

Rendelsham Forest - 1980

- **Date:** 26 December and 28 December 1980
- **Time:** 03:00 GMT (23:00 EDT)
- **Location:** Suffolk, England, United Kingdom

The **Rendlesham Forest incident** is the name given to a series of reported sightings of unexplained lights and the alleged landing of a craft or multiple craft of unknown origin in Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, England, in late December 1980, just outside RAF Woodbridge, used at the time by the U.S. Air Force. Dozens of USAF personnel were eyewitnesses to various events over a two- or three-day period. It is the most famous UFO event to have happened in Britain, ranking amongst the best-known UFO events worldwide.



Security fencing at the site of the former East Gate of RAF Woodbridge, where the incident began in December, 1980. The original East Gate, circa 1983, is shown on the left (while the USAF was still operating the base) and the current east gate (after the based closed), circa 2014, is on the right.

Along with the Berwyn Mountain UFO incident, it has been compared to the Roswell UFO incident in the United States, and is sometimes referred to as "Britain's Roswell".

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) denied the event posed any threat to national security, and stated that it was therefore never investigated as a security matter. Later evidence indicated that there was a substantial MoD file on the subject, which led to claims of a cover-up; some interpreted this as part of a larger pattern of information suppression concerning the true nature of unidentified flying objects, by both the United States and British governments.

One person to take this view was eyewitness and Deputy Base Commander Colonel Charles Halt. Another was former NATO head and UK Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Peter Hill-Norton, who stated whatever happened at this USAF base was necessarily of national security interest. However, when the file was released in 2001 it turned out to consist mostly of internal correspondence and responses to inquiries from the public. Sceptics note that the lack of any in-depth investigation in the publicly released documents is consistent with the MoD's earlier statement that they never took the case seriously.

Included in the released files is an explanation given by defence minister Lord Trefgarne as to why the MoD did not investigate further.

The sightings have been explained as misinterpretation of a series of nocturnal lights – a fireball, the Orford Ness lighthouse and bright stars.

Location

Rendlesham Forest is owned by the Forestry Commission and consists of about 5.8 square miles (15 km²) of coniferous plantations, interspersed with broadleaved belts, heathland and wetland areas. It is located in the county of Suffolk, about 8 miles (13 km) east of the town of Ipswich.



Map of the local area

The incident occurred in the vicinity of two former military bases - RAF Bentwaters, which is just to the north of the forest, and RAF Woodbridge which extends into the forest from the west and is bounded by the forest on its northern and eastern edges. At the time, both were being used by the United States Air Force and were under the command of wing commander Colonel Gordon E.

Williams. The base commander was Colonel Ted Conrad, and his deputy was Lieutenant Colonel Charles I. Halt. Halt's memo to the Ministry of Defence on the incident, and his personal involvement in the second night of the sightings, has given the case credibility.

The main events of the incident, including the supposed landing or landings, took place in the forest, which starts at the east end of the base runway or about 0.3 miles (0.5 km) to the east of the East Gate of RAF Woodbridge, where guards first noticed mysterious lights appearing to descend into the forest. The forest extends east about 1 mile (1.6 km) beyond East Gate, ending at a farmer's field, where additional events allegedly took place.

Orford Ness lighthouse, which skeptics identify as the flashing light seen off to the coast by the airmen, is along the same line of sight but 5 miles (8.0 km) further east of the forest's edge.

All these locations are shown on the above map of the local area.

A modern aerial view of the region can be found [here](#).

Below is an aerial view of the area of the Rendlesham Forest UFO sighting sourced from [Ian Ridpath's excellent website on the Rendelsham Forest incident](#). The orange line shows the route from East Gate into the forest taken by the three witnesses in the early hours of 1980 December 26, shortly after a bright light was seen apparently plunging to Earth over the forest. The three men parked their vehicle in the region of the arrowhead and proceeded on foot to the east. The area outlined in white contained only young trees at the time. The point labelled 'Landing site' on the eastern edge of the forest is where marks on the ground and on the trees were found after daybreak later that day.



