

AN EARLY BRITISH NAVAL SIGHTING

By GORDON CREIGHTON

At the time when FSR was being launched, in the spring of 1955, I was working — after a diplomatic career on four continents — in an Intelligence post somewhere in the governmental and administrative heart of London known as Whitehall. The name of the organisation where I was employed and the nature of my duties there are not matters that need to be chronicled here, and it will perhaps suffice if I say that, being in central London, I was well placed to make social contacts with people of various services, including officers of the CIA and of the American Air Force Intelligence.

Having once seen something extraordinary in the sky (in the far west of China, no less than fourteen years before FSR began) my mind was already much taken up with the problems of the “flying saucers.” And, among these officers and officials whom I was meeting outside of as well as inside office hours I found that there were some who were evidently pretty knowledgeable and who took more than just a superficial or passing interest in the “saucers” and were even very willing to discuss them seriously, although I noticed that, naturally enough, they seemed far more keen on ‘pumping’ other folk than on releasing much information on the subject themselves. In other words, they were already “cagey”. (I emphasise again that these officials were invariably encountered on purely social occasions, for my own work was in no way connected with them, secret though it was, and none of them were ever met in the course of my duties.)

It must of course be borne in mind that those were still very early days in the UFO business. The meetings of the famous “Robertson Panel” of scientists in the USA only took place in 1953. Things were fluid still, “the lid was by no means fully screwed down yet”, and lots of stories and reports were getting into the newspapers which would assuredly never get into them now, and people in uniform were correspondingly more relaxed still and not yet quite as much on their guard as they would be in later years.

In the summer of 1958, on a social occasion, while taking my vacation in a country not far from Britain, I met another American officer — a captain in the U.S. Air Force Intelligence, with whom I had a very interesting chat for an hour or so on UFOs. He told me that he had had a personal encounter with a “foo fighter” when about to land his plane on an airfield near Tokyo in 1946, very shortly after the defeat of Japan. He told me that, at a certain moment, the “foo fighter” exploded right in front of his aircraft. He said the whole area beneath and round about was combed exhaustively by American troops and Japanese police, but not a scrap of the enigmatic intruder was ever found. In the famous Brazilian case at Ubatuba, (1) in September 1957, on the other hand, it will be recalled that the “foo fighter” fell right on the shoreline, between sea and land, and a good proportion of it

was recovered and, as we were subsequently informed by APRO, was being analysed in a Brazilian laboratory. (Further reports were promised, but I never saw any, and this did not surprise me!) We gathered however that the main constituent of the object was the easily combustible element *magnesium*.

I then told the American Air Force Intelligence officer about the strange sight that I (along with two other Europeans) had seen in the sky over a city in the remote interior of China at about noon one day in the summer of 1941, (2) and he listened with evident interest and asked many questions, but refused to speculate. I was left with the impression that he already “knew a lot”.

ADMIRAL LORD LOUIS MOUNTBATTEN.

One of the earliest “big names” that we heard mentioned in connection with the “flying saucers” was that of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. He too — so it was said — “knew a lot about flying saucers”, because the British Navy possessed photographs of them in flight over the sea, and also sometimes at rest on the surface of the water.

My own (unpublicised) association with FSR had started with the very establishment of the journal in 1955. I had filled in a subscription form and sent off my cheque, and in due course, as a subscriber, I began to receive from their first secretary Brinsley le Poer Trench (later Lord Clancarty) my FSRs, from No. 1 onwards. My first contributed item appeared in issue No.2 (Vol.1 No.2) but it was to be a good many years before my name was given in the journal — not, in fact, until I had ceased to be a civil servant.

As for Lord Mountbatten’s great personal interest in our subject — we knew with certainty that this was true, for he had asked to receive FSR, and a copy of every issue was accordingly sent to him right from the beginning. (Nor was he the only person in those very highest levels among our national leaders who had expressed such an interest, and who consequently also received every issue of FSR right from the commencement.)

A STRANGE STORY.

A distant relative of mine (now dead) had served in the Royal Navy in World War II. Not long ago, just before his death, he told me a strange story which I think should now be placed on record, as it agrees so closely with some of those tales and rumours that were heard in Whitehall during the 1950s. He said, simply, that he knew a colleague, another British naval officer, who had worked in the early post-war years in the main building of the Admiralty — which, as I should perhaps explain for the benefit of foreign and overseas readers — was in those days the administrative headquarters for the Royal

Navy and is in Whitehall. This officer told my relative that, on a certain occasion, in the Admiralty, he happened to visit the room of a very senior officer in the Royal Navy, and there, right on the great man's desk, he saw what he ought not to have seen — files on the subject of UFOs, and photographs of strange disc-shaped objects on the surface of the sea.

