



The Hampshire Alien Abduction

The Truth is Out There - Among the Pubs and the Bullshit

The wind blew frigid twilight kisses onto my cheeks. The water glistened in the iridescent moonlight. I gripped my book that accompanied me on this quest - one that might end with me speaking to beings from beyond the confines of our skies.

Slurrrrrrrp...

I heard my grandfather taking a long swig from his hip flask to stave off the chill.

"Do you really think they'll come?" I asked, nervously.

"Maybe... after all, we are in the right spot..."

I opened the tome I had brought with me. It was one of my favourites. The sort of book that, read as a doe-eyed dreamer, could change your entire life trajectory.

The Haunted Places of Hampshire

Hampshire has always been my home. Other than the occasional holiday, it's all I have ever known.

That book made home feel somehow more fantastic and special. Once I'd read that aliens had visited the Basingstoke Canal, I knew where my grandfather and I would go on our next adventure.

We waited for hours - the temperature plummeted as a thin mist descended.

Crickets chirped. Reeds rustled.

I slumped in my camping chair, eyelids growing heavy, as I fought the sandman to ensure I didn't miss my chance to see *them*.

I closed my eyes and drifted into dreams of flying among the stars, visiting distant planets, and finally getting answers to questions I'd carried my whole life. The secrets of the cosmos were about to be revealed...

"Strat..." my grandfather whispered...

He gently nudged my shoulder before giving me a bit more of a jostle to guarantee I woke. .

Steel eyelids parted like pod bay doors.

"Look..." he pointed along the track leading into the fog, along the canal bed.

Lights.

Bobbing delicately in the still air - gliding through the mist. First one. Then another, and then another. Synchronised.

A whirring sound tingled deep within my ears as they approached us...

My heart rate quickened as every possibility I had imagined rushed through my mind. This could be the moment...

Adrenaline zipped through my grey matter at lightspeed.

They are here...

"They're coming closer!" I whispered louder than I aimed to...

I gripped my grandfather's hand tightly as my ten-year-old knees started to quiver...

I felt his grip tighten. And then... loosen. He let out a burst of laughter at the sight of the cyclists as they emerged from the fog and breezed past us...

For a moment, the laugh sounded comical, but before that, it sounded relieved - like he was happy he didn't have to make things right with something from the stars, and protect his ten-year-old grandson.

I was gravely disappointed - who wouldn't be? - but I too, was slightly relieved that we hadn't met with an E.T... The unknown can feel fantastic as a child when you explore it in the safe spaces of imagination. It is quite another thing to be confronted with creatures beyond comprehension...

"We'll try another time, eh?" my grandfather placed his assuring hand on my shoulder. A comfort for my dreams of meeting alien life having to continue without fruition for another night.

We attempted the trip a few more times, but we never saw any aliens, UFOs or bright lights - nor did we find ourselves politely or abruptly abducted...

Just more cyclists with their bastard deceiving lights, and night-fisherman smirking at a young lad holding a ghost book whilst waiting for extraterrestrials.

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The story that started my obsession with this particular stretch of the Basingstoke Canal concerned an elderly man who had been abducted by aliens whilst night-fishing.

Alfred Burtoo was seventy-seven. Old enough to appreciate the simple pleasures of life, but still young enough to hope for something spectacular to happen.

And it did... allegedly

In the cold early hours of August the twelfth, nineteen-eighty-three, he saw a bright light descending above him. Two humanoid beings, around four feet tall, emerged from the glow. They wore green coveralls and dark, visored helmets that concealed their faces.

As the light dimmed and his eyes refocused, Alfred saw a saucer-shaped craft behind the beings. It had a rectangular opening and appeared to rest on ski-runner landing gear.

It was approximately forty to forty-five feet across.

The great hulking machine hummed mechanically, as the beings beckoned him to come aboard.

In his account to the local newspaper, Alfred stated that he accepted the invitation and entered the craft willingly.

The spacemen then guided him into a large octagonal room where they asked him one simple question:

"What is your age?"

To which he replied, "I'll be seventy-eight on my next birthday..."

The beings exchanged a silent glance. Faceless, but almost expressive. Then they returned their gaze to Alfred...

"You are too old and infirm for our purpose..."

Then the craft's doors opened, releasing Alfred back to his Canalside perch. The craft ascended and vanished without so much as a trace.

With no witnesses, no fuss or ceremony, Alfred simply sat back down with his gear and carried on fishing...

The *Aldershot News* referred Burtoo to Omar Fowler - an investigations coordinator for the *Surrey Investigation Group on Aerial Phenomena (SIGAP)*. Burtoo had initially contacted the paper to ask whether anyone else had reported seeing a strange light near his usual fishing spot.

In October, nineteen-eighty-three, Omar interviewed Alfred and recorded his account.

The investigation, however, went cold, with no one else experiencing anything similar. And I suppose all our field attempts to locate beings could be added to this list...

Alfred Burtoo died on August the thirteenth, nineteen-eighty-six, taking the truth of this peculiar story with him. He left behind a legacy built on mystery.

After his death, Alfred's wife was asked whether he had ever admitted that the whole thing was a hoax.

She reportedly said that it wasn't, and as far as she knew, her husband was always telling the truth - and as any good wife should, she stood by him steadfastly.

