

**Out of the Shadows: UFOs, the Establishment and Official Cover Up** by David Clarke and Andy Roberts. London: Piatkus Books, 2002. 288 pp. £17.99 (cloth). ISBN 0-74992-290-7.

In attempting to understand the history and evolution of the UFO controversy, one strives to seek out the most accurate, useful information from which to draw solid conclusions. Unlike other fields of endeavor, however, this has been most difficult to do with what has been presented as evidence of UFO reality. UFO research is essentially a minefield, littered with seemingly compelling information that can blow up in one's face if not handled carefully. It is a field strewn with the pieces of case histories that once held promises of a new reality, of shattered reputations of those thinking that they had other-worldly answers to the phenomenon, of shards and remnants of misidentification, misinterpretation, and miscalculation. It is also a subject laden with unexplained incidents, many of which it is unlikely will ever be conclusively identified. The struggle for UFO research in the present day is how to give the most accurate picture as possible as to what constitutes the "truth" about UFOs.

*Out of the Shadows* goes a long way toward clarifying one area that has not previously been understood very well: the involvement of the British government in UFO investigation and analysis. Authors Dr. David Clarke and Andy Roberts take readers on a tour of recently released documents from the British Ministry of Defense (MoD) and other departments that have for decades been withheld from public view, and assemble them in a manner that makes clearer than ever before what Britain's official attitudes have been toward this odd phenomenon. It has been a lengthy wait because until recently Britain has not had a version of the "Freedom of Information Act" like the United States has had since the 1960s. Knowledge of Britain's official investigations and policies had come through threadbare public statements, interviews with ex-military members and occasional leaks.

I recall many years ago that the British government had declared all UFO files in existence prior to 1962 were destroyed according to regulations, somewhat reminiscent of statements made by the U.S. Air Force in 1975 that the records of Project Blue Book (the Air Force's official UFO investigation for 21 years) sent to the National Archives in Washington, DC, were all that existed and no others were available. It is now estimated that 8,000 to 10,000 pages of UFO records not part of the National Archives holdings have been discovered. The authors have proven at the very least that official British denials of holding early UFO files were a slight bending of the truth, to put it mildly!

*Out of the Shadows* brings us on a chronological museum walk from the earliest years of Britain's then-flying saucer records through modern times. They begin with the so-called "Foo Fighters," a peculiar aerial phenomenon that accompanied fighters and bombers in flight on missions in World War II. The authors have managed to obtain records that had never before been seen on foo fighters from the British perspective. Prior to the 1990s, foo fighters were

notoriously under-documented, stories of which existed mainly in popular articles and tales told by veterans. Descriptions of the phenomenon began to surface upon both the declassification of intelligence records and the ability of researchers to go to archives for extended periods. Part of the problem in identifying such records in the mass of official files during the war years, both in the U.S. and British archives, has been what might be called a “crisis of terms.” There seems to have been no organized manner in which to refer to the phenomenon being related by witnesses. Pilots and crew nick-named the objects seen, “foo fighters” being only one of many terms used. Such terms do not show up in the indices of records, requiring lengthy, tedious searches of many thousands of pages by hand. To emphasize this point, Clarke and Roberts explained how one document, a report compiled by British Air Intelligence and sent to U.S. intelligence on a “silver disc” incident on October 14, 1943, was discovered “after years of searching.” One document!

The authors continue on to the “Ghost Rocket” era of 1946, when mystery missiles overflew Scandinavian countries. Curious here was the fact that Sweden had entered into a secret arrangement with the MoD and War Office to send two British experts to Sweden to investigate the missile incidents virtually undercover, and to “take all possible measures to prevent the Americans finding out about Swedish full cooperation with us in investigating mysterious missiles,” according to a British air attaché in Sweden. It had long been rumored that U.S. General James Doolittle had traveled to Stockholm to aid in the ghost rocket investigations. The question may have been answered in the negative by the newly revealed Anglo-Swedish agreement, especially when Doolittle told me in a 1984 letter, “I have no firm knowledge of actual rockets, or ‘ghost rockets’ in Sweden.” No U.S. documents support such a visit either.

The authors elucidate more formerly sparse UFO history for January 1947. While press reports of the time described a “ghost plane” overflying eastern Britain with little other detail, we now see from released documents that the British military expressed some alarm that the coast was being penetrated by unknown aircraft that “appeared to take efficient controlled evasive action.” However, since all of the incidents related were radar trackings and some of these blips had been described as “moving erratically” and displaying “intermittent plots,” could meteorological oddities have been responsible in the extreme cold weather of the time? The authors describe the unusually cold weather but there is no other discussion of this possibility.