THE ALLEGED LANDING ON THE MOUNTBATTEN ESTATE.

After the murder of Lord Mountbatten by the IRA terrorists in 1979, FSR published an article by Desmond Leslie, (3) giving the details of an extraordinary affair regarding which we had already heard vague rumours over a good many years past. A UFO, or UFOs, it seems, had landed briefly in the grounds of the Mountbatten estate, at Broadlands, in Hampshire, Southern England, one snowy day during the 1950s, and an occupant of the craft had spoken to an Army NCO, Sergeant Briggs, a member of the Admiral's outdoor staff. According to Desmond Leslie, when Lord Mountbatten heard of the encounter, he at once sent for Sergeant Briggs and got him to make a full statement, of which seven copies were prepared. Briggs signed all seven copies, and was permitted to keep one, while Lord Mountbatten placed the other six copies in a drawer of his desk.

CONFIRMATION BY CHARLES GIBBS-SMITH.

When the Directors of FSR held their next board meeting, they were able to hear direct confirmation of this affair. For our colleague and fellow director Charles Gibbs-Smith reported that he had traced Sergeant Briggs and discussed the matter with him, and had seen his signed copy of the Report which Lord Mountbatten had drawn up. Several of us urged Charles Gibbs-Smith to put this important piece of corroborative evidence down in writing at once, so that it might go on record in our journal, and it is a matter for very great regret that our much-loved colleague, already a sick man, was apparently unable to attend to this before he died. This brief note must serve therefore for the record.

EVIDENCE OF THE ROYAL NAVY'S INTEREST IN UFOs.

Traditionally the Royal Navy has been known as the "Silent Service." Although we have all heard so much evidence to indicate the great interest taken by all Air Forces, and for many years past, in anything of a 'ufological' nature, only rarely have we heard of *Navies* taking an interest in such matters. Although a cursory glance through the history of our subject will show that at various times there have been reports of investigations by the naval authorities in the USA, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, to name just a few, never, it seems, has there been mention of the British Navy.

THE ARTICLE IN URANUS

Recently, when leafing through the pages of *Uranus* (the early mimeographed UFO magazine, long since defunct, which was edited in the mid-1950s first by Eric Biddle and later by David Wightman) I came across the

interesting little story which I reproduce below. As will be noted, it is said to have come from a German press source but most unfortunately, though the name of the German newspaper is given, there is no reference to the date of either the paper or the alleged report. However, many readers may feel inclined to think, as I do, that the story *sounds genuine*. We must bear in mind that those were still the very early years of the UFO Phenomenon. The official clamps of secrecy only began to be effective around 1956-57, and in the seven years that had elapsed since Kenneth Arnold's famous sighting in July 1947 many extraordinary reports had got out that certainly would not stand the slightest chance of doing so today.

I have no idea what the circulation of *Uranus* was, but it was certainly very small. It was a simple little mimeographed magazine on very poor paper, and it is likely that few copies will have survived. If we do not give this report wider circulation by reprinting it now, it will probably be lost and forgotten altogether. If we print it now, there is always the possibility that one of our German readers may be able to trace the original item in the *Speyerer Tagespost*, and if we take it from there we may be able to find out more about the story and learn from where they got it.

Who knows? The possibility is not excluded that this story in a German newspaper concerns the very same UFO sighting and the same photographs about which the British naval officer from the Admiralty spoke to a member of my family a quarter of a century ago.

A BRITISH NAVAL SIGHTING COMES TO LIGHT.

(This report first appeared in the *Speyerer Tagespost*.)

Three British submarines returned to Plymouth after manoeuvres held off the Bristol Channel. The Commander, Captain Chelwan, (5) reported to his Admiral that he had seen "Flying Saucers" floating on the sea approximately eleven nautical miles south of Lundy Island. He was able to take two photographs showing the objects.

The research organisation on UFOs, formed about a year ago in London and attached to the Admiralty, confiscated the film at the Admiral's request, and decided that the photos would be studied, evaluated, and released for publication (6) at a later date. In the meantime Captain Chelwan was ordered to treat his encounter with the UFOs as a military secret and to instruct his officers and men accordingly.