Date

Retired Sgt. John Burroughs (LE) states that the events took place over three successive nights (pm into am); 24-25, 25-26 and 26-27 December 1980. However, one of the key pieces of primary

evidence (the "Halt memo", described below) suggests that the first sightings were on the night of the 26th–27th. The memo was written almost two weeks after the event and its author later agreed that he had probably made a mistake in his recollection of the dates. This discrepancy in dates has not only confused subsequent researchers but also led to confusion at the time, for example in the MoD's investigation and analysis of contemporaneous radar records.

Halt also describes seeing the UFO on the morning of the 29th, but it seems that his experience was in the early hours of the 28th.

Main Events

26 December

Around 3 a.m. on 26 December 1980 (reported as the 27th by Halt, see below) strange lights were reported by a security patrol near the East Gate of RAF Woodbridge apparently descending into nearby Rendlesham Forest. Servicemen initially thought it was a downed aircraft but, upon entering the forest to investigate they saw, according to Halt's memo, a strange glowing object, metallic in appearance, with coloured lights. As they approached, it moved through the trees, and

“the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy”

The craft left three impressions or depressions in the ground that were visible the next day. One of the servicemen, Sgt. Jim Penniston, later claimed to have encountered a "craft of unknown origin" and to have made detailed notes of its features, touched its "warm" surface, and copied the numerous symbols on its body. The object allegedly flew away after their brief encounter. Penniston also claimed to have seen triangular landing gear on the object. While undergoing regression hypnosis in 1994 Penniston subsequently claimed that the "craft" he encountered had come from our future, and was occupied by time travellers, not extraterrestrials.

Sgt. Penniston's report made shortly after the incident contains no mention of physically encountering an unknown craft, nor of interacting with it. This report and associated sketches are neither signed nor dated, nor are they representative of AF Form 1169, Statement of Witness.

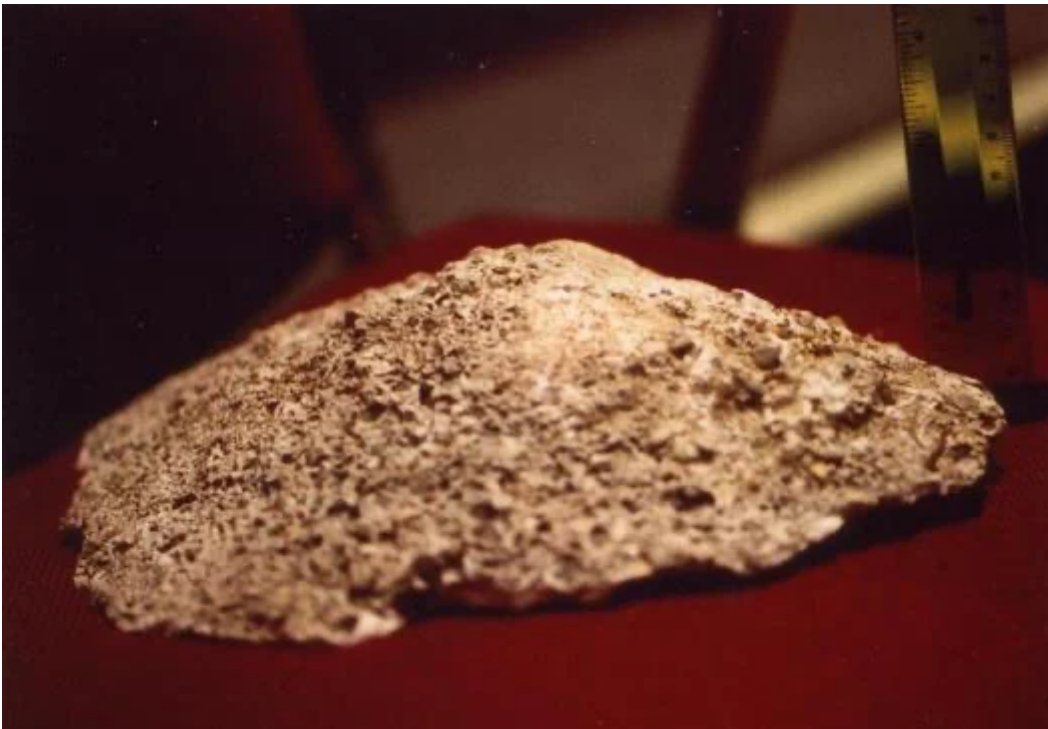
Shortly after 4 a.m. local police were called to the scene but reported that the only lights they could see were those from the Orford Ness lighthouse, some miles away on the coast.

