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200

9th November 1992

Registered file number

Registered file number
D/sec(AS)/12/6
Part No.

Part No. A

- 1. Attention is drawn to the notes on the inside flap**
- 2. Enter notes of related files on page 2 of this jacket.**

DIVISION/ESTABLISHMENT/UNIT/BR

$$\text{Sec}(AS)2a$$

SUBJECT

Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs)

Alleged UFO incident

Crash & Lightning F6 - 8 Sep 70

[illegible]

FOR DRO USE ONLY

Review date

SENT OUT DATE-

Ex1 Section 40

From DINF0(EXP)R2

28/04/04



M2

A full copy of this file was released into the public domain on 26 July 2004 following a request made by Section 40 [REDACTED] under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Personal data was removed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Further details of this request can be found on D/DAS/64/3 Part AB Enclosure 31.

Section 40 [REDACTED]

DAS-FOI

27 July 2004

M1

Following a request from the BBC for information for a regional programme they were making featuring the loss of Captain William Shaffner in 1970, the Aircraft Accident Report at Enclosure 1 of this file was released to the sons of Captain Shaffner who were taking part in the programme. The Air Historical Branch also released a copy of the Accident Card, some photographs of the aircraft and a transcript of the Radio Transmission between the aircraft and the ground controller.

The programme 'Inside Out' was transmitted on 16th September 2002 and the MOD received two requests from members of the public for copies of the Accident Report featured in the programme. With the agreement of the Defence Aviation Safety Centre (DASC) and DAS-Sec a copy of the Report and Accident Card were released under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information in November 2002. File D/DAS/64/3 Enclosures 27 and 31 refer.

Aircraft Accident Reports are not normally sent to the Public Record Office, but due to the public interest in this particular case, Information (Exploitation) Records 1 have earmarked a copy for preservation in the PRO in the near future.

A copy of the Accident Card, not originally part of this file has been placed behind this minute for reference.

Section 40

Directorate of Air Staff (Lower Airspace) Operations & Policy 1
Room 6/73 Metropole Building

6 November 2002

LIGHTNING	F-6	XS-894	SSON	11GP STR	BINBROOK	8-9-70	W/O
AIRCRAFT TYPE	MARK	NUMBER	UNIT	CMD	BASE	DATE	SEVERITY

FATAL NARRATIVE OF EVENTS										
	TIME	PLACE	NO	TIME	HEIGHT	SPEED	NO	TIME	HEIGHT	SPEED
TAKE OFF	2130A	BINBROOK	1	2142A	170 Ft	Kts	3		75	Kts
LANDING			2	APPROX	Ft	Kts	4		Ft	Kts

I was USAF exchange officer, classified as "limited combat ready" & was permitted to participate in a Tactical Evaluation exercise. At 1834Z he was called to readiness & ordered to scramble at 1947Z. He was directed back to dispersal shortly after taxiing out. After some delay he asked the ground crew to expedite the turn-around servicing because he had been informed that he would be scrambled as soon as his APC was ready. He started up before the servicing was complete & without signing the turn-around certificate & taxied out at 2025Z. The turn-around board holding the certificate fell off the APC as he entered the APC. APC took off carrying live missiles in contravention of the Air Staff Orders applicable to the type of sortie ordered. The P was vectored onto a Shackleton APC flying as a low speed target at 1500' off the Yorkshire coast, with the requirement to shadow and in a certain eventuality to shepherd it as it approached the coast. The P lacked training in these tactics. He announced visual contact with the target but no further message was received. His APC was subsequently discovered to have crashed into the sea from which it was salvaged almost intact. The body of the P has not been recovered.

Major Cause: Ground Crews Error

SPEC. REC.	SEE ATTACHED CARD					
1022 ACTION						
VS. STATE						
F765B	F765C	F1669	F412	RM. B. 66	CHECKED	CASUALTY INDEX

LIGHTNING	FL	X3 194	55PN	115	BINBROOK	1.9.70	FATAL
AIRCRAFT TYPE	MARK	NUMBER	UNIT	CMD	BASE	DATE	SEVERITY

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS										
	TIME	PLACE	NO	TIME	HEIGHT	SPEED	NO	TIME	HEIGHT	SPEED
TAKE OFF			1		Ft	Kts	3		Ft	Kts
LANDING			2		Ft	Kts	4		Ft	Kts

A combination of a difficult task as presented
 circumstances + lack of training in the low speed
 Visident + shadowing techniques, led to a situation
 where the pilot failed to monitor the height of his
 a/c whilst slowing down + requiring him to get
 and that he had inadvertently flown his a/c into
 the sea. The pilot had attempted to recover the
 situation by selecting release which failed to take
 effect, with the a/c then skimming on the water.
 He had then initiated an ejection which was
 unsuccessful because of the interruption of the
 sequence by the failure of the canopy to jettison.
 He then bravely abandoned the a/c but because he
 has not been found, he was presumed to have
 drowned. During or after his escape. The light
 gun strike on the canopy of a cartridge occurred
 because of negligent sensing in that the firing unit
 was incorrectly seated because of damaged screw
 threads. Recommendations + comments on orders,
 instructions + the training syllabus, concerning low speed
 Visident + the shadowing and shadowing techniques

SPEC. REC.						
F.1022 ACTION						
MODS. STATE						
FS 3a	F765B	F765C	F1669	F412	FIN. REV.	CHECKED
ACTION						

Registered File Disposal Form

MOD Form 262F
(Revised 10/97)

FILE TITLE: (Main Heading - Secondary Heading - Tertiary Heading etc)

UFO - Alleged UFO incident
Crash of Lightning F6 - 8 Sep 70

Reference:
(Prefix and Number):

D/SEC CAS) / 12 / 6

Part: A

PROTECTIVE MARKING (including caveats & descriptors):

UNC

Date of last enclosure:

1/3/94

Date closed:

1/3/94

PART 1. DISPOSAL SCHEDULE RECOMMENDATION (To be completed when the file is closed)

Destroy after _____ years ☒

Forward to CS(RM) after _____ years ☐

No recommendation ☐

FOR CS(RM) USE ONLY

Date of 1st review

Date of 2nd review

Forward Destruction Date

Reviewer's
Signature: _____

Reviewer's
Signature: _____

PART 2. BRANCH REVIEW

(To be completed not later than 4 years after the date of the last enclosure)
(Delete as appropriate)

a. Of no further administrative value and not worthy of permanent preservation. DESTROY IMMEDIATELY (Remember that TOP SECRET and Codeword material cannot be destroyed locally and must be forwarded to CS(RM)). ☒

b. (i) To be retained for _____ years (from date of last enclosure) for the following reason(s):

LEGAL ☒

CONTRACTUAL ☐

FINANCE/AUDIT ☐

DIRECTORATE POLICY ☐

DEFENCE POLICY + OPERATIONS ☒

ORIGINAL COMMITTEE PAPERS ☐

MAJOR EQUIPMENT PROJECT ☐

OTHER (Specify) ☐

PPQ = 100

(Continued overleaf)

DON'T BELIEVE



EVERYTHING YOU READ !

