you" type) have been made. A group with offices and equipment have had these ransacked, shortly afterwards receiving a letter from APEN apologising for 'the actions of their local agent'. Such groups have also had their reputations endangered by false sighting reports being passed on to the police. APEN have also sent an article to several individuals, and asked each to forward it to certain respected UFO publications in their own names, without reference to APEN. The effects of this ploy, had it worked would not have been hard to imagine.

Fortunately the effects of these actions are minimised because NUFON is well aware of what is going on. Those who are contacted report any new developments, and consequently a monitor can be kept on the situation. Obviously it is important both to do this, and to ensure that no-one is caught alone with APEN, and also not to get at all upset by their actions – which may be the very thing they are aiming for.

Exactly who or what APEN is is hard to determine. There are a number of possibilities, some more plausible than others. No direct efforts have been made by NUFON to track them down, partly because it would seem a pointless exercise (no



addresses or genuine names are given, and correspondence is posted from almost everywhere in the UK). It also seems that we might be doing just what APEN want if we channel valuable time searching haystacks for them, when we could be getting on with our other work. However, as was said at the outset, we do not know whether or not APEN are our work, and therefore it would be wrong to say that no steps have been taken. It would also be wrong to imply that no clues have been found – although for obvious reasons it is not possible to elaborate on these here. However, NUFON's policy remains the same. We protest that if APEN are genuine, then they will come out into the open, consequently we do not need to go chasing after them. Also, if they feel that they can worry and upset people by their attitude, I can assure them that most ufologists view them as ludicrous and pointless. This cannot be entirely the case, especially with the more malicious acts, but in these small number of cases APEN's performance on other matters lends absolutely no credence to the view that they are able or willing to carry out any truly serious actions.

If APEN are not what they claim to be, we are faced with three alternatives. Either they are an organisation which, for some reason, is out to cause disruption within ufology (and especially NUFON) – in which case our responses are hopefully proving the ineffectiveness of this. Alternatively the whole thing is a practical joke by someone with a lot of money and very little sense – again the best response to this is to laugh at the whole affair. Or finally it is a controlled experiment by someone who wants to see the reactions of UFO organisations. To my mind this last is the most plausible, and if it is so, by now the investigators ought to have their questionnaires fully completed.

Most people involved in ufology are serious, and do not accept everything at face value, although they agree to look into the possibility of most things. There are those who do react differently to a stimulus such as this, but the value of contact via NUFON in controlling reactions is, I think, proven.

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Vendetta With Venus. Jenny Randles

2

Posted on [31/12/2008](#) by [johnr](#)

From MUFOB New series 14, Spring 1979

In this report Jenny Randles gives an on the spot account of how the details of a UFO report are misrepresented by investigators, the media and the witnesses themselves

The most surprising thing about writing this article is that I am actually here to do it. Why, you might well ask. The reason is that I live just two miles from the Greater Manchester town of Urmston. That, I am sure, explains everything!

Well, on Friday December 1st, 1978 it seems that the planet Venus – which has (I am reliably informed) a diameter of about 7690 miles – landed in some marsh-meadows in that town. Of course I could not possibly have escaped the impact. Sadly, I also have to inform Peter Rogerson that he is no longer with us. He resides in that very town, so is now presumably writing about the meaning of angelic visitations in rather more than theoretical terms!

All of this apart, the story that I am about to relate has considerable importance for the modern-day ufologist. It demonstrates a number of things that can snare him in his search for truth – if he has a mind to that goal, as it seems most prefer the thrill of the chase. If they catch up with the answers too closely it may spoil their fun!

That Friday morning was cold, frosty and very clear. As I sleepily awoke at about 7.00 a.m. I glanced out of a window that faces south and saw a spectacular sight at about 30 degrees elevation. My immediate reaction was : “Venus is bright today” and after a few admiring glances, passed it by to return to more mundane pursuits like bacon and eggs.

At 8.15 a.m. precisely I happened to look out of the same window to see if it was still visible. The day had dawned sunny with a cloudless sky, but the pinprick of white light was still there, having moved a little to the west (as expected). At 8.30 I happened to pass the room once again and glanced once more. After a brief search I could still find it. These two times are exact. What is more interesting, even if it is pure coincidence, is that on both occasions I wondered if anyone was mistaking the astronomical wonder for a UFO.