After daybreak on the morning of 26 December, servicemen returned to a small clearing near the eastern edge of the forest and found three small impressions in a triangular pattern, as well as burn marks and broken branches on nearby trees.



The photo above purports to have been the clearing where the UFO allegedly landed; the day after the incident. This is also the location where plaster casts of 3 imprints in the ground were taken.

Three plaster casts were taken by Airman Penniston of the three impressions found in a triangular pattern on the ground, and the photo below is presumably one of the three. The casts have been shown in television documentaries. At 10.30 a.m. the local police were called out again, this time to see the impressions on the ground, which they thought could have been made by an animal.



28 December

Several servicemen and Halt returned to the site again in the early hours of 28 December 1980 (reported as the 29th by Halt) with radiation detectors which detected radiation in the depressions and on the near side of a tree, although the significance of the readings they obtained is disputed.

The deputy base commander Lt Col Charles I. Halt investigated this sighting personally and recorded the events on a micro-cassette recorder (see "The Halt Tape", below). The site investigated by Halt was near the eastern edge of the forest.

It was during this investigation that a flashing light was seen across the field to the east, almost in line with a farmhouse. The Orford Ness lighthouse is visible further to the east in the same line of sight.

Later, starlike lights were seen in the sky to the north and south, the brightest of which seemed to beam down a stream of light from time to time.

There are claims that the incident was videoed by the USAF; but, if so, the resulting tape has not been made public.

Primary and Secondary Sources

The first public report of the incident was published in the tabloid newspaper News of the World, on 2 October 1983, beneath the sensational headline UFO lands in Suffolk – and that's official. The story was based on an account by a former US airman, using the pseudonym Art Wallace (supposedly to protect himself against retribution from the USAF), although his real name was Larry Warren.

The Halt Memo

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 81ST COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP (USAF)
APO NEW YORK 09755



REPLY TO
ATTN OF.

CD

13 Jan 81

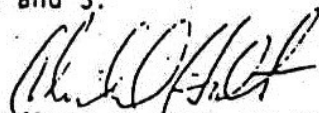
SUBJECT:

Unexplained Lights

TO:

RAF/CC

1. Early in the morning of 27 Dec 80 (approximately 0300L), two USAF security police patrolmen saw unusual lights outside the back gate at RAF Woodbridge. Thinking an aircraft might have crashed or been forced down, they called for permission to go outside the gate to investigate. The on-duty flight chief responded and allowed three patrolmen to proceed on foot. The individuals reported seeing a strange glowing object in the forest. The object was described as being metallic in appearance and triangular in shape, approximately two to three meters across the base and approximately two meters high. It illuminated the entire forest with a white light. The object itself had a pulsing red light on top and a bank(s) of blue lights underneath. The object was hovering or on legs. As the patrolmen approached the object, it maneuvered through the trees and disappeared. At this time the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy. The object was briefly sighted approximately an hour later near the back gate.
2. The next day, three depressions 1 1/2" deep and 7" in diameter were found where the object had been sighted on the ground. The following night (29 Dec 80) the area was checked for radiation. Beta/gamma readings of 0.1 milliroentgens were recorded with peak readings in the three depressions and near the center of the triangle formed by the depressions. A nearby tree had moderate (.05-.07) readings on the side of the tree toward the depressions.
3. Later in the night a red sun-like light was seen through the trees. It moved about and pulsed. At one point it appeared to throw off glowing particles and then broke into five separate white objects and then disappeared. Immediately thereafter, three star-like objects were noticed in the sky, two objects to the north and one to the south, all of which were about 10° off the horizon. The objects moved rapidly in sharp angular movements and displayed red, green and blue lights. The objects to the north appeared to be elliptical through an 8-12 power lens. They then turned to full circles. The objects to the north remained in the sky for an hour or more. The object to the south was visible for two or three hours and beamed down a stream of light from time to time. Numerous individuals, including the undersigned, witnessed the activities in paragraphs 2 and 3.