Alfred now lives on in immortal memory for all UFO chasers and enthusiasts.

Omar Fowler ensured the case appeared in *Flying Saucer Review* and later in books such as Timothy Good's *Above Top Secret*. Since then, it has featured in countless paranormal publications, becoming part of Aldershot's - my hometown's - folklore.

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Flash forward some years later to my grandfather lying in a care home bed waiting for the end to come - a short while after my grandmother passed away. We were all in agreement that the grief of losing her was more than enough to let the dementia take hold.

The dementia, of course, meant that conversations were like trying to ask for directions from a malfunctioning search engine. Just as you'd start to make progress...

PING!

Subject change.

He was, however, a very easy and cheap day out. You'd barely have to sit beside him for a few minutes before he'd say something like:

"That was a lovely walk in the park today, wasn't it? I do enjoy seeing the swans with you..."

Without ever having gone anywhere.

The other challenge was his lifelong habit of renaming anything he misplaced or lost as a "Whatsname". Whenever he lost his train of thought, the word would surface, but his poor brain could no longer work out which "Whatsname" he was trying to place, speak of or locate.

The interesting part, too, was that his inhibitions had dropped so much that secrets would spill out of him constantly - which, depending on the content, we were usually polite enough to ignore. Life in a care home is already hard on a person trying to retain some dignity, so it was just another part of the care we could give him...

Until, one day, there was a secret I couldn't brush off...

"We never would have found 'em you know..." he muttered meekly, breaking the silence, but not taking his eyes away from the television they were fixed upon. One of his favourite John Wayne films played.

"Them? Who's them?" I asked.

"The whatsname..." he trailed off.

"What whatsname?"

"You know... the little fellas..."

And so began the dementia game of twenty questions to discover the truth of the ever mystical "whatsname"

"Which little fellas?" I pressed.

"You know... those little buggers that were down at the canal..."

"The fishermen?" I was a little confused...

"Nooooooooo... them ones from up there..." he pointed up.

Suddenly, I got a little spark from my youth. Had it really been eleven years since our days of chasing and speaking of aliens?

"Oh... *them*... At the Basingstoke Canal?" I smiled. His memories of us were fading so often that, when he remembered something tangible, it felt like he was back with us again.

The thought was already starting to leave the space behind his eyes, so I gave him a light nudge with my elbow.

"Go on then... the aliens... what do you mean? You don't think we would have found them?" I asked.

His eyes became alive once more, and a cheeky cheshire smile landed on his slightly purpling lips.

"That's the ones... Yeah, well, you see, he made it all up..."

My heart bounced for a moment.

"He did? And who is that?"

"You know... whatsname..."

"Alfred?"

"Yeah, that's him" he wagged his finger to confirm the correct choice.

I was taken aback. All those trips, and he hadn't once revealed that the man's story we had been chasing had been bullshit...

"So... how do you know he made it all up?" I inquired.

"Well... I knew him. He told me... We used to drink together. He was always doing it, you know? Telling tall tales for attention, our Fred..."

"Alfred?" I confirmed.

"Yeah, that's him..." he nodded, and wagged his finger again.

He paused for one of his favourite lines of the film... miming along with the words.

I leaned forward, passing him his tea, which he took gingerly.

"Why would he make it up? Other than attention... well, you could say anything for that... why aliens?"

"BEER!" he spluttered through his tea, as he got a little too excited.

"Liked a drink he did..." He started to chuckle, as he wrestled with a wet cough.

"heh heh... He used to say to me, Peter, I am a genius... and when he said the next bit, I kind of agreed with him..."

I was smiling like a kid, regardless of the fact that one of my favourite memories might have been built on a fabrication.

He continued.

"They buy me a beer to either hear the story, or they buy me one to shut up... either way, I haven't bought myself a pint in years..."

He burst out laughing. It was infectious, and I couldn't help but join him.

He went quiet after that, and within minutes he was down for one of his medicated naps...

He passed away a couple of weeks later. We didn't get a chance to speak of it all again. He left me with memories I hold dear, but also with a mystery, just like Alfred.

Were there ever aliens at this blasted Canal? Or was it all just a fib from a man to procure tall glasses of ale?

I suspect I'll never truly know...

My grandfather could have been spinning the yarn himself - perhaps it was his way of easing my disappointment, talking to ten-year-old me rather than the twenty-one-year-old sat by his bedside.

The whole event is another Schrödinger's cat at this point. All of it could be fiction; all of it could be a clever hoax. But there is now so much hired bullshit muddying the water that the true history is impossible to know - and those who truly know it are dead and gone...

Regardless of the truth, the story will always be real in some way. A story this good demands to be told, with the story itself slowly becoming more fact than fiction in its retelling...

Stories always survive us. Time laces them with distance, allowing the fantastic to bloom spectacularly in the margins of speculation.

History, in a way, is just someone's bullshit that survived long enough to acquire footnotes...

And thanks to my grandfather's end-of-life confession, my name and story shall now be attached to Alfred's - even if that confession was bullshit. I can now proudly tell people that my grandfather may have known the truth behind one of Hampshire's most famous alien encounters all along...

The truth is indeed out there, but you'll find it next to a storyteller sat behind a tall, frosted glass of ale...

I suggest you smell the hops and remain sceptical...

Doc

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