Meanwhile I got on with my days work, until at about 12 noon I received a Mr Alan Babcock of Urmston. I spoke to him for some time as he related his story, and quizzed him on several points. This was despite the fact that I knew what he had seen. A brief account of his report follows:

At 6.00 a.m. his wife Sharon was drying her hair in the bedroom when she noticed a white light in the south (bearing later determined as about 190 degrees). It was so unusually bright and large that she knew it was not a star. Then a ‘vehicle’ detached itself from the ‘star’ and sped to earth. In a few seconds it had landed on the meadows besides the River Mersey, a half mile or so to their south-east. As it fell to earth, a beam of light was shot from star to vehicle, and then back in reciprocation. the ‘vehicle’ itself was of course only seen momentarily in the pitch black, but it looked like a bee-hive with ‘tyres’ around it.

The funny ‘star’ had meanwhile moved, so she called her husband out of bed and told him what had happened. They both watched it for half an hour through the window-glass with a pair of binoculars. It seemed to have a flashing light on top which pulsed every four seconds

or so. By now they were convinced it was a UFO – although Alan Babcock claimed he never really believed in them until that moment. They brought Mr Babcock's brother to watch it before it was decided that Alan Should drive out to find the object that had landed. The time was now between 6.30 and 7.00 am.

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Sharon was distressed, but let her husband go. He drove as far as he could and then proceeded on foot, eventually being stopped by the dark surroundings and the nearby river bank. Over to his right he saw some vague lights through bushes on the other side of the river. He stared at them for five or ten minutes despite the bitter cold. All he could really see were lights of different colours (but even five hours after he could not remember which colours), which seemed to be moving around. When I asked if all he saw were lights, he replied: "Well – I think so – there was a kind of vague shape – something like a dome – behind them" After they failed to move he convinced himself they were lights at the Shell oil refinery in nearby Carrington, and returned home in disgust.

When he confronted his wife with this account he realised several things. Firstly that the lights were not in the direction where she saw the object land, and secondly that the star was still in the sky, but not over where the lights had been. Sharon also pointed out that Carrington was west, and he was facing east (although he admitted that obtaining the exact bearings of where he was would be difficult.

With the star still there and looking like a "giant spider's web" of light revolving around a central point, they called the police. At 8.00 a.m. with the day dawning two officers arrived. For thirty minutes, until the light faded in the brightening sky, they watched the star through binoculars. The police were positive that it was something odd, said Mr Babcock, and gave him a number to report the UFO officially. He did so, and was told that there had been several other calls to corroborate this, but they had no idea what it was. He then called the Manchester Evening News who decided to interview him and his wife within minutes. Finally, he had rung Granada TV who put him onto me, and also said they were considering interviewing him.

So I was faced with this story around 1.00 p.m.. I knew very well the bright star was the one I had seen, and found it interesting that Babcock had referred specifically to two times (8.15 a.m. and 8.30 a.m., when the police viewed the 'UFO') when I had also been looking on, and wondering!

My astronomical knowledge is rudimentary and I was not positive it was Venus that I had seen, although all the indications pointed that way. So I left the matter in abeyance and meanwhile tried the 'official number' and police station that Mt Babcock had contacted.

The official number, as I had suspected, was Manchester Airport. I spoke at length to the Air Traffic Supervisor, who was most helpful. He explained that they had only one other report that day, over Stockport, and that there had been an aircraft in the vicinity that could probably explain it. Mr Babcock's light they had not thought to be of any significance, and did not report it to the Ministry of Defence at West Drayton. The Supervisor totally refuted Mr Babcock's claim that there had been several 'corroborative' sightings. The police also informed me that they had no other reports, and that the officers concerned thought the whole thing a waste of time. They regarded the light as a light. One said, "It could have been anything – probably a star or a satellite or something". Both these sources accepted as very plausible my explanation that it was Venus.

My next port of call was the Manchester Evening News. They were abrupt and somewhat rude. Their basic approach was 'we don't want to know about any mundane explanations'. When I would not confirm that their precious sighting was a flying saucer, or even a UFO, they terminated the conversation.