CHARLES I. HALT, Lt Col, USAF
Deputy Base Commander

The first piece of primary evidence to be made available to the public was a memorandum written by the deputy base commander, Lt. Col. Charles I. Halt, to the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Known as the "Halt memo", this was made available publicly in the United States under the US Freedom of Information Act in 1983. The memorandum, was dated "13 Jan 1981" and headed "Unexplained Lights". The two-week delay between the incident and the report might account for errors in dates and times given. The memo was not classified in any way. Dr David Clarke has investigated the background to this memo and the reaction to it at the Ministry of Defence. His interviews with the personnel involved confirmed the cursory nature of the investigation made by the MoD, and failed to find any evidence for any other reports on the incident made by the USAF or UK apart from the Halt memo.

Statements from Eyewitnesses on 26 December

The Scottish researcher James Easton succeeded in obtaining the original witness statements made for Col. Halt by Fred A. Buran, 81st Security Police Squadron, Airman First Class John Burroughs, 81st LE, Airman Edward N. Cabansag, 81st Security Police Squadron, Master-Sergeant J. D. Chandler, 81st Security Police Squadron and Staff-Sergeant Jim Penniston, 81st Security Police Squadron. These documents are now in the public domain and scans of them are available on [Ian Ridpath's website](#).

These documents describe the sightings of strange lights. Penniston, for instance, states that

“directly to the east [of East Gate] about 11/2 miles [2.4km] in a large wooded area...a large yellow glowing light was emitting above the trees. In the centre of the lighted area directly in the centre ground level, there was a red light blinking on and off 5 to 10 sec intervals. And a blue light that was being for the most part steady.”

Burroughs, Penniston and Cabansag drove into the forest in search of the source of the lights. They heard strange noises, too. Burroughs reported a noise "like a woman was screaming" and also that "you could hear the farm animals making a lot of noises". Halt heard the same noises two nights later.

In a CNN interview in January 2008 he said: "The livestock around the barn seemed to be going crazy". Such noise could also have been made by Muntjac deer in the forest, which are known for their loud, shrill bark when alarmed.

Cabansag said:

“We figured the lights were coming from past the forest since nothing was visible when we passed through the woody forest. We would see a glowing near the beacon light, but as we got closer we found it to be a lit-up farmhouse. We got to a vantage point where we could determine that what we were chasing was only a beacon light off in the distance.”

Burroughs' statement also states that

“We could see a beacon going around so we went towards it. We followed it for about two miles [3 km] before we could [see] it was coming from a lighthouse.”

Penniston's statement is the only one that positively identifies a mechanical object as the source of the lights. He states that he was within 160 feet (50 m) of the object and

“it was definitely mechanical in nature”.

Penniston has subsequently claimed that, contrary to his statement at the time, he actually encountered a landed craft in the forest which he circled, touched and made notes of for 45 minutes, although there is no corroborating evidence of this from other witnesses. Penniston has shown on television a notebook in which he claims to have made real-time notes and sketches of the object. The notebook is headed with the date 27 December and the time 12:20 (00:20 GMT), which does not accord with the date and time given by the other witnesses for the incident, although the date does accord with Halt's memo. Penniston claims that he saw the object at a different landing site from the one investigated by Halt, much closer to RAF Woodbridge. This is inconsistent with his initial assessment that the light lay a mile and a half from East Gate. The witnesses were unnerved by their experience and believed that they had witnessed something, as Buran expresses it, "out of the realm of explanation".

The Halt Tape

Also, in 1984, a copy of what became known as the "Halt Tape" fell into the hands of researchers. Unfortunately, because the tape had been dubbed on an old machine, much of its background conversations could not be discerned. The US Sci Fi Channel acquired the original recording, which documents Halt and his patrol investigating a UFO sighting in Rendlesham Forest in December 1980. This tape not only reveals much more of the background conversations but features names that could not be heard on the poor-quality 1984 dub. The tape has also been transcribed by researcher Ian Ridpath, who includes a link to an audio download.

