

THE LITTLE BLUE MAN ON STUDHAM COMMON

by R. H. B. Winder

THE setting is near-perfect for a fairy tale: the village, 600ft. up in the Chilterns, is quite isolated by the boundary fence of Whipsnade Park Zoo close to the N.W., and a deepish valley to the South; and by the escarpment of these chalk hills dropping steeply away on the far side of the Zoo. It all seems well removed from ions and ionisation, but perhaps not quite so remote as your editor and G. W. Creighton anticipated when they suggested that I should report on this case.

It all started with a single flash of lightning which struck on or near the common at about 1.45 p.m. on January 28, 1967. Probably an ordinary stroke, because rain was falling and the atmosphere was heavy, but it could have been initiated by artificial ionisation of the air. I mention the possibility not because any flying object was seen, but isolated strokes are not all that frequent and this one was certainly followed by some extraordinary events.

Alex Butler, aged 10 years, and his friends—Tony Banks (11), Kerry Gahill (11), Andrew Hoar (11), David Inglis (10), Colin Lonsdale (10), and John Mickleburgh (10)—were playing on the common on their way to afternoon school. They were in the vicinity of the Dell, which is a shallow valley thickly strewn with hawthorn, gorse and bracken; and a few old tin cans and motor tyres. The undergrowth is riddled with passages connecting several dens under the bigger bushes, all no doubt the work of generations of children and animals; and there is a small open space hidden in the middle. The whole is reminiscent of a surface version of a miniature Viet Cong hideout, providing good cover, even in Winter, coupled with surprising freedom of movement—for diminutive creatures. The school is about 200 yards away and the nearest houses maybe 150 yards, but small persons could remain concealed for a long time were it not for the children who obviously regard this as their territory and know virtually every blade of grass in it.

A few minutes after the lightning, and its associated thunder, Alex was casting a proprietary eye over the Dell from the top of its northern bank when he saw, quite clearly over the open centre, "a little blue man with a tall hat and a beard" standing upright and still in front of the bushes at the foot of the opposite bank. He immediately shouted a description to his friends, who were initially sceptical but confirmed his view on joining him. Reacting as if to an intruder, they all began to run down the bank towards the stranger who was only about 20 yards away. The little man reacted, in turn, by "disappearing in a puff of smoke".

It is easy, at this stage, to rationalise the happening into a fairy story based on optical and electrical effects emanating from the lightning, but this tale



Photo : Colin McCarthy

Alex Butler stands in the place where the "man" was seen

continues—without further discharges—and gets curiously:

Finding nothing at the place where he was first seen, the boys ran on, a little to their right along the bottom of the dell and then up the far bank; still searching for their elusive quarry. They soon saw him again, this time to their left farther along the top of the bank and on the opposite side of the bushes that had previously formed his background. Once again he was standing still and facing them at a range of 20 yards. They again approached him, and he repeated his disappearing trick.

The third time they saw him he was back at the bottom of the Dell, not far from his original position. His pursuers had by now reached his second location. Looking at him through the leafless bushes, they became aware of "voices" which they describe in a manner suggesting a continuous, deep-toned, incomprehensible, and "foreign-sounding" babble, coming from a point in the bushes closer to them and down the slope to the right of their line of sight. A feeling that the little fellow had associates who were communicating with him and to whom he was replying, although they could detect no movement on his part, induced a sense of caution which deterred them from rushing towards him as before. Instead, the boys continued to circle the Dell until they could look down it, whereupon they saw him for the fourth and last time still standing as motionless as ever in the same place. Uncertain what to do next, they milled around for a few more minutes before their teacher's

whistle summoned them, and they dashed off to relate their experience.

They warned Miss Newcomb that she would not believe it, but, knowing them as well as she does and after assessing their excitement and listening to their story, she did believe them. She then very sensibly separated them and made each write it down in his own words. The essays were re-written two weeks later, not in order to alter their substance but simply to improve their spelling and tidiness, and were pasted into a book entitled "The Little Blue Man on Studham Common". It makes fascinating and convincing reading. I only wish there were space enough to reproduce it here. No doubt it will occupy an honoured place in the archives of the Studham Village Primary School.