Before the order was imposed, however, a newspaper man obtained a five-minute interview with Captain Chelwan, and here is the Captain's story:-

"We surfaced near Lundy Island, and, on opening the hatch, my Engineer and I noticed, about a mile to the S.W., two silvery discs floating on the sea. As the sun was shining on the ripples, I thought at first that it was a light reflection, but presently we both heard a buzzing sound. We quickly grabbed our binoculars and examined the objects. They were shaped like a disc slightly elevated in the middle, and had no windows, portholes, or other apertures. **The elevated middle portion was stationary,**

but the flat outside portion, surrounding the middle part like a collar, rotated slowly on the water.

"We thought the objects measured approximately 100 ft. across, the middle portion appearing to be not bigger than one tenth of the whole disc. The outer portion surrounding the centre piece appeared not to be attached to it, as there was a gap between them measuring about two feet.

"I must say we were very much surprised at the sight of those objects, and officers and men crowded (7) the deck staring as if they were hypnotised. As the whole "show" took only 80 seconds, it was impossible to form a sober judgement. Their origin seems to be a puzzle; technically they seemed far above anything we knew. We all thought immediately that they were Flying Saucers. I intended to give an order to go at them full ahead and, if possible, get alongside them, but the buzzing sound became higher and more urgent, until the pitch was so high that it could not be heard any longer. The two discs mounted horizontally, turned sideways at about 300 ft, and disappeared in twenty seconds at a speed which I estimate to be at about 2,000 mph. At the same time a reddish glow surrounded the objects. (8) The Admiralty declared that the sighting was to be treated seriously and the evaluation of it would take some time."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See FSR, Vol. 6, No.4 (July/August 1960), page 21.
2. A brief account of this sighting has been given by Robert Chapman, Science Correspondent of the London *Sunday Express*, in his book *Unidentified Flying Objects* (pub. Arthur Barker, London, 1969) and later as a Mayflower paperback under the title *UFO: Flying Saucers over Britain?* (also 1969).
3. See Desmond Leslie: *Did Flying Saucers Land at*

Broadlands?: Alleged Encounters on the Estate of Earl Mountbatten of Burma. In FSR Vol 26, No. 5 (January 1981).

4 See *URANUS*, Vol.3 No.3 (December 1956). Editor David Wightman. A mimeographed twenty-page bulletin issued six times yearly by Markham House Press Ltd., 31 King's Road, London SE3.

5. This name *Chelwan* should be an important clue. I asked the department of the Ministry of Defence who deal with these matters whether they could assist me by tracing an officer of this name, and I received an extraordinarily prompt reply that they had no record of any officer of such a name having served in the Royal Navy. It is very much to be hoped that one of our readers who has more leisure than we at FRS do (our number is very small), and who has access to old issues of the *Navy List*, might be able to effect a more convincing search for us, and tell us whether they have any success.

6....."released for publication...."OH YEAH We seem to have heard of such assurances on plenty of other occasions!

7. Remember that this UFO report dates from the early or mid-1950s, that is to say, from a time when very little had yet been published about the details of UFO appearance or UFO behaviour. Read this alleged naval officer's account carefully, and note how numerous are the features that today strike us as familiar, because we have seen them in so many other reports. If it be claimed that someone in Britain or Germany faked this story, then one can only say that he must have already been remarkably well informed on various aspects that can have been known only to a very few folk indeed at so early a date.

8. How often since then have we seen mention of this change of colour towards red as UFOs accelerate! G.C.■

YOUTH OCCULT INVOLVEMENT CAUSE FOR ALARM IN FRANCE

By Diana Geddes (National Catholic Register's Correspondent in Paris)

From the National Catholic Register (August 25, 1996)

During the night of June 8, the body of 77 year-old Yvonne Foin was dragged from its tomb in Toulon's Catholic cemetery in the south of France, ripped out of the coffin where it had lain peacefully for 20 years, and had an inverted cross — the sign of the devil — driven through its chest.

"We wanted to have some fun by 'doing' a corpse" one of the four youths, all reportedly from "good" Toulon families, explained to the police without any trace of remorse.

The four youths, who believe themselves to be demons, begotten by Satan, profess a vicious hatred for all "Christians, Jews and Moslems, who are just cattle to be slaughtered."

This summer, half a dozen cases of inverted

crosses and satanic symbols daubed on tombs have been reported around France. Some 200,000 French youths are believed to engage regularly in ghoulish "role-playing" games, centered on death and Satan.

FRENCH INTEREST IN THE OCCULT.

The decline in organised religion (fewer than one in 10 of the French attend Mass regularly); the break-up of the family; the collapse of secular ideologies like communism; and science's inability to explain the "true meaning of life," have helped spawn an explosion of interest in the occult and the para-normal, becoming a source of increasing alarm in France.

An estimated 10 million French people consult clairvoyants and mediums every year. Half the population