The Halt Tape Audio Recording. Source: Ian Ridpath

A transcription of the Halt Tape can be found here.

The Halt Affidavit

In June 2010, retired Colonel Charles Halt signed a notarized affidavit, in which he again summarized what had happened, then stated he believed the event to be extraterrestrial and it had been covered up by both the UK and US:

“ I believe the objects that I saw at close quarter were extraterrestrial in origin and that the security services of both the United Kingdom and the United States have attempted—both then and now—to subvert the significance of what occurred at Rendlesham Forest and RAF Bentwaters by the use of well-practiced methods of disinformation.”

Halt also dismissed claims that he and his men had confused a UFO with a lighthouse beam:

“ While in Rendlesham Forest, our security team observed a light that looked like a large eye, red in colour, moving through the trees. After a few minutes this object began dripping something that looked like molten metal. A short while later it broke into several smaller, white-coloured objects which flew away in all directions. Claims by

skeptics that this was merely a sweeping beam from a distant lighthouse are unfounded; we could see the unknown light and the lighthouse simultaneously. The latter was 35 to 40-degrees off where all of this was happening."

Contradictions between this affidavit and the facts as recorded at the time in Halt's memo and tape recording have been pointed out.

In 2010, base commander Colonel Ted Conrad provided a statement about the incident to Dr David Clarke of Sheffield Hallam University, UFO adviser to the UK National Archives. Conrad stated that "We saw nothing that resembled Lieutenant Colonel Halt's descriptions either in the sky or on the ground" and that "We had people in position to validate Halt's narrative, but none of them could." In an interview, Conrad, criticised Halt for the claims in his affidavit, saying "he should be ashamed and embarrassed by his allegation that his country and Britain both conspired to deceive their citizens over this issue. He knows better." Conrad also disputed the testimony of Sergeant Jim Penniston, who claimed to have touched an alien spacecraft; he said that he interviewed Penniston at the time and he had not mentioned any such occurrence. Conrad also suggested that the entire incident might have been a hoax.

Halt's partial response to this was: "Ted Conrad is either having memory problems, has his head in the sand or continuing the cover up. Even his son has admitted to family talk substantiating the incident... Through the years Conrad has made conflicting statements about the events. First he stated he never went out to look in the sky. Then stated he never saw anything. Apparently he doesn't remember talking to me on his radio [about seeing a UFO sending down beams of light onto the base]... Remind Conrad of his article in the OMNI Magazine dated March 1983... In the article he describes the first incident in detail and concludes 'those lads saw something, but I don't know what it was'. Now he's smearing those involved. It's pretty clear there was a very intense confrontation with something in the forest. Does Conrad want to talk about how the airmen were then subjected to mind control efforts using drugs and hypnosis by British and American authorities? Yes, Burroughs and Penniston have issues that relate to the events..."

The 1983 OMNI article cited by Halt has the following account attributed to Conrad: "Colonel Ted Conrad the base commander... recalls five Air Force policemen spotted lights from what they thought was a small plane descending into the forest. Two of the men tracked the object on foot and came upon a large tripod-mounted craft. It had no windows but was studded with brilliant red and blue lights. Each time the men came within 50 yards of the ship, Conrad relates, it levitated six feet in the air and backed away. They followed it for almost an hour through the woods and across a field until it took off at 'phenomenal speed.' Acting on the reports made by his men, Colonel Conrad began a brief investigation of the incident in the morning. He went into the forest and located a triangular pattern ostensibly made by the tripod legs. ...he did interview two of the eyewitnesses and concludes,

Those lads saw something, but I don't know what it was'."

Suffolk Police log

Suffolk Constabulary have a record, dated 26 December 1980, of a report from the law Enforcement Desk of RAF Woodbridge, stating that

“We have a sighting of some unusual lights in the sky, we have sent some unarmed troops to investigate, we are terming it as a U.F.O. at present".

The police investigated this report and the result is recorded as follows:

“Air Traffic Control West Drayton checked. No knowledge of aircraft. Reports received of aerial phenomena over Southern England during the night. Only lights visible this area was from Orford lighthouse. Search made of area - negative."

