

# THE SUNDERLAND FAMILY ENCOUNTERS - Part 1

*Jenny Randles & Paul Whetnall*

Another UFOIN report. Classification data: July 1976 Oakenholt, Clwyd, N. Wales CE3 A, Psycho, TR Level A

**T**HIS is, potentially, a most important case. Already it has been the subject of a 48-page report by the authors (on which this account is based). Further work is inevitable, and UFOIN is planning this (with the assistance of Peter Warrington, who is to use his talents for site analysis).

The story revolves around numerous events in a little Welsh village a few miles from the English border, and 1½ miles east of Flint. Principally these are *two* close encounters of the third kind, which are said to have happened independently to a young brother and sister (although within a short space of time and distance). Associated with these are many subsequent events, including three other close encounters. Primarily these occurred to other members of the same family (including adults), but there are also events involving a girl who was an original CE3 witness.

The story is as fascinating as it is complex, and we can do little more here than provide a survey of the major points. Indeed new events are said to be occurring continually, even this report should only be regarded as a statement of the current position.

## Synopsis

In July 1976, it is claimed, both Gaynor Sunderland (then 9) and her brother Darren (then 8) had encounters with landed UFOs and occupants within less than a mile of each other, and their home in the village of Oakenholt in the Welsh county of Clwyd.

These stories were *not* related to their parents until March 1978, from which point an investigation has been under way. Since that time it has been learned that Gaynor claims several other LITS encounters (before and after the CE3), and her experiences have continued during the course of the investigation (including a CE1 with animal interference). Apparently she has also had psychic experiences, and believes that more is yet to come!

Darren, however, claims no further sightings, but his parents (particularly Mrs. Marion Sunderland) *do* claim encounters, two of which must be regarded as CE1 incidents (involving psychological and electromagnetic effects). In addition, other stories of strange phenomena have been recorded in the immediate area during the course of the investigation.

## Location

Oakenholt is surrounded by farmland and is close to the Clwyd coast. The estuary of the River Dee is immediately adjacent, while to the south, in the direction of the sites of the main encounters, is a ridge of hills which rise in places to 1000 feet. To the east is the industrial and steel town of Shotton and the border with England overlooked by the ancient city of Chester. Much of the immediate area is rural and sparsely populated, and abounds with local tradition. Wat's Dyke passes by to the SSW, in the direction of the main incidents, and within a mile or so of them (see sketch map of area).

