

WAS GOD AT ABERFAN?

F. W. Holiday

ABERFAN, the most terrible land accident of recent British history, left behind a row of question-marks that subsequent inquiry has done little to clarify. Following the collapse of a Coal Board spoil-heap on October 21, 1966, which killed 116 children and 28 adults, there were many who doubted any sort of universal wisdom. "Where was God when this lot came down, then?" demanded one angry resident.¹

Aberfan called into question the entire machinery of causation in time and space. Could such a traumatic disaster occur without casting a shadow before it? There is some evidence to suggest it could not.

Peter Fairley, science correspondent of the *Evening Standard*, requested information relating to possible precognition of the disaster and received 76 replies which were analysed by Dr. J. C. Barker. Of these, 22 subjects were able to supply the names of witnesses who confirmed that apparent precognition occurred prior to the catastrophe.

One of the most remarkable was a drawing by an eight-years-old boy, made the day before he died, which shows miners working on slag-heaps with vehicles labelled "National Coal Board". He captioned the sketch "The End". The same evening the same little boy reported "a man" near the bathroom door although no one was there.

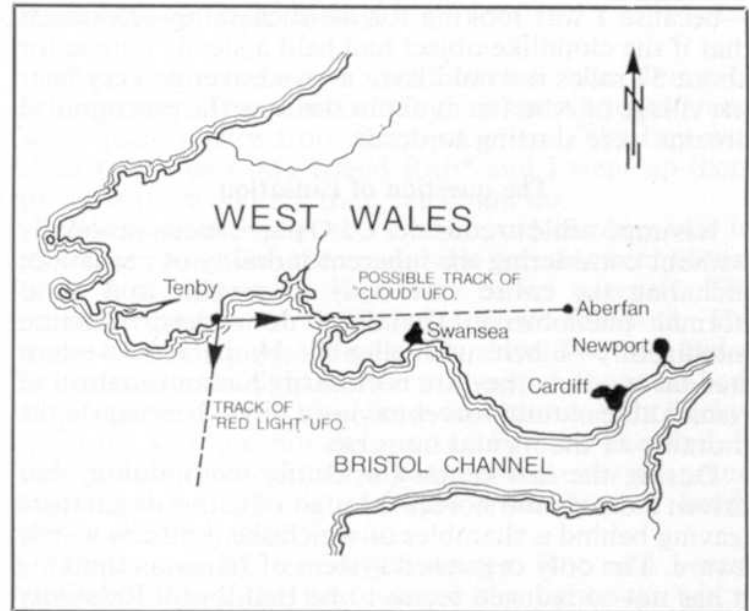
Some witnesses described vivid precognitive dreams of the disaster. One child actually mentioned her own death and that of her two school-friends. These three little victims were later, in fact, buried side by side in the mass grave. This child's foresight, as well as that of some of the adult percipients, appeared to extend forward in time to about 14 days prior to the accident.

Numerous theoretical models are possible on the basis of which the human mind might perceive future events. However there is no scientific reason why any one of these should be preferred before the others. Nearly all such approaches assume a direct perception of the coming event by the person concerned. It is at least possible, however, that the perception is not direct but is obtained by a telepathic link with a mind or minds which themselves are doing the overlooking.

I was led to this possibility following the events of October 8, 1966, thirteen days before the Aberfan disaster occurred.

Object over Tenby

At about 7.00 p.m. on the evening of that day I was standing on the lifeboat slipway in Tenby harbour fishing for whiting. About a dozen men and boys were similarly occupied. The night was clear and calm with a brilliant display of stars. Eventually I noticed an under-current of excitement amongst the fishermen and when I asked the cause someone drew attention to an object directly above our heads.



It looked like a small, bluish, luminous cloud. That it was not a cloud was suggested by the curious manner in which it was orbiting slowly in a circle equal to about three times its own diameter. Since it was opaque and blotted out the background stars it was possible to observe this motion plainly. The object was about the size of a 10p coin* held at arm's length and it resembled a self-luminous lump of blue-grey cottonwool. I remember someone exclaiming about "lights", or it may have been "coloured lights", but I failed to see these and my attention finally wandered back to the fishing.