Skeptic Ian Ridpath has speculated the reported "aerial phenomena" refers to the re-entry of the Soviet Cosmos 749 satellite's final stage rocket, which was widely seen over Southern England shortly after 9 p.m. on the evening of 25 December.

A letter in the police file notes that one of the PCs returned to the site in daylight in case he had missed something. "There was nothing to be seen and he remains unconvinced that the occurrence was genuine. The immediate area was swept by powerful light beams from a landing beacon at RAF Bentwaters and the Orfordness lighthouse. I know from personal experience that at night, in certain weather and cloud conditions, these beams were very pronounced and certainly caused strange visual effects." A scan of the report is available at Suffolk Constabulary's website.

Other military installation involvement Some researchers have claimed that personnel from Porton Down visited Rendlesham in 1980 after the Rendlesham Forest incident.

No evidence has been presented and there seems to be confusion with other alleged UFO incidents.

Admiral Lord Hill-Norton, the former Chief of the UK Defence Staff, argued that an incident like this at a nuclear weapons base was necessarily of national security interest. As a member of the House of Lords, Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

“Whether they are aware of any involvement by Special Branch in the investigation of the 1980 Rendlesham Forest incident [HL303]”.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean gave the reply that

“Special Branch officers may have been aware of the incident but would not have shown any interest unless there was evidence of a potential threat to national security. No such interest appears to have been shown.”

Hill-Norton commented,

“Either large numbers of people were hallucinating, and for an American Air Force nuclear base this is extremely dangerous, or what they say happened did happen, and in either of those circumstances there can only be one answer, and that is that it was of extreme defence interest.”

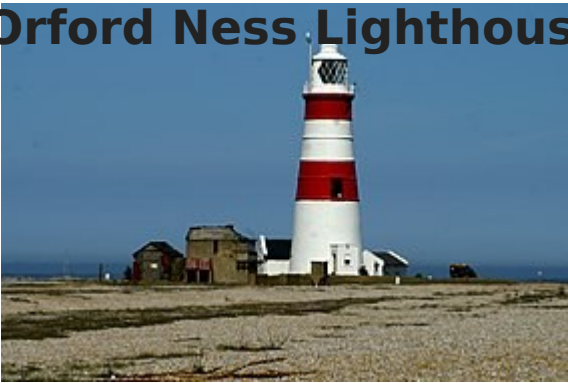
In 2007, the British Government released its file on the incident to researchers following a request from Dr David Clarke under the Code of Practice for Access to Government Documents, a precursor to the Freedom of Information Act.

The Ministry of Defence has since made these documents available online.

The United States continues to remain silent despite the SciFi Channel-sponsored investigation entitled "UFO Invasion at Rendlesham", the History Channel's "UFO Files – Britain's Roswell" and Coalition for Freedom of Information inquiries.

Skepticism

Orford Ness Lighthouse



The Orford Ness lighthouse as seen from the south-west.

Jim Penniston and John Burroughs went to investigate the craft together. In an interview with Larry King on 9 November 2007, Jim Penniston claimed that he did a 45 minutes full investigation of the craft on the ground, touched the craft and took photos of the craft.

John Burroughs apparently contradicts this in a separate interview in Robert Stack's Unsolved Mysteries. He states that after suddenly encountering the craft on the ground, "We all hit the ground, and it went up into the trees". The interviews with Jim Penniston and John Burroughs have subsequently been made available on Youtube.

Science writer Ian Ridpath investigated the incident in 1983, initially for BBC TV's Breakfast Time news programme, and on 5 January 1985 wrote an article for the Guardian which did much to discredit the accounts of the UFO sightings at Rendlesham.

Ridpath asked local forester Vince Thurkettle about the flashing light, and he indicated that it originated from the lighthouse at Orford Ness, which as seen from the forest edge appears to hover slightly above the ground and would appear to move as the witnesses moved between the trees. At that time, the Orford Ness lighthouse was the second-brightest in Britain with an intensity of 5 million candelas.

In the Halt tape (mentioned above), one can hear an unidentified airman call out "There it is again ... there it is" with an interval of 5 seconds, the same frequency at which the Orford Ness lighthouse flashes.