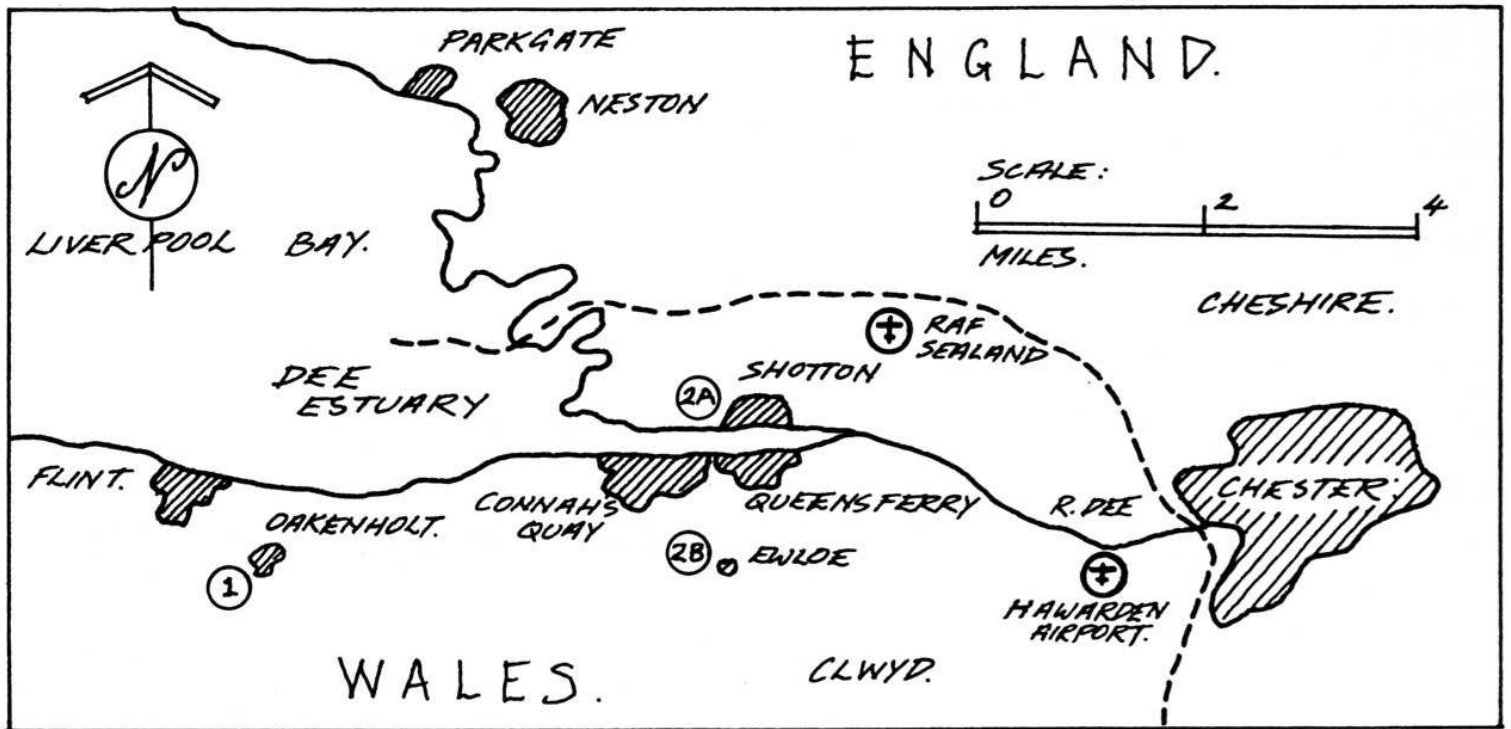
## The Trigger

In March 1978 there was considerable publicity in the United Kingdom for the imminent release of the film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. One day Mrs. Marion Sunderland (in her thirties, a mother with five children) was reading a story about it in the local newspaper; she had no more than a general knowledge of the subject. Darren, then aged 10, asked her what a "close encounter of the third kind" was, and she told him to the best of her ability. He then announced quietly that he might have had one of these, and proceeded slowly, and in bits and pieces, to tell his mother of an experience he claimed had occurred in July 1976.

At this moment Gaynor, then 11, was out playing. She came in briefly at one point and heard her brother talking. She ridiculed him, which was apparently uncharacteristic, and made jibes about "little green men." Then she went out again. She heard only a few moments of Darren's story.

A while later she returned indoors and waited until Darren had gone out and she could be alone with her mother. She then told her, sheepishly, that she had had an experience (in July 1976), and this she related in detail. She said that she had been afraid to tell anyone about it because she knew it would not be believed, and because she had also had a deep inner feeling that she should not tell. However, when Darren was telling his story, she got a "picture in her head" that now was the time to tell her mother.

Mrs. Sunderland was unsure what to do. She had dismissed Darren's story as imagination, but she knew Gaynor to be totally unimaginative and certainly not prone to telling lies. Also, despite the fact that at



no point had the two children been together alone, there were consistencies in their stories (most notably the date). Puzzled, she immediately called Darren back, separated them, and queried them both in detail independently, and obtained drawings. The consistencies made her most intrigued, plus the fact that both were so matter-of-fact about things, and insistent that the story not be told to anyone in the area because they did not wish to be laughed at.