An article was carried in the Grimsby Evening Telegraph recently; it consisted of a full page spread on 2 consecutive days and concerned the loss of Lightning F6 XS894 on 8 Sep 70, flown by a USAF exchange pilot, Capt Schaffner. These are some extracts from those pages:

Headline: MYSTERY OF A JET AND ITS 20,400MPH "TARGET"

The aircraft, XS894, disappeared into what is fast becoming one of the greatest aviation puzzles of all time. The ditching was witnessed by the crew of a Shackleton aircraft but no trace of Capt Schaffner was ever found. More than a month later the wreckage was found by RN divers. The cockpit was empty and the canopy closed.

On this particular night, a radar operator at Saxa Vord picked up an unidentified aircraft between the Shetlands and Norway flying at 630mph at 37,000ft. It increased speed to 900mph and climbed to 44,000ft and QRA at Leuchars was scrambled. The contact then turned through 180 degrees and disappeared from the screens. Its speed was estimated in the region of 17,400mph. During the next hour, the mystery contact reappeared several times.

The contact was being monitored by the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System at Fylingdales and the information was being relayed to the North American Air Defence (NORAD) Command at Cheyenne Mountain. Strategic Air Command HQ at Omaha ordered its B52 bombers into the air. A request was made from a high level within NORAD, through HQ STC, for RAF Binbrook to send Capt Schaffner to join the Lightnings looking for the mystery contact. By now, the contact was flying parallel to the East Coast 90 miles east of Whitby at 530mph at 6,100ft - an ideal interception by a Binbrook Lightning. What follows is drawn from what I have been told is the official transcript of the conversation

between Schaffner and Staxton Wold:

Schaffner: There is ... blueish light. Very bright. It's a conical shape. It's like a large soccer ball. It's like it's made of glass. Contact in descent. About 70ft ... it's levelled out again. It's turning, coming straight for me, am taking evasive action, I can hardly....

Staxton: 94? Come in 94, are you receiving.

A radar operator who had been tracking the Lightning and the mystery object watched in disbelief. The 2 blips merged into one, decelerating rapidly from over 500mph until they became stationary 6,000ft over the North Sea 140 miles out from Alnwick. Shortly afterwards the single blip separated into 2, one maintaining its southerly heading at 600mph, the other turning to head north-west and vanishing at a speed later calculated to be around 20,400mph. While all this was going on a Shackleton was ordered to hold station around Flamborough Head. Then Staxton Wold re-established contact with Capt Schaffner.

Staxton: 94 what is your condition?

Schaffner: Not too good, I feel kinda dizzy. I can see shooting stars. The compass is useless, can you bring me in GCI?.

Staxton: Er... Hold station, 94 over.

HQ STC had instructed Staxton Wold to request Schaffner to ditch his Lightning off Flamborough. It appears the reason for the decision to ditch was a fear that the Lightning had somehow become "contaminated" during its mystery interception over the North Sea. The Shackleton watched the Lightning ditch and called for a helicopter. The crew noticed the canopy up but could not see the pilot. On their next pass, they called that the aircraft was sinking fast but the canopy had been closed again. The search for the pilot involved the Shackleton, a Whirlwind from Leconfield and several lifeboats but the pilot was not found. On 7 Oct 70, divers from HMS Keddleston inspected the wreckage and said that Capt Schaffner's body was still in the cockpit. But when the wreckage was brought to the surface, there was no trace of Capt Schaffner. Just an empty cockpit.

The wreckage was taken in some secrecy to RAF Binbrook. The ejector seat seemed to be "wrong" and there was a suspicion among the investigators that it was not the one fitted to the aircraft when it took off. At the end of the day the investigation team was told that as nothing useful had been discovered, their job was over. They were all called into the main office at Farnborough and told in no uncertain terms that they were not to discuss any aspect of the ditching. The reason was simple - national security.

That dramatic story is how a major regional newspaper described the loss of one of our Lightnings. The Lightning was popular with the Humberside population and this article would undoubtedly have attracted interest. In contrast, this is the RAF's version of events:

The pilot of the accident aircraft was a USAF exchange officer who had completed 2 tours on the USAF F102 all weather fighter. He had accumulated 121 hours on the Lightning, of which 18 were at night. He had been declared Limited Combat Ready after only 8 weeks on the Sqn; this unusually short period of time was based on his previous experience as well as his performance thus far on the Lightning. The limitation on his operational status was partially due to the requirement to complete all the stages of visident profiles; at the time of the accident, he was qualified in 2 of the 3 phases of visident, which meant that he would be capable of carrying out shadowing and shepherding tasks, only if he was in visual contact with the target.

The Sqn was participating in a Taceval at RAF Binbrook and the Sqn Cdr had authorised this pilot to participate, in the belief that he would not be involved in a shadowing or shepherding mission. However, unbeknown to the Stn or Sqn, the Taceval team had just changed the exercise scenario from normal interceptions to shadowing or shepherding on slow speed low-flying targets. The targets were Shackletons flying at 160kts at the minimum authorised height of 1,500ft.

After maintaining one hour at cockpit readiness, the pilot was scrambled. While he was taxiing, the scramble was cancelled and he returned to the dispersal, ordering fuel only and no turnaround servicing. This was contrary to standing instructions and the engineering officer ordered a full turnaround. The turnaround was delayed and, during this delay, the pilot was warned that he would be scrambled as soon as he was ready. He told the groundcrew to expedite the servicing but started his engines and taxied before the servicing was complete. He got airborne at 2030Z.

The pilot climbed to FL 100 and was handed over to GCI; he was then given a shadowing task against a 160kt target at 1,500ft. At a range of 28nm, he was told to accelerate to M0.95 in order to expedite the take over from another Lightning. He called that he was in contact with the lights but would have to manoeuvre to slow down; his voice sounded strained as though he was being affected by 'g'. His aircraft was seen by the other Lightning pilot; it

appeared to be about 2,000yds astern and 500-1,000ft above the Shackleton, in a port turn. The Shackleton crew then saw the aircraft, apparently very low. Shortly afterwards, the Lightning pilot failed to acknowledge instructions and emergency procedures were initiated. A search by the Shackleton, and a further air/sea search the following day, failed to detect any trace of the aircraft or pilot.

The wreckage was located nearly 2 months later with surprisingly little damage. The canopy was attached, but not closed, and there was no sign of the pilot. The aircraft appeared to have struck the sea at a low speed, planed on the surface and come to rest comparatively slowly.

The ejection seat handle had been pulled to the full extent allowed by the interrupter link in the main gun sear. (The interrupter link ensures that the seat does not fire unless the canopy has gone). The canopy gun sear had been withdrawn but the cartridge had not been struck with sufficient force to fire it (during servicing, the firing unit had been incorrectly seated because of damaged screw threads). The canopy had been opened normally, the QRB was undone, as was the PEC, and the PSP lanyard had been released from the life jacket.

It was concluded that the difficult task, carried out in rushed circumstances, combined with a lack of training in this profile, led to the pilot failing to monitor his height while slowing down. He had inadvertently flown into the sea but had attempted to recover the situation by selecting reheat; this was ineffective with the tail skimming the water. He attempted to eject, but this was unsuccessful due to the canopy failing to jettison. He then manually abandoned the aircraft, but was never found. He was, therefore, presumed to have drowned during or after his escape.