At 5.00 p.m. the evening paper arrived. It contained a major splash on the sighting – quite unusual for the MEN (Manchester Evening News). Headed "MYSTERY IN THE SKY SCARES HOUSEWIFE", it contained pictures of the Babcocks, and a large drawing of the 'beehive', plus white blob of light. The whole tone was that a UFO had landed in Urmston. The quotes from both the airport and the police totally contradicted what I had been told. In other parts they had been taken out of context to make it appear they were pronouncing the light a UFO.

Shortly after the paper reached the newsstands I spoke to Bill Skellon, an investigator for the DIGAP group, who also lived near Urmston. I had no intention of going any further with this report myself, but thought it might be interesting to see how the case developed, so when Bill said he was going to see the witnesses, I raised no objection. He set to work planning a full scale investigation.

That evening Peter Rogerson rang me to ask what I knew. I told him, and he had of course suspected that there was a mundane explanation of that sort.

On Saturday, Sunday and Monday investigations by DIGAP continued. They interviewed the witnesses several times and went to the scene on Urmston Meadows to look for samples, radiation, etc. Still nobody seemed to be looking for a natural explanation, although David Tarry, the DIGAP investigator who did most of the work on the case, was by Monday suspecting something mundane for the 'landed object' seen by the witness. In fact he felt that a farmer's tractor lights might be to blame, a view subsequently echoed by Bill Skellon. At that moment I put David in the picture on the Venus situation.

The press had not been idle over the weekend. The MEN carried a follow-up piece on the Saturday, saying that more people had seen the 'spaceship'. Then one chap, unbelievably from the Natural Science Phenomena Society or something, drew parallels between the US Mars Lander and the UFO, which he proposed had landed in the Mersey to take soil samples! All of this totally omitted any reference to the obvious solution to the mystery, which I had offered on Friday afternoon, and which anyone with any sense should have suspected

from learning about a 2½ hour encounter with a mostly stationary light.

Tuesday morning was the first to be clear again, and a quick glance at the southern sky at about 7.00 a.m. revealed our 'UFO'. By now my colleague Peter Warrington, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, had checked out the position of Venus, and there was virtually no room for doubt that the cause of the main part of the Friday morning sighting was that planet.

On Tuesday evening David Tarry rang me to say that Granada Television wanted him to appear to talk about 'the UFO', and news had by now filtered to other parts of the country, via press agencies. Being a relative newcomer to the subject Tarry had declined the TV interview. When Granada then came to me I took the opportunity, without revealing, until I had got to the studios, what I planned to say. That evening they presented a short filmed report on the events, interviewing Mr and Mrs Babcock at the Urmston site. The influence of the investigators, to whom they referred on air, was noticeable.

"Oh, yes", said Mrs Babcock. "Several UFO investigators from the group have been to see us and were very interested. They showed us pictures of UFOs and we picked out which one it was". They went on to talk, now in much more graphic terms, about the 'object' on the ground. Five hours after the events, when they rang me, it was just a set of lights. Bill Skellon, the investigator who had shown the UFO sketches says that the TV made it seem they had led the witnesses, but in fact they showed their drawings after the Babcocks described their sightings. It seems the landed object was now most like an Adamski Scout-Ship! Sharon had by now turned her two brief flashes of light into "beams of solid light".

I have no desire to criticise the DIGAP investigators, I am sure they acted with honestly objective intentions. The point is, however, that they clearly had deeply affected the witness's story, and it was now much more bizarre. At this point DIGAP have not yet published their final report, so it would be unfair of me to comment on their methodology; yet it seems odd to me that they should not look for the rational before exploring the irrational. This seems to be a failing of far too many UFO investigators, and perhaps a prime reason why we have so much apparently puzzling data.

IT SEEMS ODD TO ME THAT INVESTIGATORS SHOULD NOT LOOK FOR THE RATIONAL BEFORE EXPLORING THE IRRATIONAL. THIS SEEMS TO BE A FAILING OF FAR TOO MANY UFO INVESTIGATORS, AND PERHAPS A PRIME REASON WHY WE HAVE SO MUCH APPARENTLY PUZZLING DATA.