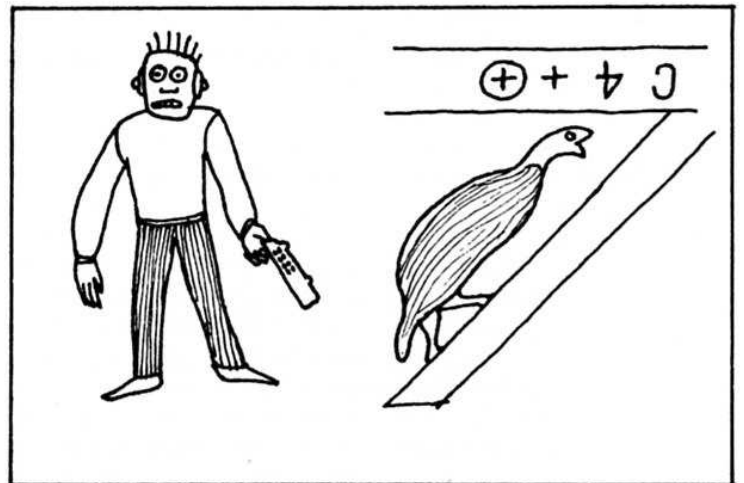
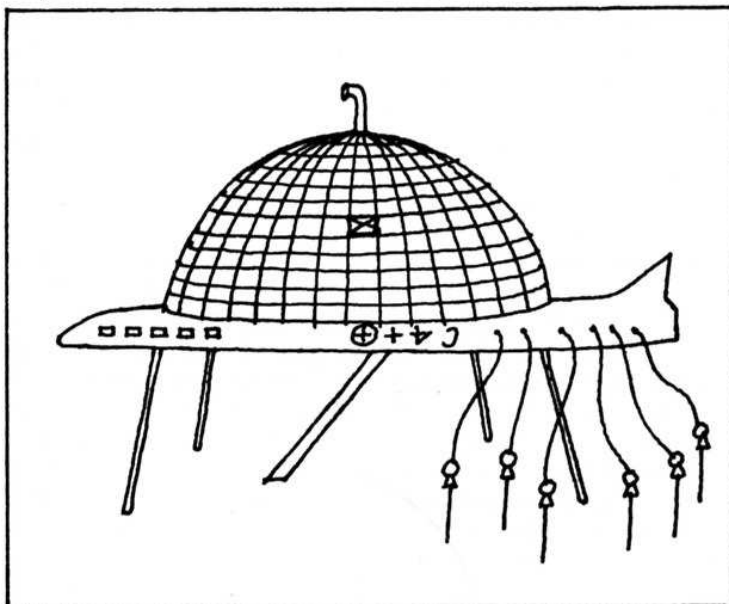
#### Darren's story

He claims that mid-afternoon on a sunny day, just after the school holidays had begun (i.e. mid-July 1976) he was walking down a fairly quiet lane known as Coed-On Road. His attention was attracted to a glint of silver in a field, and he went to the roadside to have a closer look.

In the field was an object on four tall legs. Basically it consisted of an elongated silver "oblong",

with a kind of tailpiece associated with aeroplanes at one end. On top was a large round dome the surface of which was made up of tiny square windows. There was a kind of periscope atop this, and a coloured cross in the centre of the dome. On the silver rim (the "oblong") there was a central line of black "writing" and a row of small windows on the edge opposite to that with the tailfin.

Emerging from the "ship" and reaching towards the ground were five or six wires. These were attached to blue bulbs on top of poles about 3 feet high. There were also five or six "men" who were walking around "like cripples" and seemingly very angry. They carried "guns" that had masses of buttons on them, including a blue one which when pressed released a red ray. They seemed to be attempting to destroy the bulbs, but to no avail. This fuelled their anger. They were jumping up and down apparently with rage.



Darren's alleged sighting, based on his sketches  
 LEFT: The "UFO"  
 RIGHT: "Man" and "gun"; "animal"

The men were about 4' 10" tall and were like human beings, except that they had angular bodies and just a few wisps of hair sticking up. They wore mottled silver tops and green trousers (not unlike clothing worn in certain series of *Star Trek*? JR and PW).

One of the men seemed so annoyed that he went up to a bulb and hit it with the butt of the gun. It went out and the rest suddenly looked overjoyed and started to do the same. All but one bulb was extinguished and they simply left that one on.

A central ramp came down from the ship and suddenly a bizarre creature moved down this. It was not unlike a dinosaur, with a green body and red neck. In place of ears it had long floppy cheeks. One man made a growl, and with a sad expression the animal turned around and went back up into the craft.

The next phase of the observation concerned a human-like man, with pink face and much hair. He also had five fingers (unlike the other entities who had four). He appeared inside the dome and seemed to have trouble manipulating some controls. He was wearing a white 'T' shirt. Then he glanced at a picture on the inner wall of the craft, which according to Darren somewhat resembled the man who lived next door. The human-like person smiled, and disappeared behind the wall.

A curious feature that Darren noted was that inside the craft everything appeared smaller. He saw the entities walking past the windows but these were only about 3 feet tall. When they came down the ramp they seemingly "grew."

The observation ended, he claims, when at one point all the "men" briefly looked the other way and he ran from his hiding place behind a lamp-post. That night from his bedroom, Darren states he saw the ship leave with only the cross illuminated.