Wing Commander Spry says

There are a number of points which are raised by this article, the first of which is do not believe all you read in the newspapers! Among the serious points to consider are the distractions and stress caused by the false scramble and interrupted turnaround, as well as the supervisory failure of allowing a LCR pilot to participate in a Taceval by night. Close supervision during exercise conditions, in a single seat environment, is almost impossible. Minimum qualifications are laid down for a reason!

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DPR/325/1/1

10 Mar 93

Dep Hd AHB(RAF)

Copy to:

Sec(AS)2 - **Section 40**
DPO(RAF)

LOSS OF LIGHTNING XS 894

Reference:

A. D/AHB(RAF)8/10 dated 9 Mar 93 (not to DPO(RAF)).

1. Reference asked for comment on your draft reply to Sky TV.
I am entirely happy with your form of words.

2. Perhaps 'RAF Bimbroke' (sic) exists on some alternative
Earth?

Section 40

DDPR(RAF)

Section 40

NOA,

LOOSE MINUTE

D/AHB(RAF)8/10

9 Mar 93

Draft cleared subject to
amendments - see attached.
Also advised that we believe
the pilot's name was Schaffner.

Section 40

11/3

DDPR(RAF)

Sec AS 2 - fac Section 40

LOSS OF LIGHTNING XS 894

Ref A: D/DPR(RAF)325/1/1 LM dated 27 Jan 93

Ref B: D/AHB(RAF)8/27/1 LM dated 1 Feb 93

1. You will remember, I am sure, our recent exchange at Refs A & B concerning the loss of Capt Schafner USAF in XS894. Unfortunately SKY Television are doing a documentary on UFOs, and they picked up on the Evening Telegraph story and have asked me to supply them with further information (see attached). I thought it best that you both be aware of SKY's interest in this aircraft, and indeed the subject in general.

2. I should also be grateful if you would both indicate that you are content that my attached draft reply to Section 40 does not give any hostages to fortune. Sorry to inflict this on you, but we must do our best to bring SKY back down to earth!!

Section 40

Section 40

Dep Hd AHB(RAF)

Section 40

SKY
TELEVISION

3 March, 1993

Dear **Section 40**

One of my colleagues spoke on the phone (Wed) about a television documentary we're making for SKY TV about UFO's.

I was particularly interested in the case of the English Electric Lightning (XS894) that was ditched into the North Sea on the 8th September 1970 after being scrambled from RAF Bimbroke in Lincolnshire.

I'd be grateful if you could supply me with any information about the incident.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

Producer, SKY NEWS FEATURES

DRAFT

Section 40

Sky News Features
Sky Television

Section 40

Our Reference
D/AHB(RAF)8/10

LOSS OF LIGHTNING XS 894

Thank you for your letter of 3 March 1993 concerning the accident to the above aircraft and the death of Captain W O Schafner USAF. ~~Surviving Ministry of Defence records indicate that the aircraft took off from RAF Binbrook at approximately 2025 hours Greenwich Mean Time to take part in a Tactical Evaluation Exercise involving the interception, shadowing and shepherding of low speed targets.~~

The facts surrounding this accident are

The target aircraft in this case was a Royal Air Force Shackleton maritime reconnaissance aircraft flying at 1500 feet off the north east coast. Capt Schafner was vectored onto the target and reported that he was in visual contact, but not further messages were received and it was subsequently established that the aircraft had crashed into the sea. Capt Schafner apparently abandoned the aircraft after it hit the sea, but despite a prolonged search he was never found and is presumed to have drowned.

~~The accidental loss of aircraft during demanding manoeuvres at low level over the sea is not unknown.~~ There is absolutely no evidence of any "unidentified aircraft" having been encountered, nor is there any reason to suppose that there is any UFO connection with what remains a tragic accident.

DRAFT

THE FATAL FLIGHT OF FOXTROT 94



TONY DODD

THE FATAL FLIGHT OF FOXTROT 94

Saxa Vord was one of a chain of British radar stations who's task was to scan the skies and guard against intrusion from unidentified aircraft approaching from the North Sea or the sensitive 'Iceland Gap'. The year was 1970 when the cold war was at its height with Russian aircraft making regular flights into the North Atlantic to test reaction from NATO fighters.

At 8.17pm. on the night of September 8th 1970, a radar operator at Saxa Vord picked up a contact of an unidentified aircraft over the North Sea between the Shetlands and Norway.

The contact was monitored for several minutes at a steady speed of 630mph at 37,000ft on a south-westerly heading. The contact was then seen to turn 30 degrees to head due south with its speed increasing to 900mph and its altitude lifting to 44,000ft.

In accordance with normal procedure Saxa Vord flashed a message to the *quick-reaction-flight* at RAF Leuchars on the east coast of Scotland. Two *Lightning* interceptors were scrambled within minutes and headed out across the North Sea. So far it had been a routine scramble, but it was then that the radar plotters on the Shetland Isles saw something on their screens which left them amazed. The contact which had been travelling at speeds consistent with Russian warplanes had turned through 180 degrees and within seconds had disappeared from the screens. Later they calculated the speed of the object at 17,400mph.

During the next hour the mystery contact reappeared several times, and each time the *Lightnings* were sent to investigate, but the object turned and disappeared again.

By this time two *F4 Phantoms* of the US Air Force had been scrambled from Keflavik in Iceland and with their sophisticated radar were able to track the intruder themselves. As they attempted to close on the object they found that they had no more success than the *Lightnings*.

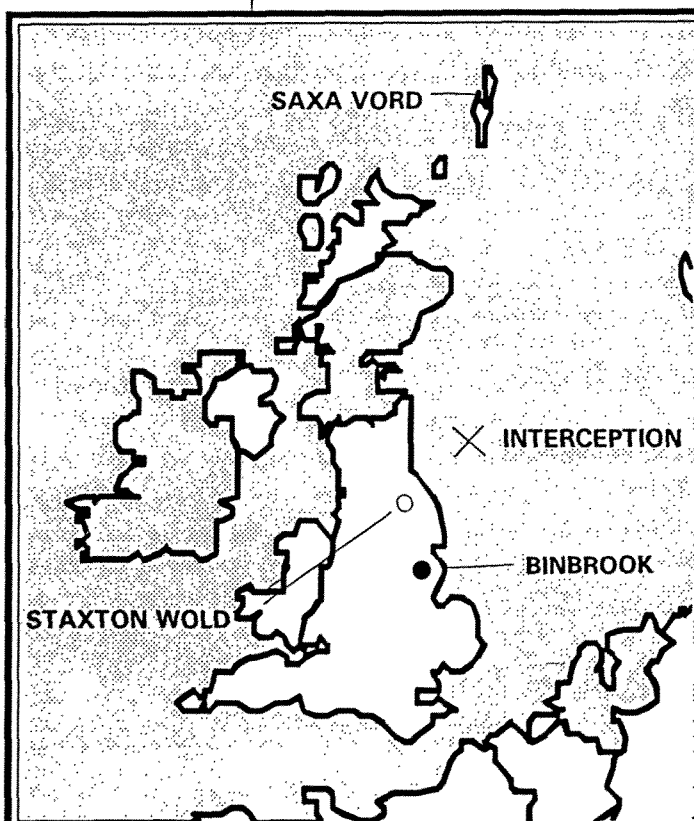
The cat and mouse game was now causing alarm to NATO commanders. The alert had reached such a level that the contact was being monitored by the Ballistic Missile Early Warning station at Fylingdales, also with a second BMEWS in Greenland. The North American Air Defence Network at Cheyenne Mountain and the US Detection and Tracking Centre at Colorado Springs also became involved in the incident.

