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Location: [Ufomind Mailing List](#) > [1998](#) > [Sep](#) > [Here](#)

Τέλος φόρμας

Nick Pope article on Rendlesham incident

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RENDLESHAM - THE UNRESOLVED MYSTERY
By Nick Pope

There has been much recent debate about the Rendlesham Forest incident, and some interesting and well-researched articles have appeared. These include "Seeing the Forest for the Trees", a detailed analysis from Jenny Randles, which appeared in the Summer edition of International UFO Reporter. There have been two articles by James Easton, entitled "Rendlesham Unravellled" and "Resolving Rendlesham", together with a piece by Georgina Bruni, entitled "Rendlesham Unravellled - NOT". How are we to make sense of the various conflicting views? Has the case really been resolved, or is there more work to be done before we can make such a claim?

As many readers of this statement will be aware, I work for the Ministry of Defence, and between 1991 and 1994 was responsible for researching and investigating the UFO phenomenon for the British Government. As such, while my involvement with the Rendlesham Forest case came long after the events concerned, I had an advantage over other researchers in that I was approaching the case from a unique angle, having access to the official government file on the incident, and being able to call upon official resources and expertise.

Various accounts of the Rendlesham Forest incident have appeared in numerous books, magazines and articles, many of which take a radically different view. I have summarised the case in my first book, "Open Skies, Closed Minds". More detailed accounts appear in "Left At East Gate" by Larry Warren and Peter Robbins, and "UFO Crash Landing" by Jenny Randles. I shall not attempt to rehash any of this material, but shall instead focus on the areas that have sparked the recent controversy.

The first of these areas concerns the original witness statements made by Penniston, Burroughs, Cabansag and Chandler. James Easton makes much of the fact that these statements are fairly bland, and points out that some of the witnesses seem to have added to their stories over the years. However, based on my own official investigations of other cases I can tell people that this is entirely consistent with the way in which junior military personnel report UFOs. They do so tentatively if at all, as they are unsure on official policy and unclear as to what ramifications there may be for their careers. They will be more forthcoming in telephone conversations and face to face meetings, and much more inclined to speak out once they have left the service. Having met a number of the military witnesses, Jenny Randles is clearly aware of this factor. Sadly, a number of the sceptics do not seem to have the same understanding of the way in which the military operate.

Bearing in mind the above point, the key document is still Charles Halt's memo, and its mention of a "strange glowing object" which was "metallic in appearance and triangular in shape, approximately two to three metres across the base and approximately two metres high". As a senior officer he had no qualms about being more forthcoming, because he was clearly aware of policy, and knew that there was a requirement to report details of any UFO sighting to the Ministry of Defence.

What then are we to make of inconsistencies between the accounts of different witnesses, and in particular the testimony of Larry Warren? Taking the first point, it is well-known to any police officer that different people perceive the same event in different ways. This has been demonstrated in a number of studies, and is something that I was briefed

about as part of my official duties at the MOD. With regard to Larry Warren, he and Peter Robbins stayed with me for several days while they were promoting "Left At East Gate", and we had numerous, in-depth conversations about the case. I am personally convinced that he was present, and was a witness to some quite extraordinary activity. But it was abundantly clear that the activity he witnessed was not that referred to in Halt's memo.

This brings me to the recent work done by independent researcher Georgina Bruni, editor of the Internet magazine "Hot Gossip UK" @ www.hotgossip.co.uk. Georgina is a good friend of mine, and in recent months she has re-interviewed many of the well-known witnesses, and uncovered and spoken to several new ones. She will be publishing this material in due course, although she will be unable to do so in the immediate future, due to the pressure of other business commitments.

Let us now turn to the physical evidence. This consists of the damage to the trees in the clearing where the metallic craft was seen on the first night of activity, the indentations at the point it apparently landed, and the radiation readings taken from these trees and indentations. In "Open Skies, Closed Minds" I revealed the results of the first and only official investigation into this aspect of the case, detailing my enquiries with the Defence Radiological Protection Service. The official assessment was that the radiation readings recorded were ten times what they should have been for the area, although I should stress that the radiation was low level, and would not have posed any danger to those present.

Ian Ridpath has highlighted some legitimate doubts about the suitability of the equipment used to record the radiation levels, and further suggests that Halt may even have misread the dial on the Geiger counter. Whilst I accept these points, I should explain that any official investigation can only be based on the data received by the Ministry, and not on such speculation - intriguing though it may be. But one can actually set aside any debate about the precise level of the readings, on the basis that the readings can only be considered in their proper context. In other words, we need to

consider the events collectively, not individually. We have a sighting of a UFO, coupled with tree damage and indentations in the very same clearing in which the UFO was seen. Then we have radiation readings which, irrespective of how high they were, just happened to peak where the trees were damaged and in the very centre of the indentations. We should also remember the fact that Halt's memo explains how "the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy" when the object was seen. While none of this proves that the UFO was of extraterrestrial origin, it seems clear that there was an object of some sort involved, which had an effect on the surrounding environment.

The sceptics clearly disagree, returning to the theory that all the UFO sightings were misidentifications of the Orford Ness lighthouse or the Shiplake Lightship, or even of stars, and that the indentations in the clearing were caused by burrowing rabbits! When I met Charles Halt he was dismissive of this, and confirmed that he and other witnesses were familiar with the lighthouse, which was indeed visible as an entirely separate object for some time during his actual UFO sighting. Furthermore, as he explained on the "Strange But True" documentary on the case, "A lighthouse doesn't move through the forest; the lighthouse doesn't go up and down, it doesn't explode, doesn't change shape, size - doesn't send down beams of light from the sky".

Long after the events concerned, questions are still being asked about this case in parliament, both in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, by MPs and Peers who are clearly alive to the defence and national security implications of the incident. When seeking expert analysis on a case such as this, one really cannot obtain a more authoritative view than that of Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton, a former Chief of the Defence Staff and Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. With the greatest respect to the sceptics, Lord Hill-Norton is considerably better qualified to analyse an incident such as this. Commenting on the case he has said "It seems to me that something physical took place; I have no doubt that something landed....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 summary, James Easton and Ian Ridpath should be commended for
highlighting some intriguing new material and for stimulating
constructive
debate on this case. But while it's a neat soundbite to claim that the
case
is resolved, this would be a premature and naive claim to make, and
one that
is clearly inconsistent with the facts. As Georgina Bruni and Jenny
Randles
have shown, there is still work to be done here.

Nick Pope
London
27th August 1998

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Index: [Nick Pope](#) (#6)
Index: [Bentwaters Incident](#) (#17)

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