### Gaynor's story

Gaynor was riding her bicycle along a different part of Coed-On Road. It was a Saturday and hot and sunny. The time was about 1.50 p.m. (BST).

The area where she was riding was quite secluded, and she descended a hill towards a field which was below the level of the roadway. Suddenly a glint of silver caught her eye. She got off her bike and laid it on the grass by a hedge, peering downwards into the field through a gap.

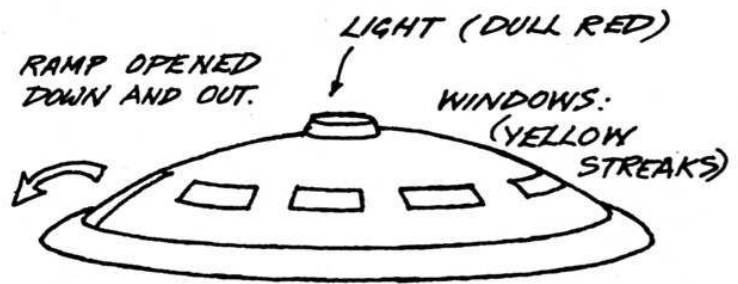
In the field she saw an object which, she says, appeared to her like a silvery cigar. It was about 35 feet long and 10 feet high. Along the base was a narrow rim and on top a dull red box. Three rectangular windows were seen along the side (with a fourth partly visible round the right hand edge). These were all different shades of yellow blending into one another.

Gaynor's first thought was that she was looking at something from a carnival, or from a parade and, fascinated, she decided to watch. The thing was only

a few yards in front of her (maybe about 20 yards) and she saw a dark shadow pass across one window. Assuming that there were men in it, and that they would frighten her off if she revealed herself, she stayed hidden, captivated by the strange object.

By now she was lying on her stomach with her feet in the air, peering through the hedge. After a few minutes a strange "man" appeared from round the side and it was only then that she realised that this was something really unusual and she began to consider that the object might be "from space."

The "man" was humanoid, about 5' 5" tall, but



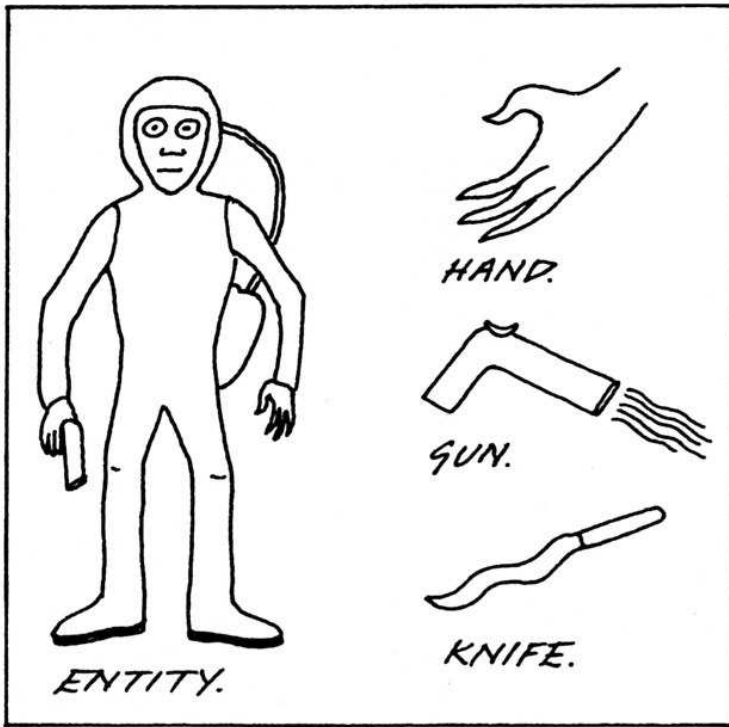
UFO allegedly seen by Gaynor on the ground

very thin and angular in the body. He walked jerkily, in sidesteps, and his knee joints were three quarters of the way up his leg. His elbows, too, were pointed and his face was long, thin, and terribly pale.

As he came closer, and remained in view for several minutes, she obtained an excellent detailed view. His eyes were very large and round. They were white with a tiny pink "dot" in the middle. The nose was squat and flat and the mouth just a slit with many white teeth. Only a few sandy wisps of hair were visible. The hands consisted of three very pointed fingers and a 'wobbly' thumb.

