



The National Archives

Flying saucers and crop circles - official UFO files released today at The National Archives

Tales of alien abductions, flying saucers and crop circles may seem the realm of fantasy novels and science fiction movies, but reports like these are among the files revealed today by The National Archives.

The Ministry of Defence has transferred eight files to The National Archives today detailing reports and sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) gathered from the public, civilian aircrew and military personnel, and compiled in the course of their day-to-day operations. The files are available to download at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ufo - a new online resource from The National Archives containing a podcast and a videocast, together with further background information on this compelling subject.

Today's release showcases a wide variety of material and details sightings between 1979 and 1987, as well as Ministry of Defence (MoD) briefing papers for a House of Lords debate in 1979. Found among the many standard accounts of unexplained sightings made to the authorities are some reports of an altogether stranger kind.

One such report from the files recounts a UFO sighting by a fisherman from Aldershot, who describes seeing a saucer land during a fishing trip. Shortly after the landing, he claims to have been approached by two small human-like creatures wearing green overalls who invited him aboard their "flying saucer". Once inside, the fisherman claims to have been "scanned", but was subsequently told to leave the craft as he was "too infirm" for their purposes.

Another report demonstrates a common trait found among UFO sightings: misidentification of everyday objects in the sky. Staff and customers at a Tunbridge Wells pub reported a sighting of an alien craft with red and green flashing lights moving across the sky. When asked to describe the direction of movement, the answer was simply: "Gatwick".

Dr David Clarke, UFOlogist and senior lecturer in journalism at Sheffield Hallam University, said: "It is fascinating to see this new information from the MoD and it is a great addition to the extensive resources available at The National Archives. To add to this, the new online resource means that from today anyone can access these, and any subsequent releases, from a single website, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ufos, enabling them to find out more about the UFO mystery."

The opening of these files is the first instalment of UFO documents that are due to be transferred to The National Archives from the MoD, with further instalments due for release over the next 3 to 4 years. Once the transfer is complete the MoD will have opened all its files relating to UFOs, providing the public with unparalleled access to the official record on this fascinating subject. As the new files come to The National Archives, they will be available to download from the website.

Howard Davies, senior archivist at The National Archives, said: "This latest release from the MoD on the subject of UFOs will undoubtedly be of interest to many people all over the world. Building online resources such as the one The National Archives is launching today is an excellent way of making the information we hold accessible to the widest possible audience and gives users the tools to interpret the information in the files."

The files can be accessed from www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ufos.

Ends

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

There is no charge to download the new files for the first month.

Visitors to the website can access a selection of existing UFO files from The National Archives collection and listen to a podcast from David Clarke and a videocast from Nick Pope. In addition, there is a detailed briefing document outlining the background to material available on UFOs.

The National Archives, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk, is a government department; and also an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice. The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. See also www.opsi.gov.uk

The National Archives is at the heart of information policy – setting standards and supporting innovation in information and records management across the UK, and providing a practical framework of best practice for opening up and encouraging the re-use of public sector information. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensure that they become tomorrow's permanent record.

The National Archives is also the UK government's official archive, containing 900 years of history from Domesday Book to the present, with records ranging from parchment and paper scrolls through to recently created digital files and archived websites. Increasingly, these records are being put online, making them universally accessible.

The vision of The National Archives is to:

- Lead and transform information management
- Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow
- Bring history to life for everyone