Britain’s official entry into the flying saucer/UFO era occurred in the fall of 1950, with popular articles endorsing the possibility that saucers were spacecraft from other worlds. Nevertheless, the Air Ministry maintained an attitude of disinterest, with the exception of some Ministry officials who began to follow flying saucer reports seriously. Prominent endorsement of saucers as extraterrestrial came from none other than Admiral of the Fleet Lord Louis Mountbatten, who had encouraged his friend, journalist Charles Eade, to publish pro-saucer articles in the “London Sunday Dispatch,” and, much less overtly,

Prince Philip. With all of the new information and interest in flying saucers moving along like a steamroller in 1950, it was deemed necessary for the British equivalent of the CIA, the MoD's Directorate of Scientific Intelligence (DSI), to initiate the "Flying Saucer Working Party." The authors describe their lengthy battle to obtain copies of this and related documents, a curious bit of British UFO history. The FSWP was to conduct a serious investigation of flying saucers and report its results to the DSI. The report was finished in 1951 and was entirely negative toward flying saucer reality. This was probably due in no small dose to the fact that the FSWP relied heavily upon U.S.-originated information and CIA and Air Force Project Grudge conclusions. Only three sightings (by RAF officers) were seen to be worthy of investigation at all. Saucer reports were seen to be "uncoordinated and subjective" and that without harder evidence "no progress will be made by attempting further investigation." From the evidence presented by the authors, it is clear that U.S. and British government approaches to the investigation of UFOs paralleled one another closely. The desire by both governments was to get rid of the topic as quickly as possible inasmuch as it was proving to be an embarrassment to their respective official positions and abilities to explain how unknown flying objects are able to penetrate sovereign air space without being quickly identified. It would literally take a crashed flying saucer to provide hard evidence and change official positions, and that apparently had not yet happened, Roswell notwithstanding. Speaking of crashed saucers, the authors are quite skeptical of the possibility.

Their presentation avoids sensation and wild speculation that characterizes many UFO books of this kind. This translates to the rest of the book as well. As the authors bring us through the later decades, numerous cases that have passed through British government hands are recounted with either commentary from the case files or with witness and official statements given retrospectively. I must admit that having grown up with the flying saucer controversy, it is still disappointing to see classic tales of once promising "evidence" for alien visits to Earth shot down anew by the authors. Their discussion of the Alex Birch photo of 1962 is an example of a UFO claim gone awry. I continue to see it used in television documentaries as if it were never exposed as a hoax.

The authors noted one interesting divergence between U.S. and British UFO policy in the late 1960s. They point out that after the Condon Report (the U.S. Air Force's final, negative word on UFOs) was issued in 1969, a summary was given to the MoD in early 1970 to review the British approach to UFOs. But rather than end government involvement, as the U.S. had chosen to do, the MoD opted to continue. The reasoning was that questions from the public still needed to be answered and, from the British perspective at least, the Condon Report had no real impact on the public's will to believe in UFOs. Sociologists would do well to study this issue. While the release of the Condon Report led to a precipitous fall of U.S. UFO reports for several years afterward, the British Isles saw a large increase in sightings a year after the MoD recommended

continued monitoring. What made the British public ignore the Condon Report, which was widely publicized in that country?

There are a couple of minor quibbles about the book, more having to do with the book's production than its contents. The graphics were generally good with relevant photos and document reproductions. There was an odd mix of using footnoted quotes in straight type style like the rest of the book's print, and in a style giving the impression of documents coming right off of an old manual typewriter. This is surely to give the image of direct reproduction from actual documents being pasted into the book. But they aren't reproductions from the documents. The type is the same for a wide variety of sources, including news clips. If the quote in the original document is clear, use it as a graphic. If it isn't clear, use the same type font as the rest of the book. Mixing styles unnecessarily gives the book a cheesy appearance. Also, an annoying habit of publishers is to reproduce news clips as graphic material where they are copied too small to read, or scissored through to fit a page. This book reproduces one of the earliest British pro-flying saucer pieces from the October 1, 1950, *London Sunday Dispatch*, which I would have liked to have read but couldn't because it is shrunken beyond readability. These are not easily obtained by the reader and would have been better copied in full. Another clip is cut through, butchering the story. As graphics, they show what the clips looked like, but as information they are a waste of pages.

I highly recommend *Out of the Shadows* as a concise summary of official British UFO history. The authors do well in taking a mass of disjointed information and creating a flowing commentary. They have also managed to avoid "spinning" the information into something it is not. This is most appreciated by one who is tired of the exaggerations that have plagued UFO research.

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**Astrology: The Evidence of Science** by Percy Seymour. Luton, Bedfordshire, UK: Lennard Publishing, 1988. 200 pp. £12.99 (cloth). ISBN 1-85291-025-9.

The scientific evidence for the validity of astrology, as it was traditionally practiced in Western Europe and North America, is virtually non-existent. For despite the much-cited statistical and other studies that, since the early twentieth century, promised to place traditional astrology firmly within the empirical groundwork of western science, it appears, in my view anyway, there's no single unambiguous piece, or corpus, of scientific work that does this, nor should any be expected to, given the nature of the astrology of tradition.

Given this, in writing *Astrology: The Evidence of Science*, Percy Seymour took on an unenviable task, that, since the book was published, has become even less enviable with subsequent criticism of what was formerly considered by many to be quality statistical work in astrology.