During this time the *Lightnings* and *Phantoms* made repeated attempts to get close to the object, but as they approached it disappeared off the radar screens. Eventually the *Lightnings* were ordered back to base whilst the *Phantoms* continued to patrol.

At 9.39pm radar controllers picked up the contact again. This time its speed was decelerating to 1,300mph which was almost the limit of the *Lightnings* and *Phantoms*. It was at this time holding an altitude of 18,000ft and heading southwest, off the northern tip of Denmark.

Two more *Lightnings* were scrambled from RAF Leuchars to patrol northeast of Aberdeen and a further two from RAF Coltishall in Norfolk. The contact was now between these two lines of fighters. While this was taking place, Fylingdales were informed that Strategic Air Command HQ at Omaha, Nebraska, was ordering its B52 bombers into the air.

The order could have only come from the



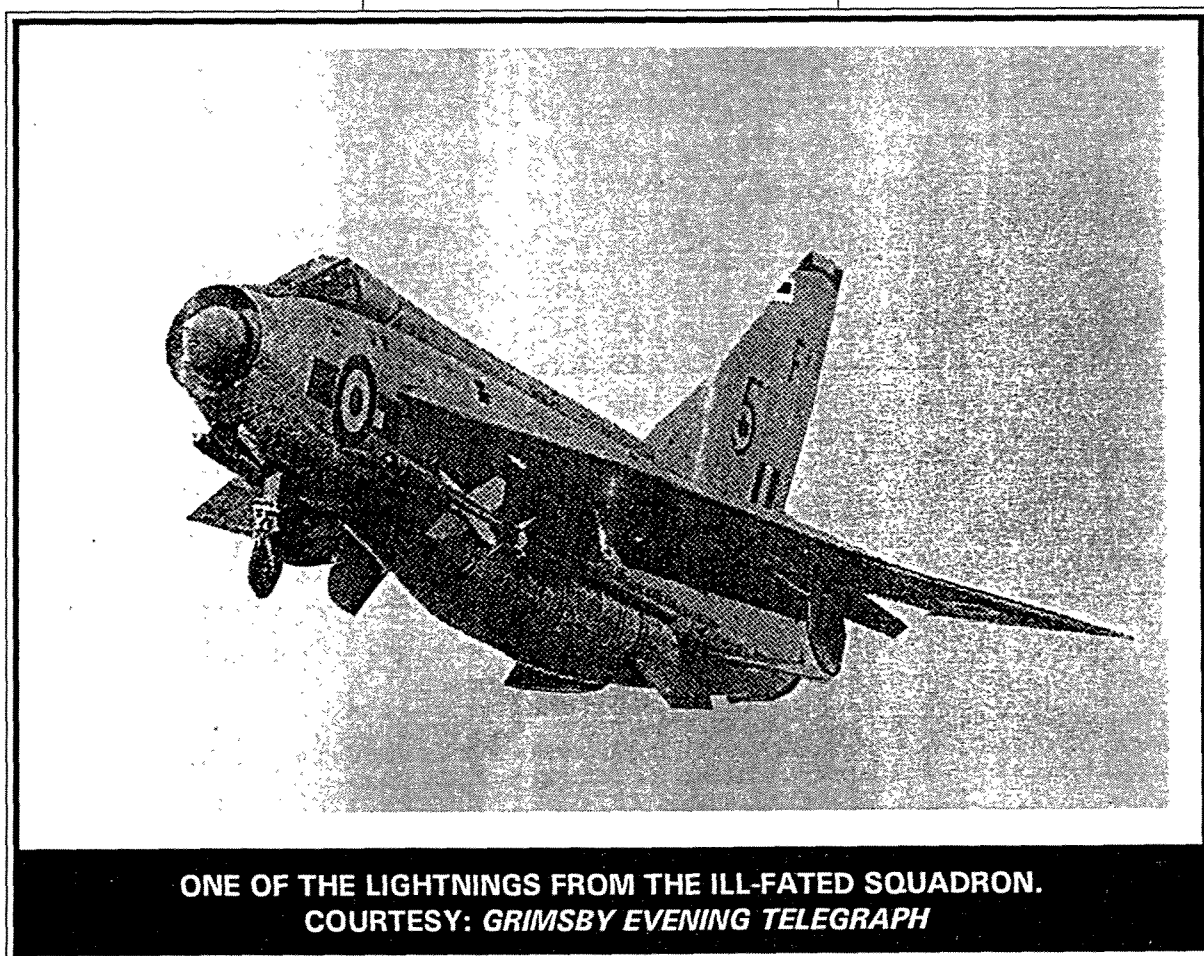
highest level. What had started as a routine sighting of a Russian aircraft had now reached the **White House** and presumably **President Richard Nixon**.

At this time **NORAD** was informed that a US pilot of great experience was presently on an exchange visit with the RAF at Binbrook, the north Lincolnshire fighter base near Grimsby. Enquires were made and it was discovered that the pilot was on station, and by coincidence, '*Flight Available*'.

out one aircraft, flown by Captain Schaffner. The Americans wanted one of their own men present when the object was eventually cornered.

Captain Schaffner was sitting in the crew room of 5 Squadron when the call came from High Wycombe. Schaffner was still in his flying suit, after returning earlier that evening from a training sortie in one of the squadron's aircraft. When the call came Schaffner ran out of the building across the runway towards two *Lightnings* which were standing virtually

One of the men on the ground crew at the time was Brian Mann of Grimsby, who was driving one of the fuel bowsers. He remembers XS894 being refuelled at a rate of 150 gallons per minute, when suddenly the aircraft engines started. He said, "*The windows of the tanker almost went in, I took off the hoses and got out of the way.*" Mr. Mann remembered Captain Schaffner disregarding the ground marshal, who was the eyes and ears of the pilot on the ground, as he swung the *Lightning* round.



At 9.45pm a request was made from the highest level within **NORAD** through Strike Command's UK Headquarters at High Wycombe, for RAF Binbrook to send **Captain William Schaffner** to join the *Lightnings* search for the mystery object. By this time four *Lightnings*, two *Phantoms* and three tankers were already airborne and they were joined by a Shackleton from Kinloss which was ordered to patrol on a north-south heading at 3,000ft 10 miles from the east coast.

Binbrook's QRA *Lightnings* were being held in reserve but it was decided to send

ready for flight. One XS894, was in the process of having its fuel tanks topped up. Schaffner climbed the ladder into the aircraft and hauled himself into the cockpit. He waved aside the ground crews who were expected to carry out pre-flight checks, ordered the refuelling to stop and failed to sign the regulation form stating that he was happy with the aircraft.

The aircraft was armed with two *Red Top* air-to-air missiles, one was armed, the other a dummy. The aircraft's guns had enough 30mm canon shells for a six-second burst.

At 10.06pm the aircraft blasted off Binbrook's runway into the night sky. Those on the ground saw it disappear with a sheet of flame from its twin tail pipes as it headed out over the North Sea.