I did appear on Granada Television on the Wednesday and made my point by suggesting that viewers look for themselves at what the Babcocks had seen. At the same time I made no comment at all about the 'beehive' or the landed 'object' involved in the sighting. Considering my early involvement in the case it seemed clear to me that most if not all of the strange aspects of the case were attributable to the cold and unusually clear atmosphere distorting Venus at its most brilliant. No doubt frost on the window-pane, aberrations in the binoculars or even sleep in the eyes of Mrs Babcock during the first two minutes of the observation were all contributory factors towards what was rapidly becoming a 'classic' landing.

It now seems that Mrs Babcock remembers some youths returning from the meadows, near where her husband saw the 'landed' object. This was around 9.00 p.m. on the Thursday night. It seems there was an 'eerie' sensation around the place and horses and cows grazing on the meadows were 'acting up a bit'. Now we are getting associated effects intermixed with what is turning into a close encounter! One wonders what would have happened if the investigators had found the remains of an illicit bonfire on the meadows. Would we have physical traces too?

In fact there is still more to add. Granada (tongue-in-cheek, we hope) announced that a certain UFO investigator – they named no names, so I cannot imagine who – connected the sighting with the mysterious disappearance of seven cats from the vicinity!

As a UFO investigator who comes across all sorts of strange encounters, most of much greater importance than this, I find it sad and horrifying that this whole thing can have been exploited out of all proportion. To most of the general public this is typical of UFO sightings and typical of UFO investigators. There is truth and untruth in that viewpoint. Yet here we see the genesis of a classic case, which I hope through MUFOB will remain classic no more to those few who care, the serious UFO reporters who know there is something strange behind some of the reports, although we may not agree among ourselves what precisely this is.

For those few, Friday December 1st, 1978 was a sad, but all too typical day.

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When Jenny Met Joe. Jenny Randles

Posted on [01/04/1999](#) by [magonia](#)

From [Magonia 68](#), Autumn '99





MUFON's last conference of the millennium (as Walt Andrus introduced it) was staged in Washington in July. Appropriately it was a remarkable reflection of the AC/DC nature of modern ufology, where the subject has become so polarised that we now have two warring factions. This is not ufologists versus the sceptics, but fringe ufologists against the last bastions of rationality.

MUFON, for example, put on some lectures that can only be termed bizarre – for instance the saga of what was effectively an alien dating agency that can set up female abductees with male abductees even if they are already married. As one audience member/would be abductee said to me, beaming with joy when the lecturer announced a book on the theme – it will be a bestseller. And of course it will.

Contrast that with the remarkable about face by former Roswell defender Kevin Randle, whose current writings (including a new book devastatingly assessing abduction beliefs) seems so British he probably ought to emigrate. Some of the

dispirited old guard in the US fought back too with rationality. Bruce Maccabee, for example, gave a splendid hard headed talk in which he patiently explained why a couple of photo cases were not really UFOs whilst uncovering an intriguing Phoenix, Arizona photo case that may conceivably be the first solid evidence of a time lapse.

So there were, in effect, two conferences going on at the same time. No prizes for guessing which one the majority of the audience crammed to see, or the media (what few of them showed up amidst evident apathy) chose to report. Those who said, serious, sober ufology go stand in the corner.

However, for the media, thronging audience and MUFON (who even gave Budd Hopkins second billing behind the new rising star) one man dominated the event. The reporters and delegates swarmed about him like flies on a cowpat. There was an enraptured, zealous look about the 400 or so who watched his undeniably slick presentation and his name was pretty well all anyone was talking about afterwards.

Who was this man? He is Joe Firmage, (above) a 28 year old computer whiz kid who, outside the US, is a virtual unknown. Even in the US his prominence is very recent and until now largely based upon his 'book', published so far just on the internet (but watch out for what must be the near inevitable mass market edition, TV specials and movie of the week). It has the immodest title 'theword is truth'.

Frankly, I had no idea who this man was or what to expect of him. But most who attended had formed some opinion and, whether they be ordinary UFO enthusiasts or leaders of the community this quickly transformed into adulation. Why did this man get a standing ovation and achieve cult status so speedily? I saw a very similar thing with John Mack at the MIT symposium in 1992. Then it was because Mack was perceived as a hero riding in to save the abductees. He had so much to lose, they told me. Yet he was willing to stand up and support them. What a brave thing to do, I heard them croon. As a professor and Pulitzer prize winner many ufologists had other expectations of him. Mack would salvage their credibility and legitimise the field. As for his obvious great knowledge leading to anticipated breakthroughs – a little thought should have suggested what has proven to be true. Mack was up against all the same hurdles the rest of us face – confusing, conflicting evidence and virtual no solid proof for alien reality. Even a genius cannot be expected to do much with that.