The case was brought to our attention by Mr. L. Moulster, a long-standing reader of this review, who sent a cutting about it from the *Dunstable Borough Gazette*, dated March 3. He kindly accompanied C.B., G.W.C. and myself in a preliminary survey of the district and reminded us of local sightings investigated by him in previous years: an apparent landing at the foot of the hills not far from the Zoo and another, more controversial, case at the nearby Flying Club, of which he is a member. G.W.C. has also found another cutting from the aforementioned newspaper: dated October 15, 1965, it describes mystery lights in the sky over Whipsnade. Finally, it is hardly necessary to mention the Wildman case (FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, March/April 1962, p.18) that took place near Aston Clinton about six miles away on February 9, 1962.

Returning to our present case: Miss Newcomb arranged for Mr. and Mrs. Creighton, Colin McCarthy, and myself to meet the principals at the school on Saturday afternoon, May 13. Without any prompting from their obviously respected and loved teacher, they gave a very competent account of the whole incident. They also took us to the places involved and then returned with us to the schoolroom to go into

more detail. The following additional points emerged:—

They estimate the little man as 3ft. tall (by comparison with themselves), with an additional 2ft. accounted for by a hat or helmet best described as a tall brimless bowler, i.e. with a rounded top. The blue colour turned out to be a dim greyish-blue glow tending to obscure outline and detail. They could, however, discern a line which was either a fringe of hair or the lower edge of the hat, two round eyes, a small seemingly flat triangle in place of a nose, and a one-piece vestment extending down to a broad black belt carrying a black box at the front about six inches square. The arms appeared short and were held straight down close to the sides at all times. The legs and feet were indistinct.

The "beard" is interesting: apparently it extended from the vicinity of the mouth downwards, to divide and run to both sides of the chest. Although agreeing that it could have been breathing apparatus, the boys could not see clearly enough to be certain and this thought had not occurred to them.

The disappearances caused me some difficulty at first, but became more understandable after further explanation: the "puff of smoke" was apparently a whirling cloud of yellowish-blue mist shot towards the pursuers, possibly from the box on the belt. They agreed that he could have nipped into the bushes before this camouflage cleared, although it dissipated quite quickly. They heard no sound other than the voices and saw no movement at any time. Nor did they smell any smells or see anything strange in the vicinity, either on the ground or in the air.

The glow and the mist could have been the products of ionising radiation. Indeed, similar emanations, not necessarily from the same source could have triggered-off the lightning in an atmosphere already charged by natural processes. However, we must not carry speculation too far. All that we are certain of at this stage is that this is no ordinary fairy tale. Nobody who knows the boys disputes that it really happened.

RETURN OF A PRODIGAL

The Spring 1967 edition of BUFORA JOURNAL carries an article (pp.4-6) by Eric Biddle, entitled *The Flying Discs and the U.S.S.R.* It was translated by Mr. Biddle from the November 1966/January 1967 issues of a Brazilian journal called *Sabedoria*.

The whole of that part of the article which appears on page 5 is a translation from the Portuguese text, itself a translation of an article by Roberto Pinotti in Ray Palmer's magazine *Flying Saucers*, and which is a summary of an original article by Alberto Fenoglio which appeared in issue No. 105, June 1-15, 1962 of the Italian journal *Oltre il Cielo; Missili e Razzi*.

It so happens that a translation by Gordon Creighton of the whole of the Fenoglio article was published in FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, November/December 1962, pp. 27/28.

BUFORA

*Please note that the
North Regional Conference
will be held at the
Central Hall*

Renshaw Street, Liverpool 1

on

November 4th, 1967

*and not as announced in our last
issue*

**Details from R. D. Hughes, Esq.
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