By now the mystery contact which had led to five *Lightnings*, two *Phantoms*, three tankers and a Shackleton being scrambled was being tracked by radar controllers at **Staxton Wold**, which stands on high ground overlooking Scarborough. The contact was flying parallel to the east coast 90 miles east of Whitby, at a speed of 530mph and an altitude of 6,100ft.

What follows next is drawn from information given to the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* newspaper who broke the story and was reported as being an official transcript of the conversation between Captain Schaffner and the radar station at Staxton Wold.

Schaffner: I have visual contact, repeat visual contact. Over.

Staxton: Can you identify aircraft type?

Schaffner: Negative, nothing recognisable, no clear outlines. There is bluish

Staxton: Is it part of the object or independent? Over.

Schaffner: Negative, nothing.

Staxton: Can you assess the rate...?

Schaffner: Contact in descent, gentle. Am going with it... 50 no about 70... it's levelled out again.

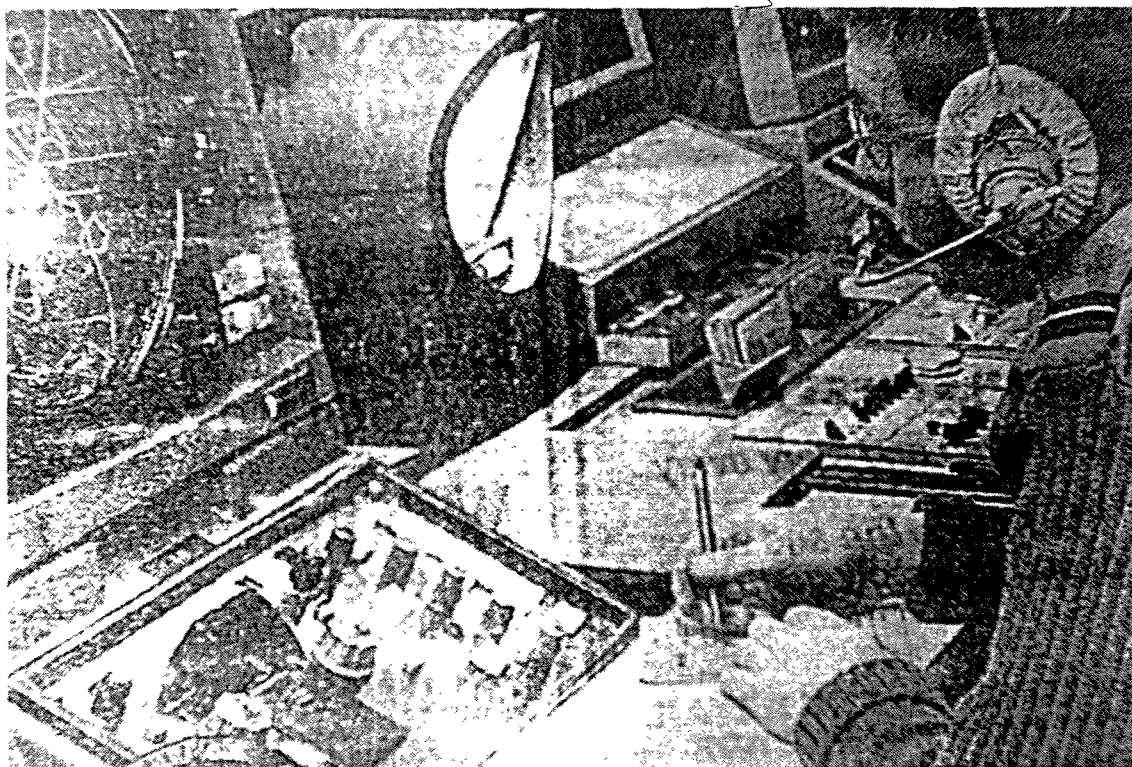
Staxton: Is the ball object still with it. Over.

Schaffner: Affirmative. It's not actually connected... maybe a magnetic attraction to

North Sea.

Two and a half minutes after the blip came to a halt it started accelerating rapidly to 600mph and climbing to 9000ft, heading south towards Staxton.

Shortly afterwards, the single blip separated into two. One maintaining it's southerly heading, somewhat erratically, at about 600mph and descending slowly, the other turning through 180 degrees to head north westerly and vanishing at a speed later calculated to be around 20,400mph.



TRACKING THE UNIDENTIFIED OBJECTS
COURTESY: GRIMSBY EVENING TELEGRAPH

light. Hell that's bright... very bright.

Staxton: Are your instruments functioning 94. Check compass. Over.

Schaffner: Affirmative, GCI I'm along side of it now, maybe 600ft off my... It's a conical shape, jeeze that's bright, it hurts my eyes to look at it for more than a few seconds.

Staxton: How close are you now?

Schaffner: About 400ft he's still in my three o'clock. Hey wait... there's something else. It's like a large soccer ball... It's like it's made of glass.

the conical shape. There's a haze of light Ye'ow... it's within that haze. Wait a second, it's turning... coming straight for me... shit... am taking evasive action... a few... I can hardly...

Staxton: Come in 94. Foxtrot 94 are you receiving? Over, come in.

As the controller lost contact with Captain Schaffner, a radar operator who had been tracking the Lightning and the mystery object watched in amazement. The two blips on the screen representing the aircraft and it's quarry, slowly merged into one. Decelerating rapidly from 500mph until they became stationary 6000ft above the

At this time a Shackleton which had been on patrol off the Firth of Forth was ordered to hold station around Flamborough Head. Then Staxton Wold re-established contact with Captain Schaffner.

Schaffner: GCI... are you receiving? Over.

Staxton: Affirmative 94, loud and clear. What is your condition?

Schaffner: Not too good. I can't think what has happened... I feel kind of dizzy... I can see shooting stars.

Staxton: Can you see your instruments? Over.

Schaffner: Affirmative, but er... the compass is u/s...

Staxton: Foxtrot 94, turn 043 degrees. Over.

Schaffner: Er... all directional instruments are out. Repeat u/s. Over.

Staxton: Roger 94, execute right turn, estimate quarter turn. Over.

Schaffner: Turning now.

Staxton: Come further 94. That's good, is your altimeter functioning? Over.

Schaffner: Affirmative GCI.

Staxton: Descend to 3,500ft. Over.

Schaffner: Roger GCI.

Staxton: What's your fuel state 94? Over.

Schaffner: About 30 per cent GCI.

Staxton: That's what we calculated. Can you tell us what happened 94?

Schaffner: I don't know, it came in close... I shut my eyes... I figure I must have blacked out for a few seconds.

Staxton: OK 94. Standby.

At this time the Shackleton arrived over Flamborough and began circling before XS894 was vectored into the area by Staxton controllers.

Schaffner: Can you bring me in GCI?

Staxton: Er... Hold station, 94. Over... Foxtrot 94 can you ditch the aircraft? Over.

Schaffner: She's handling fine. I can bring her in. Over.

Staxton: Negative 94. I repeat, can you ditch the aircraft? Over.

Schaffner: Yeah... I guess.

Staxton: Standby 94. Over. Oscar 77. Over.

Shackleton 77: Receiving. Over.

Staxton: 94 is ditching. Can you maintain a wide circuit? Over.

Shackleton: Affirmative GCI. Over.

Staxton: Thanks 77. Standby 94 execute ditching procedure at your discretion. Over.

Schaffner: Descending now, GCI. Over.