Had a UFO been present, the airmen should have reported a second source of light (the lighthouse) in the same line of sight. Video footage of the lighthouse as seen from Colonel Halt's vantage point at the edge of the forest shows it flashing at this rate.

Thurkettle saw the alleged "landing marks", as did the local police, and believed them simply to be old "rabbit diggings" covered with pine needles.

USAF photographs of the marks discovered by researcher Georgina Bruni were sent to the MoD by Lord Hill-Norton in 2001 and released under the Freedom of Information Act in 2007.

Moreover, the supposed burn marks in the trees were actually axe cuts made by foresters that indicated the trees were ready to be felled. To give further pause to accepting the alleged UFO sighting, a meteor "almost as bright as the full Moon" was spotted over Southern England at exactly the time of the initial reports of a bright object "landing" in the forest, according to Dr John Mason, who collects reports of meteor sightings for the British Astronomical Association. "Nothing came down in Rendlesham Forest," concludes Ridpath.

Crucial amongst the evidence is the interpretation of the levels of radiation in the area (clearly heard on the "Halt tape"). Experts at the UK's National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) have pointed out that the equipment used for this measurement was not intended to measure background radiation and therefore the readings at the low end of the measurement scale are meaningless.

Steuart Campbell proposes an alternative explanation. He agrees with the standard explanation that the incident began with the sighting of a fireball (bolide) which was interpreted by guards at the base as an aircraft falling in flames in the nearby forest. In fact it would have been hundreds of miles away over the North Sea. Campbell argues that the object subsequently seen by Halt and his men on their nocturnal expedition was the lightvessel Shipwash and that the supposed "spacecraft" were actually bright planets, such as Venus. Campbell is critical of the USAF's abilities with their equipment.

Another theory is that the incident was a hoax. The BBC reported that a former US security policeman, Kevin Conde, claimed responsibility for creating strange lights in the forest by driving around in a police vehicle whose lights he had modified.

Conde has since withdrawn the claim that he was responsible for the incident. "It is my impression that I pulled my stunt during an exercise. We would not have had an exercise during the Christmas holiday [when the UFO sightings occurred]. That is a strong indication that my stunt is not the source of this specific incident".

It remains possible that the colored lights seen in the forest on the first night of the incident were due to a hoax by a perpetrator who has never come forward. Other explanations for the incident have included a downed Soviet spy satellite.

Researchers and Commentators

Some of the first people to examine the event in detail were the British Ufologist Jenny Randles in her book "Sky Crash", co-authored with local researchers, Brenda Butler and Dot Street, who were the first investigators to interview any witnesses and to visit both the site and RAF station and Nick Redfern in his books "Cosmic Crashes" and "A Covert Agenda". Georgina Bruni has researched the

subject and in her book "You Can't Tell the People" publishes a photograph of the supposed landing site taken on the morning after the first sighting.

The late Lord Hill-Norton, (Admiral of the Fleet and former Chief of the Defence Staff of the UK) also believed that a UFO landed at Rendlesham and repeatedly questioned the UK Government on the issue.

Larry Warren who was the source of the original News of the World article has written extensively on the subject and is a firm believer in an extraterrestrial explanation. Warren was certainly a USAF airman at RAF Woodbridge, but his own claims that he was a witness to the incident are disputed by others, notably by Col. Halt. Bruni and Warren do not agree on the details and have clashed publicly over the supposed inaccuracies of their respective accounts.

Prominent amongst the sceptics is Ian Ridpath (mentioned above). Much of his research is available on his website, which also includes much of the raw evidence, including the original eyewitness statements.

Jenny Randles, one of those who originally brought the case to prominence, wrote an extensive article in her book with David Clarke and Andy Roberts, (The UFOs That Never Were) entitled "Rendle Shame Forest" where she came to the conclusion that "While some puzzles remain, we can probably say that no unearthly craft were seen in Rendlesham Forest. We can also argue with confidence that the main focus of the events was a series of misperceptions of everyday things encountered in less than everyday circumstances."