Possibly ten minutes later there were exclamations all round at a spectacle as unambiguous as it was remarkable. Out of the cloudlike object had emerged a dark object which was beaming a brilliant ruby light down on us. The emergence was leisurely. After the two objects were separated by a little distance they each began to move away steadily on different courses. The "cloud" moved east and the red light object moved south-west. A belated dash by me at this point to get binoculars from the car was too late, and when I focussed the area both objects had moved out of vision.

Until this incident occurred my interest in alleged UFO phenomena was marginal. A subsequent study of the literature—including descriptions collected by Michel of the so-called "cloud-cigar"—strengthened the conviction that the Tenby object was not an atmospheric cloud, a helicopter, a balloon or even a nocturnal

* Diameter $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches, or 2,8 cms.

flight of snow-geese hovering overhead for the specific purpose of being mistaken for a UFO. Such crass suggestions, I discovered, were the stock-in-trade of certain hardcase astronomers whose dogmatism was equalled only by their abject failure to explain the plainly discernible.

It was much later (how obtuse one can be!) that I took a map and plotted the tracks of the objects from their point of departure over Tenby. Purely by accident—because I was looking for no such thing—I noticed that if the cloudlike object had held a steady course for about 57 miles it would have arrived over or very near the village of Aberfan at about the time the precognitive dreams were starting to occur.

The question of causation

It is impossible to consider UFO phenomena rationally without considering the inherent morality of causation, including the entire vast body of psychic and paranormal phenomena. If UFOs do indeed function intelligently—albeit unintelligibly by current western standards—then they are necessarily a manifestation of remarkable natural forces having a direct bearing on the morality of the mental universe.

During the last century scientific methodology has driven a coach and horses through religious dogmatism leaving behind a shambles of which the public is widely aware. The only organised system of religious thinking it has not so reduced seems to be Buddhism. Relativity and molecular physics demonstrate that the physical universe is precisely the sort of illusory structure the Buddhists describe. Moreover, the origin of the universe—whether it started as a “big bang” or exists in steady state—seems to be resolving in favour of the former. The Buddhists with their “Day of Brahma” teach this very thing. Are they equally correct therefore in arguing the existence of a timeless, all-knowing Cosmic Mind? If so, it may cast light on the problem under discussion.

It could be objected that the cloudlike object we observed over Tenby may have changed course when it was out of sight and have traversed a route nowhere near Aberfan. Even though Michel's rectilinear orthoteny lines were rejected by Vallée (the argument being happily quoted by Condon although his pro-UFO

arguments were carefully not quoted) I believe, nonetheless, that orthoteny will yet bear fruit. Lacking evidence we can only say that the object *may* have pursued a straight course. In which case it reached Aberfan some 13 days before the disaster.

If we make the daring assumption that the impending catastrophe was the motivation for this particular journey, then the mechanism by means of which the entities foresaw the landslide becomes almost immaterial. If we accept the possibility that they were aware of the impending event then small wonder, perhaps, that various people dreamed dreams and small children calmly discussed their fate in advance of its unfolding. Telepathy is no longer the dirty word it once was.

The reason for the visitation, if it occurred as suggested, is quite beyond conjecture in our present state of ignorance about causation. It is well worth remembering that *Odin*, chief of the Icelandic gods, was also known as *Valfödr* (Father of the Slain). He was the Lord of Valhalla to whom those who died violently were taken by the *Valkyries* (Odin's Friends).² This should be set beside a recent remark by Dr. Paul Tabori: “A great deal of what has been considered rank superstition and appalling ignorance in past ages has been found, at the least, to be prophetic insight in the light of modern scientific research.”³

This is not an attempt to paint a chocolate-box picture of the phenomena, but merely to explain several seemingly unrelated facts. Even if true, there is no reason for doubting certain well-attested cases in which witnesses appear to have encountered UFOs of sinister or malignant character. These may well exist and form part of the phenomenal universe the Buddhists so accurately describe.

References

- 1 Austin, Tony (1967): *Aberfan: The Story Of A Disaster*. Hutchinson: London.
- 2 Branston, Brian (1955): *Gods Of The North*. Thames & Hudson: London.
- 3 Tabori, Paul (1968): *Companions Of The Unseen*. H. A. Humphrey: London.

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