A period of six to seven minutes elapsed without contact, then suddenly.

Shackleton: He's down GCI. Hell of a splash... he's down in one piece though. Over.

A further two minutes elapsed.

Shackleton: GCI. Over.

Staxton: Receiving you 77. Over.

Shackleton: This is odd GCI, she's sinking fast, but the canopy's closed again.

Staxton: Can you confirm the pilot clear of the aircraft?

Shackleton: He's not in it. We can confirm that. He must be in the water somewhere.

Staxton: Any distress signals or flares? Over.

Shackleton: Negative GCI, we're going round again. Over.

A short time later the Shackleton was back in contact with Staxton Wold.

Shackleton: She's sunk GCI, there's a slight wake where she was, still no sign of the pilot. I say again GCI, we need a chopper fast. Over.

Staxton: A whirlwind's on it's way from Leconfield, are you positive you saw no sign of the pilot. Over.

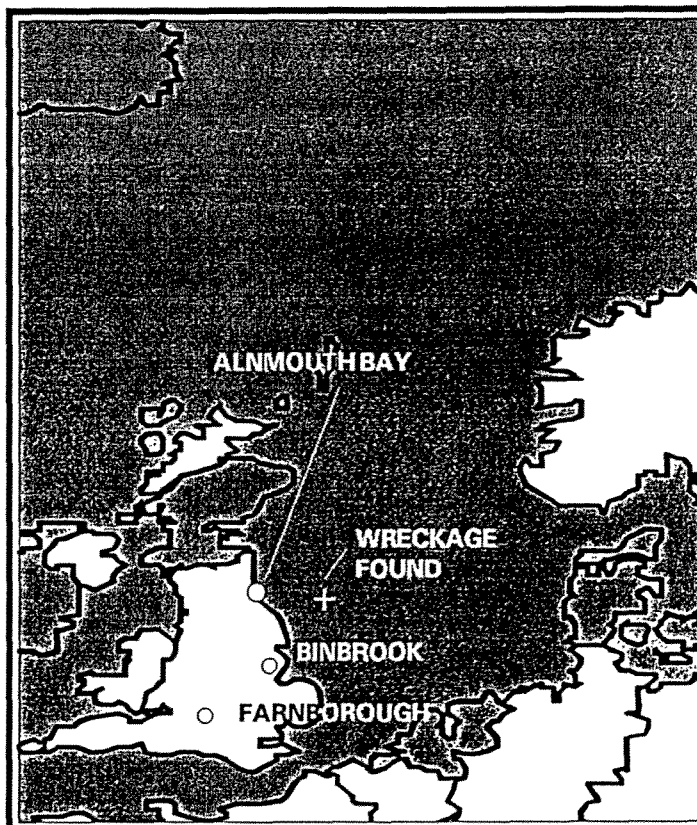
Shackleton: Nothing GCI. The first pass we assumed he was un-strapping. He must have got out as we went round for the second pass, but why shut the canopy? Over.

Staxton: That's what we were thinking. Maintain patrol 77, he must be out there somewhere.

Shackleton: Roger GCI.

A short time later the search and rescue helicopter arrived and a systematic search of the area began. Lifeboats from Bridlington, Filey and Flamborough arrived and joined in the search as the weather began to deteriorate. The search continued overnight and into the next day, without success and without receiving any transmissions from the beacons carried by the pilot and no distress flares were seen at any time.

The following day the Evening Telegraph reported that flares had been seen about 10 miles off shore and the Grimsby trawler



Staxton: Can you see the pilot yet? Over.

Shackleton: Negative, were going round again, pulling a tight one. Over.

Two minutes elapsed.

Shackleton: The canopy's up... she's floating OK... can't see the pilot, we need a chopper out here GCI. No sign of the pilot, where the hell is he?

Staxton: You sure he's not in the water? Check your SABRE receptions. Over. (Note: Sabre was the search and rescue beacon carried by all RAF aircrew)

Shackleton: No SABRE yet, no flares either. Hang on we're going round again.

Ross Kestrel which had been in the area had gone to investigate, but found nothing.

The missing pilot was not found and at that time no wreckage from the aircraft had been located. Three weeks later the *Evening Telegraph* reported that the fuselage of the aircraft had been located on the sea-bed and quoted that the ejector seat was still in the aircraft giving rise to the belief that the body of the pilot was still in the aircraft.

On October 7th, divers from HMS Kiddleston inspected the wreckage and said that Captain Schaffner's body was still in the cockpit. But that was the start of the biggest mystery of all. When the aircraft was brought to the surface and returned to Binbrook, there was no trace of Captain Schaffner, the cockpit was empty.

The wreckage was eventually lifted from the sea some five miles from Flamborough Head and transported in some secrecy to RAF Binbrook.

Air crashes in the North Sea in those days were relatively common and much of the wreckage found its way into Grimsby where the *Evening Telegraph* reporters were on hand to record the event, but not with XS894.

It was also common practice for crashed aircraft to be taken to the MoD Crash Investigation Branch at Farnborough where detailed examination took place in an attempt to find the cause of accidents, but this didn't happen with XS894. Instead, the remains of the aircraft, which were in good condition, were taken straight to Binbrook where it was placed behind shutters in a hangar at the far corner of the base.

The Accident Investigation team from Farnborough arrived at Binbrook in the belief that they were about to start a detailed investigation, one which would lead to a report to the Ministry of Defence to assist with the eventual board of enquiry, but they were in for a surprise.

They were amazed to find that many of the cockpit instruments were missing. These included the E2B compass, voltmeter, standby direction indicator, standby inverter indicator and the complete auxiliary warning panel from the starboard side of the cockpit, below the voltmeter. This was a serious breach of regulations and although the investigation team were told the instruments would be returned shortly, they never were.

The investigators found there was a revolting fusty smell in the cockpit while the whole aircraft still had a slimy feel

to it following its month's immersion in the North Sea.

The ejector seat also seemed to be 'wrong', and there was a suspicion that it was not the original one fitted to the aircraft when it had taken off on its last flight from Binbrook. They were given assurances by the officer commanding 5 Squadron that the seat had not been tampered with, but some of the investigators were not convinced.

Brian McConnell, a former sergeant who was serving at Binbrook at the time of the incident, said that the cartridge on the seat had failed because of faulty installation, but this contradicted the story of the Shackleton crew who stated that they had seen the cockpit open. Had any attempt been made to fire the ejector seat, the cockpit canopy would have blown off. It also comes into conflict with the order Captain Schaffner received instructing him to ditch his aircraft, even though he stated that the *Lightning* was still handling fine with plenty of fuel left.

When the accident investigators were eventually allowed to examine the plane, they were constantly supervised by five civilians, two of whom were Americans. After a few hours, the investigators were told that as nothing useful had been found, "their job was over."

The following day, they were summoned to the main office at Farnborough and told in no uncertain terms that they were not to discuss any aspect of the ditching of XS894, even with their own families. The reason given? "National Security."

No further information has been forthcoming and the investigation file is still classified. When we recently contacted the Ministry of Defence, we were informed that the incident had been an unfortunate accident and that there was nothing related to UFOs being involved.