One of the most prominent believers in the extraterrestrial origin of the Rendlesham UFOs is Nick Pope who worked for the MoD, researching and investigating UFO phenomena between 1991 and 1994. He discussed the Rendlesham Forest incident in his various books and in several articles: "Selected Documents", which relates to the MoD documents on the Rendlesham Forest incident, "Rendlesham – The Unresolved Mystery", "The Rendlesham Files Reviewed" (a detailed commentary and analysis of the MoD documents) and "Rendlesham Forest UFO Incident".

He has gone on record as saying that "the Rendlesham Forest incident is bigger than Roswell" (quoted on Sci Fi Channel – see TV documentaries below).

Lieutenant Colonel (later Colonel) Charles I Halt, the former Deputy Base Commander of USAF Bentwaters and Woodbridge, who was a major witness to these events, is also a firm believer and contributor to books and documentaries. As stated in his recent affidavit above, Halt believes he witnessed an extraterrestrial event that was then covered up. Halt was also a speaker at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on 27 September 2010, one of half a dozen former US Air Force officers testifying on the subject of "U.S. Nuclear Weapons Have Been Compromised by Unidentified Aerial Objects."

Rendlesham Forest Today



Today, the forest looks quite different: the Great Storm of 1987 (winds equivalent to a category 3 hurricane) caused extensive destruction of trees, and the Forestry Commission undertook a massive replanting programme in its aftermath. Some of the locations associated with the supposed incident are still identifiable and the Forestry Commission have marked a trail (the UFO Trail) for walkers, which includes the principal locations such as the small clearing where the object allegedly landed.

At the start of the UFO trail, there is a large triangular shaped metal information board. It features a map of the forest, clearly marking the UFO trail and gives a basic account of what happened in 1980, although with an erroneous date for the initial sighting: "In December 1980 several sightings of UFOs were reported in Rendlesham Forest. Many think these mysterious events are the most significant UFO incident to have occurred in the UK. "During the evening of 26 December a resident of Sudbourne, a village approximately 6 miles (10 km) to the north east of Rendlesham Forest, reported a mysterious shape (like an upturned mushroom) in the sky above his garden. Later that night two USAF patrolmen at the East Gate of RAF Woodbridge spotted unusual lights in the forest, and were given permission to investigate. What they reported was very strange. "This was the time of the 'Cold War' and because of the sensitive military situation at the time, the incident was officially reported to the Military Authorities by the Deputy Base Commander Lt. Colonel Charles Halt, USAF. "There is, of course, no tangible evidence of a UFO on the ground – no debris was found apart from some broken tree top branches. We can, however, piece together, from transcripts and recordings which were taken at the time, an intriguing picture."

Official Government Sources

MoD Documents covering the UFO incident at Rendlesham Forest in 1980 were first released in May 2001 to Dr David Clarke of Sheffield Hallam University who had requested them under the Code of Practice for Access to Government Information (which preceded the UK's Freedom of

Information Act). Dr Clarke discusses them on his website[64] In 2008 the files were transferred from MoD to The National Archives (TNA) and removed from the MoD website.

As of August 2009, all documents relating to the incident are available on the National Archives UFO section under reference DEFE 24/1948.

These documents include the request above, along with details of the Ombudsman judgment which followed. For a few months, access to this file and other files released on the same date were free to view and download. As of January 2011, these documents are available for a fee of €3.50.

On 2 March 2011 it was revealed that several MoD files relating to the incident had been disposed of as part of a policy to destroy files of no historical interest. However, their contents were mostly duplicates of the Rendlesham files released in August 2010.

TV Documentaries

Lifetime Television's Unsolved Mysteries: "Bentwaters UFO", 18 September 1991 (US)

London Weekend Television's Strange But True?, 9 December 1994 (UK)

BBC3's Britain's Closest Encounter, 15 March 2003 (UK)

SciFi Channel's UFO Invasion at Rendlesham, 12 December 2003 (US), 1 December 2005 (UK)

British UFO Files, 2004 (Five (TV), UK)

National Geographic Channel's Naked Science: "Close Encounters", 17 December 2005 (US)

History Channel's UFO Files: "Britain's Roswell", 17 December 2005 (US), 22 January 2006 (UK)

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