

HAS YOUR HEAD EXPLODED LATELY?

We are indebted to Dr Bernard Finch for the following curious item of news, which appeared in one of the British papers (we are not sure which) in July or August of 1988. No doubt many FSR readers — in common with your Editor — recognize the symptoms only too well.

Exploding head syndrome quite harmless

A previously unreported medical condition known as the *Exploding Head Syndrome*, in which patients experience a bomb-like detonation in the back of the head, is described by a consultant neurologist in the weekly medical journal, *The Lancet*.

It has nothing to do with that morning-after-the-night-before feeling, and is not a pain in the head, but a loud and unexplained noise that occurs during sleep.

Mr John Pearce, consultant neurologist at Hull Royal Infirmary, has examined ten patients with the symptoms, and says he thinks it is probably common but unreported.

The sufferers are generally middle-aged or elderly, usually female, with no other signs or symptoms, and usually in good health. He says it occurs exclusively when the person is sleeping. She is then awakened by a violent sensation of, as it were, an "explosion inside the head, which occurs abruptly and with great force".

The persons are usually so alarmed that at first they think the experience was painful, but on further questioning it turns out that they were not so much aware of a *pain* as of "a noise deep in the middle or back of the head".

One of the patients, a 67-year old woman, was awakened by "a sudden bang in her head" once every two or three weeks.

She described it: "It was as if my head was bursting with a flash of light over both fields of vision, after which I would be dazed for a split second, and then

would come round, terrified, my heart thumping."

Another sufferer (a 68-year-old man this time) said: "It's more of a thunderclap than a pain, though you never know when it's coming, except that it has always been when you are asleep."

The neurologist says the attacks have no apparent cause and are not related to excitement, food, or alcohol the previous evening. Victims of it tend to fear, he says — and they fear quite wrongly — that it is an early sign of a cerebral haemorrhage or a brain tumour.

He says that a sense of "explosion in the head" is not mentioned anywhere in the standard medical textbooks, and the condition, harmless but frightening, ought to be given official recognition. He emphasises that the condition does not seem to be related in any way to neurosis, and although it is essential that the sufferers be reassured, drug therapy for it is entirely unjustified.

Concluding, he says: "This syndrome is entirely benign and, I suspect, common and under-reported. The cause of the bomb-like noise remains a mystery; no known vascular or hydrodynamic changes in the brain, labyrinths, or cerebrospinal fluid would cause such a symptom".

Well there, I thought you'd all feel better after reading that!

I know I do. *Personally, I still think it's all due to UMMO or the PLEIADES.*

G.C.

HYPNOSIS DECRIED

A doctor with a long experience of all aspects of UFO research, including in particular the hypnotic regression of subjects, has drawn our attention to an item in a London newspaper which suggests that hypnosis is unreliable. (The doctor's own comment was that it was "just possible" that the issue of such a report might be part of an attempt to make sure the the public would lend no credence to the increasing number of alleged UFO experiences divulged under hypnosis.)

The article, in the *Daily Express* (end of May/early June, 1988) runs as follows:-

HYPNOSIS ALERT

The use of hypnosis by police to interview witnesses has come under attack in a major new survey.

On the eve of the publication of Home Office guidelines on the subject, new laboratory research suggests that information gathered under hypnosis is unreliable.

CONFIDENCE

The Australian* university researcher who conducted the survey said: "The suggestions of the hypnotherapist are transformed into pseudomemories".

Mr Kevin McConkey, of Macquarie University, Sydney, said that people hypnotised become more confident about their recollections. But, he warned, there is no correlation between confidence and

accuracy.

Many police chiefs are still convinced that hypnotism can be useful. (Our italics. ED, FSR).

In the past decade hypnotism has been used — with varying success — in many celebrated cases, including that of the "Yorkshire Ripper".

The new Home Office guidelines are expected to be highly sceptical about the use of hypnosis. They are likely to recommend that it should be used only when all else fails, and that the interview should be video-recorded.

*A lot of folk in Australia are, of course, still worried that the Knowles family and the Nullarbor Desert Case (see FSR 33/2 and 33/4) received so much publicity world-wide.

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would, wouldn't they?"

In this case, as in that of the British Island Airways' plane, there is probably no way in which the truth can be ascertained.

Finally, it might be mentioned that on April 21, 1989, the London *Evening Standard* reported very briefly that in Israel, the Police at Haifa had "officially confirmed" that a UFO had crashed on a beach near that city, and that they had gathered up fragments of the falling object, which resembled a "fireball".