Enquiries were made through our own channels and we were informed that the aircraft had eventually been taken to Kirkland Air Force Base in America. When questioned about this, the Ministry of Defence spokesman said that this was quite possible and not unusual because the pilot of the aircraft had been American. This in no way inferred that the MoD were admitting that the aircraft had been sent to America.

When the story first appeared in the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph*, Pat Otter,



the Editor and author of the story was amazed by the response he received from the public. He was contacted by a member of the accident investigation team who had been sent to examine the aircraft, (he related the earlier account).

People came forward who reported that they had personally witnessed UFOs in the area on the date of the incident. Two pilots who had been flying *Lightnings* on the night of the incident came forward and gave their own account of the incident.

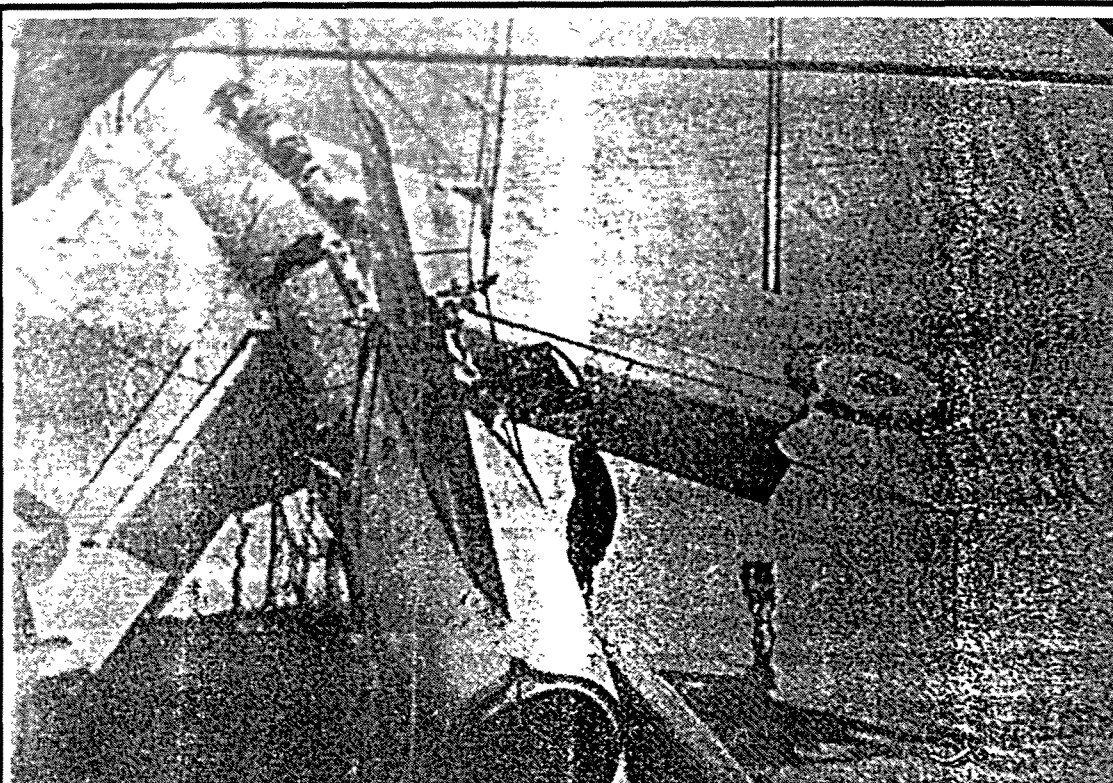
They were Mike Streten, a former 5 Squadron CO, and Furz Lloyd, a very experienced *Lightning* pilot.

airborne early warning Shackleton from 8 Squadron based at Lossiemouth. A crew member reported that he had last seen the navigation lights of the *Lightning* passing to the rear and below his aircraft. The *Lightning* pilot, Capt. William Schaffner was an experienced USAF pilot who had recently joined 5 Squadron. Immediately following the pilot's failure to acknowledge radio transmissions from both the Shackleton and ground control a search was initiated.

"No trace was found and the immediate search was called off for the night. The following morning, a comprehensive search was mounted, but no wreckage, oil slicks or other tell tale signs of the missing pilot were found. It was not until two months later that

"From my own flying experience night flying over the North Sea, with stars above and lights of fishing boats below, disorientation affected all pilots from time to time.

"The evidence indicated that Capt. Schaffner had most likely suffered from this since the only way the aircraft would have hit the sea without breaking up was from hitting it at a slow speed and at a very shallow glance angle, most probably planing over it as he rapidly decelerated. It is a matter of fact that the only way the canopy could be opened and remain with the aircraft was if the aircraft was doing less than 150 Knots or so. Therefore the most likely situation that the pilot found himself in was the nightmare of having hit



**THE WRECKAGE OF THE LIGHTNING AIRCRAFT RETRIEVED
COURTESY: GRIMSBY EVENING TELEGRAPH**

Mike Streten stated:

"On the night of the loss of Foxtrot 94, September 8th 1970. I was night flying with 23 Squadron, based at Leuchars. I remember the initial report of the loss of the aircraft well; at that stage I only knew that the pilot was missing and I knew that Binbrook was undergoing its annual Tactical Evaluation. The immediate facts we were able to glean on that fateful night were that the pilot had been shadowing an

a Royal Navy mine sweeper found the aircraft virtually intact at the bottom of the sea. :

"I remember the reports on the aircraft well, the aircraft was effectively in one piece. What was very unusual, however, was that the canopy was still attached to the aircraft and all the ejector seat straps and the seat dinghy were still in the aircraft. There was no trace of the pilot whatsoever.

the sea while trying to recover from slow speed situation.

"With the aircraft on the sea and sinking rapidly, the quickest way out would have been to open the canopy, unstrap and disconnect the seat dinghy lanyard thereby relying on the life jacket for floatation and subsequently for the manual activation of the SABRE emergency beacon (contained

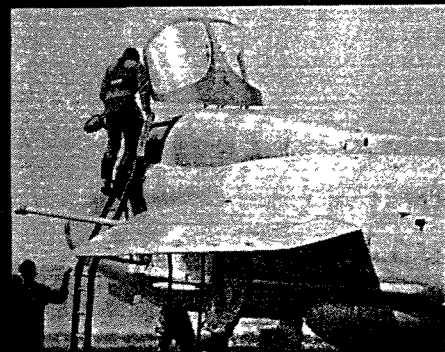
CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

Around the time of the incident involving XS894 many reports of UFOs were being received by the local police and coast guards in the Bridlington area. The following are two such reports. Mrs. Jill Cooper of Bridlington informed me that she remembers her sighting as if it had been yesterday.

"She stated that 20 years ago she had been working in her kitchen when her four-year-old son who was playing in the back garden, came running into the house very excited insisting that she go out into the garden to see the strange objects in the sky. She said: 'When I got outside I could see bright things in the sky, but it wasn't until I got my binoculars that I could see six saucer-shaped objects. They were metallic silver in colour and at the centre of each of them were orange swirling flames.' She stated that each of the objects were approximately three inches in diameter at arms length. She estimates that she was no more than half-a-mile from the hovering objects. She watched them for approximately five minutes, but returned into the house to answer the telephone. On the night of September 8th 1970, a couple and their daughter were waking their dog along a coastal path at Almouth Bay, Northumberland.