The entity was wearing a one-piece silver suit. At no point did Gaynor see any zippers or fasteners, and it stretched from neck to feet, covering even the hands. The boots were silver but had thick black soles (like boots worn by divers). On the head was a round helmet which was silvery at the rear — in fact a continuation of the suit — and had a "glass bubble" at the front. Connected to this, from the side, was a transparent tube. This fitted into a white, heart-shaped object on the back that Gaynor assumed was breathing apparatus.

The "man" was carrying a gun, which was very simple. It was in the shape of a letter 'L' held by the bottom. This instrument was creamy coloured and had a half moon button on top. The entity was pointing the gun at the ground and pressing the button, whereupon a "wavy" red ray was emitted, "slower than a light being switched on." Immediately a hole the size of a cup formed in the ground, and he bent stiffly to feel it. He walked around the front of the craft making about six holes in all and feeling



Based on Gaynor's sketches of the humanoid

each one. In each case the soil had just melted away, leaving no grass, just a hole.

Gaynor had now been watching for 10–15 minutes, and she was uncomfortable and frightened. She moved her leg slightly and it caught on the hedge, making a noise. Unfortunately at this point the entity was only about 10 feet from her, and he appeared to hear the sound. He did not turn his body, which was side on, but moved his eyes towards her. At this she felt very cold inside and went momentarily dizzy. She says that she “knew” that he was seeing inside her mind and that because she was only a child he realised she could not hurt them.

He went about his business of making holes, occasionally looking at her – when on each occasion she felt the cold and the dizziness. Then a kind of whimpering noise – high pitched and not unlike a dog crying – came from the direction of the craft. Both Gaynor and the “man” looked to see a flap coming down on the extreme left hand edge. This, seemingly, was moulded into the sides, and left no gap when it was down. In shape it was not unlike a banana.

A hand, similar to the first, appeared from within and waved up and down. In response the man moved his foot from side to side and then walked stiffly over to the flap. He climbed on the rim and went “into” the flap. The murmuring occurred again. Then he came down and walked around the back of the ship and was not seen again.

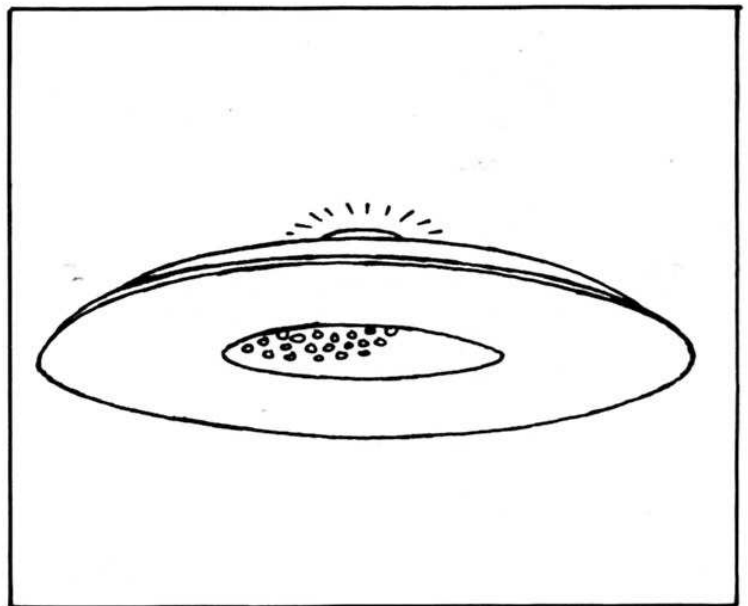
A few moments after this another figure came from around the right hand side. Gaynor feels this was a woman, as she appeared to have “a bit of shape.” She was very similar to the man, wearing exactly the same clothes, but was only about 5’ 2” tall. She had a long, jagged knife “stuck” to her side

(there was no belt). She proceeded to go to each hole and scrape this knife in them. A noise was heard, but the knife always came out clean. Several times the woman looked directly at Gaynor and she again felt dizzy and cold. Indeed she said she sensed the woman was angry at her presence and was more antipathetic towards her than the man had been.

After a total period which Gaynor estimated from her watch as 30 minutes, there was again a whimpering sound, slightly lower in pitch this time, and the woman at the same time looked up towards the sun. She then proceeded towards the ramp, which lowered as she got closer. She walked up it, and as she did so Gaynor noted the box on top of the cigar pulsing deep red.

