

UFO File release June 2013

Dr David Clarke

The 10th and final collection of Ministry of Defence UFO files released by The National Archives.

There are 25 separate files of sightings, something in the order of 4300 pages in total that you can now download from The National Archives website and they cover mainly the years 2008 – 2009. The Ministry closed their UFO desk and cancelled their UFO hotline in November 2009 and that brought to an end almost 60 years of collecting, analysing and in some cases investigating sightings of mysterious things seen in the sky.

The highlights of this collection of UFO files, the last one, is the build up to the Ministry of Defence's decision in November 2009 to close the UFO files and in that month they closed the UFO hotline number which members of the public had used since 1997 to report their sightings directly to Whitehall. They also redeployed the final UFO desk officer and they sent out letters to the Home Office and to the Civil Aviation Authority basically saying that the Ministry no longer wanted to receive UFO reports from the CAA or from the police and they were no longer going to investigate anything that was reported to them.

In this collection of files there are 4300 pages and 25 separate files and the really big year is 2009 because in that year the Ministry received 643 separate sightings, up to November when the UFO desk was finally closed. And that figure was actually a record breaking number for the MoD, the number of sightings had trebled from the previous year – 2008, and on average during that decade the MoD was receiving between 100-200 per annum. Those numbers doubled in 2008 and trebled in 2009 and that really did put a strain on the resources the MoD had committed to this subject and really it lead up to the decision to finally pull the plug on 'Britain's X-files' simply because they didn't have the resources to investigate these sightings or to look at them in any detail so they tended to just be filed away. And the vast majority of the sightings in 2008 and 2009 seemed to be of very down to earth objects such as Chinese lanterns that had been released by people at parties and weddings and these had been reported, photographed and published in the newspapers which encouraged more people to report these things and what you find is, looking through the reports, you get people who are enjoying themselves out at night in the summer at BBQ's, some of them in hot tubs, they see something odd in the sky, they take a photograph on their mobile phone and there are lots of examples in here where people are really really excited about some orange light they have seen in the sky and they want to tell someone about it. So there is a UFO hotline that the Ministry was running at that time, they would contact the hotline they would leave a message and send some footage from their mobile phone or iphone in some cases. The photographs you can see them yourself in the files, they are not very good quality, a lot of them are just little blobs of light against a very dark background. There are some more interesting photographs, there is one for instance of a UFO supposedly seen over Stonehenge in Wiltshire. But when you actually look over the description of that, you find in a lot of these cases that a lot of people who send these photographs in didn't actually see anything at the time they took the photograph, it is only when they downloaded it later they noticed something odd and maybe because there had been publicity about it somewhere in the press they thought they should tell someone about it. The vast majority of cases where nothing was seen at the time and

then shown up on the photograph it turns out to be some kind of film fault that has created the image.

One of the really outstanding reports in this set of files is a sighting that was made by a group of soldiers from the Royal Irish Regiment at Turnhill Barracks in Shropshire in June 2008. This was a period when the Ministry was receiving a very large number of sightings of objects in the sky that were described as orange ball shaped phenomena, often seen in clusters of lights that bobbed around in the sky and moved around in formation completely silent and a lot of these sightings were reported in the national media and in the tabloids and the more sightings that were reported the more it encouraged people to come forward with their own accounts. This group of soldiers were out on guard duty at this base in Shropshire and they saw these clusters of small rotating objects in the sky and one of the soldiers, a Corporal, captured images of these objects on his mobile phone and he decided to contact the news media and the story appeared on the front page of The Sun newspaper. It later emerged the manager of a nearby hotel had hosted a wedding party on the night of this sighting where the guests had released a large number of Chinese lanterns and so the obvious conclusion was that what had been seen by these soldiers were Chinese lanterns. There is quite a substantial file on this sighting and how the Ministry of Defence decided they would react to it.

What you get in these files are lots of amusing letters by people, people who believe they have been abducted by aliens, people who are getting telepathic messages from aliens. We get lots of photographs people have taken of odd things in the sky and sometimes people send in sketches and they even photo-shop in images because they haven't had a camera with them and they want a way of depicting what they have seen. Also one of the more amusing enclosures in these files is this letter from a schoolgirl which was sent to the Ministry of Defence in January 2009. She'd been out in the garden with her father and she had seen a lot of little objects flying around in the sky and she wrote to the Ministry of Defence and she sent this little picture of an alien waving from inside a flying saucer and she was saying, 'please tell me what the truth is, I have a right to know.'

What you also get in these files is, you get people reporting things, unusual natural phenomena. This is one that I find particularly interesting, it happened in August 2009 and this is a lady in Dorset and she was in her kitchen one night at 9.50pm and through the kitchen window came this bright white fireball about the size of a football and it flew in through the open window and exploded in a flash of white light in her kitchen. She was obviously, as you can imagine, extremely upset and worried about what had happened. Reading the description it is a classic account of what is known as 'ball lightning' which is a very very rare form of lightening. It is sometimes reported and there are numerous examples of other people who have seen these balls which have sometimes come down the chimneys in houses or floated through open windows and there are examples of people who have been harmed by them and burned. But in this case, fortunately this lady didn't suffer any ill effects and could find no traces of this thing after it exploded, so she was very fortunate.

We have now come to the end of this programme of release for the UFO files and it is often said about UFOs that 'the truth is out there,' in my opinion the truth is actually in here - in these files - and I would encourage everyone who is interested in this subject whether you believe or whether you disbelieve take the time to take a look at the content of these files that can now be downloaded from The National Archives website.