There has been much the same sort of mood about Firmage. He has gone from zero to hero rapidly via the late 20th equivalent of the Hollywood film set – the internet. His web company employs 2000 people and was worth three billion dollars. His own fortune makes the annual budget of most UFO groups look like a generous tip to the waiter after a good night out.

Yet, here's the rub. Firmage had chosen to leave all that behind. He quit his company (apparently to spare it embarrassment through his new found beliefs) and has announced that the reason is his assertion of the alien presence on earth. They have been here for millennia in fact. How does he know? Three key reasons, it seems – as in fact only those at the pre-symposium press conference really got to hear.

Reason one, the evidence of ufology has convinced him. He thanked the many great folk at the conference, as he put it, who had been 'doing this job longer than I have been alive' (audible groans all round). They had done a great job but too few were listening. Unspoken (but I could hear it in my head) was the undercurrent, that it was maybe time to move on.

Reason two is worryingly familiar. Nameless, faceless 'sources' he has been contacted by during his business success – implied to be bigwig military or government types that his career allowed him to mix with – had admitted to Joe the aliens were here and all the UFO stuff was true. Who were they? When they are ready to own up then they'll say. Right now he cannot breach their confidence.

Reason three, was the one he seemed less keen to discuss. But it appears to boil down to a 'conversation' with an alien image that he saw over his bed one night as he lay half asleep/half awake mulling over problems. It is interesting that many ufologists would seek altered states of consciousness solutions for such a visionary episode, but it clearly has more meaning than that to Joe.

So he is now here in ufology, its new cult hero and public mouthpiece and, the mutterings behind the scenes at the conference hinted to me, he has already staged meetings with some of the leaders of ufology (translation, I assume, the ETH supporters at the helm of US ufology). With what result? This is something we were told we should not have too long to wait and see.

However, I was struck by a curious lack of foresight by those doing the hero worship. Firmage's well presented lecture was an entertaining and clever blend of expertly delivered future technology, fringe science and neo-mysticism. UFOs per se hardly got a mention except as a stepping stone to new science. Instead he reflected on how because of them we now had to reassess our entire future – and he went through topics such as chemistry, physics, cosmology, etc showing how we will have new perceptions in a few decades time.

His interest is to create a kind of super think tank of high flying technocrats and specialist nerds (eg recruited from NASA) who can think laterally, take account of secret UFO data and strive to break the rules. He spoke about fantastic new propulsion systems and how he aimed to let everyone have their own UFO before too long. No doubt in any colour so long as its invisible to cameras.

Now this is fascinating, almost laudable and he has the money to at least give it a shot. But it isn't ufology. I cannot really see this new force he is creating inviting the chairman of the Piddletown UFO Society to its board meetings. Nor does the recording of the 7.45 Adamski spaceship from Zeta Reticuli seen passing over Clapham Common hold much interest to Firmage. Although few delegates were asking themselves this question, one perceptive reporter asked him at the press conference and Firmage's answer should have sent a chill down the spine of the UFO leaders he has courted.

Will you fund UFO groups, he was asked? Well, said Joe, I don't regard it as important to try to prove the existence or nature of UFOs. Its been done. I personally don't need convincing. In other words, what he was really suggesting was (to loosely paraphrase and apologies for anything I misunderstood) – good work chaps, you've kept the UFO pot boiling whilst I grew up, made my millions and discovered the science and technology potential of ufology. You can now take it easy because the day of the UFO spotter is over and the day of the UFO technocrat is here.

Some of this he did say, some he did not and is inference on my part. But the problem is that many ufologists may not realise that their hero is really speaking a different language and heading in a direction that for now is parallel to their own but fairly soon might not be. Once scientists he works with tire of the weirdos hanging on his coat tails and the madcap fulfilled world of UFO ideology that wants a bite of his cherry pie will it be a case of – them or us, Joe? And if so who will he choose?

Once Joe realises that much of ufology is a desert of tiny shoots with specks of hard evidence and good theory swamped by the endless sands of inanity will he really need to be attached?