Seizing her opportunity she fled, gashing her knee quite badly on the hedge in her panic (her mother recalls the gash). She went only a few yards and realised she had left her bicycle. In agonies of indecision she went back for it, but did not jump on immediately. She ran off down the road with it.

As she went she heard a faint humming noise. Glancing back she saw the leaves on the trees surrounding the field trembling as she smelt a slight “burning.” Then she saw the “cigar” angle upwards into the sky, accelerating into the one and only cloud that was in the otherwise clear sky. It disappeared into



Gaynor's UFO on take off

this (which was not large) revealing its underside as it climbed. This consisted of a circle of lights or buttons.

Gaynor cycled home at a fast pace, but even so took several minutes. She stared upwards several times but did not see the UFO emerge from the cloud. In a turmoil she rode around her house for several minutes until, dizzy, she went indoors and reported the accident (omitting to mention anything at all about her experience).

The next day, as if partly to convince herself that it had really happened, she returned to the field. Her elder brother went with her (not Darren). She

found an oval patch of grass where the object had been and this was tinged with silver. The holes were no longer there, but their presence was detectable due to the grass being somewhat greener and fresher ("like after it had rained") at these points. She did not say anything to her brother, nor did she dare venture further into the field to look at the far side of the oval patch.

### Investigation

The case was originally discovered by a Mr. Terry Bellis, a local investigator. This was following a radio phone-in programme in which he took part for Radio City (Liverpool). Mrs. Sunderland telephoned with brief details, omitting any names or locations and afterwards filled out a BUFORA R1 report form and sent a detailed statement of Gaynor's sighting to him. This was in April 1978.

Mrs Sunderland had requested further contact to relate Darren's story, but Mr. Bellis did not take the case further. Nor did he transmit information to anyone else involved in local investigation. In August, however, he gave details of the case (again minus names and locations) to the *Liverpool Post*, who featured a story on it as part of a UFO series. This was picked up by UFOIN and eventually (thanks to the help of Martin Keatman – a UFOIN member who was in contact with Mr. Bellis) a copy of the preliminary report was obtained. Paul Whetnall followed this up with an immediate on-site investigation, and considerable further contact with the participants took place when it became known that the case was so complex.

The family consists of Mr. Frederick Sunderland (aged 36), a former car factory worker who at the

time of writing (April 1979) is unemployed. He is a practical man who is highly sceptical of UFOs. He has tended to dismiss Darren's story as fanciful, and has also considered Gaynor to have been "dreaming." However, his attitude has slowly changed and the events of the investigation, plus a personal sighting



**Above:** Gaynor looking at a hole in the hedge at approximately the position from which, lying down, she watched the UFO and the humanoid.



**Left:** The view from the point where the domed object is said to have stood, looking towards the gap in hedgerow, by which Gaynor was lying prone (Gaynor is just visible in our picture).

(see later), have now convinced him of the validity of at least Gaynor's experience. His wife Marion (of similar age) is now very interested in UFOs, but appears only to have picked up knowledge since the children's stories fired her enthusiasm. She also seems to have pursued this interest for genuine reasons of wanting to know what had happened to them all and why. Her knowledge is still moderate, but the investigators are aware of the possibility that she may have unconsciously had some influence on the testimonies. However, we do have comparison accounts from Gaynor dating from April 1978 to February 1979 and there is no indication of such influence.

Of the five children, Gaynor's and Darren's accounts have already been noted. The only other child old enough to have been involved with the observing of the phenomena is Carl (the eldest... now 14). He was party to one of the subsequent encounters.

The investigators found Darren a fairly typical 11-year-old boy, with normal interests for that age. His sense of drama, and his imagination, were noticeable, and quite clearly he injected both into his story. For example, when he was describing his running away he likened himself to the "Bionic Man." He also took great relish in comparing one of the entities with the man next door (a fact that will no doubt be of interest of psychologist readers!). We also noted how on several occasions he tried to show how his story was like that of his sister, in at least one major instance, citing a comment ("the entities had pink faces") as *identical*, whereas in fact it was totally contrary to Gaynor's consistent story ("they had very pale faces with white eyes containing a tiny pink dot"). The investigators consider these factors, plus the very real inconsistency of Darren's story over the months of investigation, as significant.

As for Gaynor she was very different. Instantly likeable, she has a noticeable shyness when she first meets anyone. Her interests are again somewhat typical, ice skating and music being prominent. She does watch TV programmes such as *Dr. Who* (a popular British science fiction series), but not in any abnormal amount, and she displays no extraordinary interest or knowledge in the UFO phenomenon. At school she is well-liked and popular. Her work has dramatically improved since 1976, the time of her initial CE3. She is now very proficient at languages, speaking Welsh and French well, and has a growing command of sciences, particularly life sciences. Indeed she was so lucid and helpful in her descriptions that the investigators invariably had the feel that they were dealing with a girl who was well advanced from her age.

It should be noted that at several places in the investigation contradictions of minor points were introduced into Gaynor's testimony (a standard investigational ploy). Never once was she ensnared, and she corrected the investigators in a tactful and straightforward way that said a lot for her basic honesty. This was not only attested to by family and friends, but was apparent also to the investigators.

## Hypnosis

While the investigators felt no need whatsoever for the use of hypnosis, they did not prevent its use under the auspices of Mr. Joe Keeton — a qualified hypnotherapist recommended by the *Liverpool Post*. There was no indication of a time-lapse, nor suspicion of an abduction or hidden memories. The story we had obtained was highly detailed and had remained consistent, even in very minor points, throughout our investigation of Gaynor. However, there were doubts about Darren's testimony.

Consequently, when the newspaper people said they would like to try the experiment, and the witnesses agreed, we went along with this. The regression took place late in February 1979 (well after our investigations of all major points was complete). Darren and Gaynor were both willing to be hypnotised, and both were told that under hypnosis there was no way that they could lie. The truth would out — whatever it was. This, of course is erroneous but the point is that they believed it. Gaynor submitted willingly to hypnosis, and was a reasonable (not exceptional) subject. She said, the night before, that she was looking forward to the hypnosis because although she "knew" her story was real, so many people doubted her that she sometimes wondered if she could have just dreamt it. She was willing to accept whatever transpired. Mrs. Sunderland, too, said that she would be happy to find it all explained as a dream, if it could be.

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Gaynor looks towards the landing site, this time through the gate further along the hedge.



Darren, however, became very perturbed prior to the investigation under hypnosis, and clammed up to the extent that it was impossible to hypnotise him. Afterwards he felt that the "proof" of Gaynor's story had vindicated his too.

The hypnosis session was most productive. Gaynor relived the experience in detail twice (once for the hypnotist and once for Philip Key – the *Liverpool Post* reporter). She displayed emotional reactions that were totally consistent with the various phases of the experience, including acute fear with considerable crying. This was most noticeable at the last phase (as she was running away), and the hypnotist did not pursue what to him, knowing almost nothing about the details of the sighting, should have been a little inconsistent. In fact she would not have felt *less* emotional at that stage because a) the object was moving, and, b) she had badly gashed her leg and was presumably crying partly through the pain.

Gaynor made no contradictions on any significant points with her previous stories. Also she added *no* new phases, and added only a few minor details that had simply not been the subject of questions by the investigators. All in all her testimony was very impressive.

Joe Keeton is a UFO sceptic and this was emphasised by his sometimes biased questioning. Indeed he thought he had come up with an explanation when, under hypnosis, Gaynor admitted to watching a TV programme that had shown a drawing made by some boys of a cigar-shaped UFO. This had been several weeks prior to the sighting, and was not previously recalled consciously by her. The UFO described was seen many miles away in England and was not very similar to the one Gaynor saw (it was

more of a cigar shape, had no windows, no light on top, and no entities were seen in association with it). However, the basic similarity may possibly have accounted for Gaynor's classification of the "Cigar." This was not really accurate, considering her drawing, but was the most recent term she had heard used for a UFO prior to the sighting.

In the opinion of the investigators there is no reason to suppose that there is any psychological link between the TV programme – from which Gaynor walked out *before it had finished* – and the girl's subsequent sighting. However, it was apparent that Joe Keeton was trying to prove the connection without success.

In this connection it is interesting to note the following passage from the hypnosis session transcript. Gaynor, having relived her experience, is taken back a few weeks to the time of the TV programme.

Keeton: What is the announcer saying?  
Gaynor: Some boys saw it... In a field.  
Keeton: Did the boys see anyone get out?  
Gaynor: Don't know. They went away.  
Keeton: You were braver than the boys then.  
Gaynor: Why? (Gaynor was very puzzled by this).