Perhaps so. Maybe he has genuine affection and will support the folk who got him where he is. Possibly he will fund some good research and bankroll UFO projects. If so, good on him. But I do not really see that as his priority. The hunt has already started. I left Richard Hall looking glum that Joe had been a 'no show', as Richard put it, at a planned discussion about funding his giant casebook venture. Hall's book ('The UFO Evidence Part 2' – a sequel to his NICAP epic 36 years ago – that's even pre-Magonia and myself!) is worthy and should be released. Conventional publishers have (shamefully but unsurprisingly) forsaken it to print the sea of bilge that gets onto the bookshelves these days instead.

If Firmage has an eye for good PR he may see the value of funding this project, but to be honest I don't perceive that as being his *raison d'être*. I think he has a rather different agenda in mind. On the internet, in a discussion posting, I likened the hero worship to turkeys voting for Christmas, which to a degree it is. If Firmage does what he wants to do ufology will stagnate. He'll get his military chums to reveal all and there won't be any need for groups to fight government secrecy. Or he'll prove his case by using back engineering to build amazing technology that could only have come from the stars. He'll attract so much media attention that the UFO writers and leaders won't get as much of a look in and will have to retire or find another job. And if his technology think tank builds a UFO for your garage who the heck is going to care about the latest pink light seen over the local park as recorded by the neighbourhood spacewatch group?

Of course, chances are that not very much – if any – of this will happen as Firmage no doubt quite sincerely expects that it will. To him its all new. Many of us have been there, bought the T shirt and long since torn it up for use as a cheap duster. His sources will probably never tell all. His support for ufology may by necessity prove short term. His think tank could make a few interesting discoveries or small scale breakthroughs but will not change the world and might figure out it stands a better chance of real funding and being taken seriously if it doesn't saddle up to the silly sausages that believe reptile aliens are lurking in the woods waiting to kidnap nubile young women.

Or, of course, we may just have witnessed the beginning of the end of the old world and the start of the birth of a new one. Perhaps dear old Nostradamus was right about the seventh month of 1999 and for ufologists a 'great king of frightfulness has come down from the sky' (or soon will do when Sky TV devote their inevitable one hour special to his ideas). But I doubt many of you will be breathless in anticipation of the old order fading forever. Which is not to say it will not be fun watching as the show unfolds.

Whats that I hear? Faint murmurs starting about how Joe Firmage is a government plant? Utter tosh, of course. But then don't the UFO big wigs have to think of some reason why 'The Unexplained World of Strange Things' doesn't call quite so often to set up that TV interview because you are 'the worlds greatest UFO expert' and why your latest book about 'Alien Clones I have Met' didn't earn its £100,000 advance and your agent is now talking to some scientist who makes the tea in the Firmage think tank because he has seen the plans for the Mark One All American Flying Saucer.

What else can the reason be for your ousting from the limelight but some dastardly plot. It cannot possibly be because Joe Firmage is (for now) an interesting, new story and you are a tired old media has been. And even if so that realisation would never cloud your judgement enough to think nasty things about a serious rival just because of jealousy.

In ufology? Nah. Course not.

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Jenny Randles is a British author and former director of investigations with the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA), serving in that role from 1982 through to 1994. Randles specializes in writing books on UFOs and paranormal phenomena. To date 50 of these have been published, ranging from her first UFOs: A British Viewpoint (1979) to Breaking the Time Barrier: The race to build the first time machine (2005). Subjects covered include crop circles, ESP, life after death, time anomalies and By Jenny Randles. "...the flying saucers phenomenon...does supply real mysteries, and...Randles' most modern publication is an effective position to begin. One or circumstances for every 12 months from 1947-1997 are summarized and illustrated, with insightful observation from the writer. Such well-known incidents because the Roswell crash...are defined, in addition to sightings that experience acquired very little airplay...Randles keeps a balanced standpoint all through. Show description. Read Online or Download Alien Contact: The First Fifty Years PDF. Jenny Randles, who specialized in physics and geology at university, has sold more than one and a half million copies of her fifty published books. She has... Get updates about Jenny Randles and recommended reads from Simon & Schuster. Plus, get a FREE eBook when you sign up! By clicking 'Sign me up' I acknowledge that I have read and agree to the privacy policy and terms of use.

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