The point here is that Gaynor, under hypnosis, was regressed to a time where she had not yet seen the UFO. Had she responded Yes, or No, or something similar at this point she would be indicating that she was not really hypnotised. Her puzzlement confirmed that she was hypnotised, since it is highly unlikely that, if conscious, she would have been alert to this ploy (it must be added that everyone else missed it until it was explained afterwards!)

Three weeks after this session Joe Keeton, Gaynor,

Mrs. Sunderland and Jenny Randles took part in a thirty minute BBC Radio Wales programme about the case. The hypnotist gave his considered opinion that under no circumstances was Gaynor lying. He was adamant that she was describing events she really believed took place that day. However, he felt that it was possible that she might have fallen asleep due to the heat and had a vivid dream triggered by the TV programme seen weeks before. He emphasised he did not really know if this was true. It was just a theory.

It should be noted that Jenny Randles put some contradictory points to this theory and, following the programme, the BBC in Cardiff were deluged with calls with a 100% bias towards people saying that

in no way could they accept that Gaynor was describing a dream, and that they thought the sighting was the most evidential for the reality of UFOs that they had ever heard. The BBC were somewhat taken aback by this response, and say they are now considering a further programme.

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In Part 2, which will appear in the next issue of *Flying Saucer Review*, we will look at further encounters claimed by the Sunderland family, and at other paranormal experiences of theirs. We will also give our conclusions.

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# CONVERSATION WITH ENTITIES AT MARIMBONDA

*Dr. Walter Buhler*

Translation from the Portuguese by Gordon Creighton

I GIVE below a preliminary account of another interesting case in which a UFO appears to have taken a keen interest in a Brazilian hydroelectric plant. To my knowledge it is the fourth, but of course we have no way of knowing how many more similar and unreported cases there may have been.

I have interviewed the witness, but my enquiries into the affair are not complete and no final account has yet been prepared for publication in our Society's Bulletin. In the meantime I am sending the text of a report on the case which was printed in the São Paulo newspaper *Ultima Hora* of March 2, 1979, under the signature of Vakdir Pacheco, which was based entirely on my investigation.

"The story about the UFO which landed on December 6, 1978, inside the security zone of the Marimbonda Hydroelectric Plant near the town of Fronteira,<sup>1</sup> on the border between the states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo, has already, to all intents and purposes, been forgotten by everybody — except, that is, for Dr. Walter Kárl Buhler, a medical doctor and Director of the Brazilian Society for the Study of Flying Saucers.

"The event did receive some mention, at the time of its occurrence, in newspapers in Rio and São Paulo, but after the passage of a few days nobody any longer paid any heed to it and it was forgotten. However, for Dr. Buhler, who for thirty-five years past has been investigating these UFO apparitions and the contacts of humans with extraterrestrial beings, there was a whole series of remarkable points of agreement between the story as told by the watchman, Jesús Antunes Moreira, and many of the other cases on file in his voluminous archives.

"Dr. Buhler accordingly set out for Fronteira, with

the intention of interviewing Moreira. But at first he ran into a whole series of obstacles, deriving principally from the friends and acquaintances of Moreira, who simply refused to discuss the affair or to furnish any information regarding the whereabouts of the witness.

"The only information that Dr. Buhler was able to secure was that Moreira — described as a steady, hard-working and conscientious employee — had handed in his notice at the Electricity Generating Plant and had moved to Barretos. But the physician, Dr. Sergio Bandeira, who had attended to Moreira at the Plant's first-aid post, recalled that 'after his meeting with the crew of a UFO, the guard was suffering from powerful attacks of nausea, and was in a pretty dazed condition. For more than an hour afterwards he was unable to stand any sort of light, and his recovery was very slow and gradual.'

"Encouraged by the favourable accounts he had been given about the character and nature of Moreira, a man described as moderate in his habits and whose word could be relied upon, Dr. Buhler carried on with his search, and he finally managed to trace the former watchman to his new residence at No. 0855, Thirty-fifth Avenue, in Barretos.

"Moreira was now working as a driver for a department store in Barretos, and completely settled into his new job. However, he showed no objection to discussing the contact which he had had with the beings' from a flying saucer at the Marimbonda Hydroelectric Plant on the night of December 6, 1978.

### The Watchman's Story

" 'Yes, it was true. I really did see a flying saucer and I talked with its crew,' he said.