"This was almost opposite the point over the North Sea where Schaffner made his interception, when they saw and heard something strange:

'We had been walking for approximately 10 minutes when we heard a high pitched humming noise.' "They later told the MoD



PILOT BOARDING LIGHTNING

personnel... 'The dog kept cocking her head to one side and growling. It seemed impossible to tell from which direction the noise was coming, it seemed everywhere. It lasted for about 10 - 15 seconds.

'About five minutes later the eastern sky lit up rather like sheet lightning, only it took

about 10 seconds to die down again. Over the following three minutes this happened many times, but it was only visible for a second or two at a time. It appeared similar to the Northern Lights. The whole spectacle was completely silent. After two or three minutes, there was another flare up of the sheet lightning.'

"The family called in at the local Police Station to report what they had seen and heard."

Their's was one of many similar reports that night to the police and RAF at nearby Boulmer. The time and location fit in exactly with the events going on 60 miles south at Staxton Wold. They could have been watching some kind of natural phenomenon, or could there be another explanation? What do you think?

If any reader has any additional information in relation to this incident, I would be very pleased to hear from them.

My grateful thanks to Roy Otter of the Grimsby Evening Telegraph who has provided a great deal of material and co-operated fully in this case, which needless to say is still ongoing.

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ALIENS IN ENGLAND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

overhead and we all turned our heads. On turning to see more of this Avebury apparition we found it had vanished, though there was nowhere for it to have gone! [FIG. 4]



A 'SUIT OF MANY COLOURS'

One afternoon in May 1973, about 4.00pm, a girl named Fay, aged seven, together with a young boy, claimed to have seen a seven-foot tall figure wearing a green tunic and red collar. The figure also had a yellow pointed hat with knob and antennae and was holding what looked a microphone. The

incident occurred close to disused Sandown Airport on the Isle of Wight. The figure then disappeared close to an old hut.

TRIANGULAR ALIENS?

Julian Garside, then sixteen years of age, was driven home from work on a friend's motor-bike on 20th September, 1973. As they passed Stainland Woods, between Huddersfield and Halifax, Julian noticed three

bright triangular lights. He tapped his friend on the shoulder and they stopped to look. They both saw three triangular 'shapes', yellowish-white and around five feet tall, 'gliding' uphill through the woods.

Though scared, they followed, and as they did so, the 'entities' speeded up; This wood runs about half-a-mile uphill and when they reached the top, the figures had disappeared. However, above the hill was a round, orange light shaped like a road-crossing beacon, and as they watched, it moved away. One strange thing that both commented on was that there was a strong smell resembling engine oil, which seems completely incompatible with either aliens, ghosts or UFOs!

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'ALIENS IN ENGLAND'
CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE!

LOOSE MINUTE

D/AHB(RAF) 8/27

1 Feb 93

DDPR(RAF)

Copy to:

Sec(AS)2 - fao **Section 40** (less enclosures)

LOSS OF LIGHTNING XS 894

Ref: D/DDR(RAF)325/1/1 LM dated 27 Jan 93

1. You asked at reference for any information relating to the loss of XS894 and its pilot, Capt Schafner USAF.
2. Enclosed for your delectation and delight are copies of the aircraft accident card, and extracts from the F340 Operations Record Books of the various units involved. The documents tend to indicate that there is NO mystery, and that it is the age old problem of pilots handling high performance aircraft close to the sea on an unfamiliar task. Clearly, however, the Evening Telegraph's **Section 40** could easily make a living writing SF novels!

Section 40

Dep Hd AHB(RAF)

Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)12/6

28 Jan 93

DDPR(RAF)

Copy to:

AHB - **Section 40**

LOSS OF LIGHTNING XS894

Ref A: D/DPR/325/1/1 dated 27 Jan 93

1. Thank you for your minute at Reference, and for sending the articles from the Evening Telegraph.
2. Following the publication of these articles last year, I had a number of enquiries from UFO organisations and researchers. As a result I tracked down the original Board of Inquiry papers relating to the crash, and made a thorough study of the whole incident.
3. As you recognise, this accident predated the Military Aircraft Accident Summary procedure. I have not found any official published statement on the crash, but given the time that has elapsed, I am not surprised.
4. In response to the questions that were put to me, I produced some unclassified sentences setting out what happened to the aircraft. I have attached one of my letters, which can be drawn upon in response to any queries that you receive. Notwithstanding all the stories about the loss of this aircraft, there is no UFO story here!
5. Please let me know if you require anything further.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a

Section 40



From: Section 40 Secretariat(Air Staff)2a, Room Section 40

E5



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building Whitehall London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct Dialling) Section 40
(Switchboard)
(Fax)

Section 40

Your reference

Our reference

D/Sec(AS)12/3

Date

2 November 1992

Dear

Section 40

Your letter dated 20 October to RAF West Drayton, in which you asked about the crash of an RAF Lightning on 8 September 1970, has been passed to this office.

I have done some research into the loss of the aircraft, and have discovered that it was taking part in a Tactical Evaluation Exercise designed to practise the night shadowing and shepherding of low speed targets. For the purpose of the exercise, the targets involved were Shackleton aircraft. The Lightning crashed into the sea while attempting to intercept one of the Shackletons. There is no indication of any "unidentified aircraft" having been encountered, and no reason to suggest that there is any sort of UFO incident in any way connected with this tragic crash.

I hope this is helpful, and I wish you luck with your research.

Yours Sincerely,

Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DPR/325/1/1

27 Jan 93

Sec(AS)2

Copy to:

AHB - Section 40

LOSS OF LIGHTNING XS 894

1. I have recently been sent the attached cuttings from the Evening Telegraph relating to the loss of Lightning XS 894 and its pilot in 1970. It makes fascinating reading!

2. Do we have a line on this? I do not believe we issued Military Aircraft Accident Summaries in those days, but presumably we did have some cleared statement on the mystery.

Section 40



DDPR(RAF)

Section 40



minutes were airborne and heading out over the North Sea.

After checking the position of their tanker, a Victor K1A, the two fighters were guided north by Saxa Vord. So far it was a routine scramble for what was then assumed to be a Russian Bear or Badger, the long-range reconnaissance aircraft used to test the nerves of the Royal Air Force.

But it was then that the radar plotters on the Shetland Islands saw something on their screens which they found impossible to believe.

During the next hour the mystery contact reappeared several times, approaching from the north. Each time the Lightnings were sent north to intercept, it turned and disappeared again.

By now two F4 Phantoms of the US Air Force had been scrambled from the American base at Keflavik in Iceland. They had much more sophisticated radar than the British Lightnings and were able to pick up the mystery contact themselves.

But when they, too, tried to get close enough to identify what was

at Cheyenne Mountain and the US Detection and Tracking Centre at Colorado Springs.

In the meantime, the cat-and-mouse game over the North Sea between the Lightnings and Phantoms and the mystery contact was still going on. Then, at 21.05 after the fighters had made yet another abortive attempt to get close, the contact vanished off the radar screens.

The Lightnings were ordered to return to Leuchars while the Phantoms were instructed to carry out a Combat Air Patrol to the east of Iceland.

The radar stations and airbases put on alert by the first contacts that night.

Then, at 21.39, radar controllers picked up the contact again. This time its speed was decelerating to 1,300mph — almost the limit of both the Lightnings and Phantoms — at a holding altitude of 18,000ft. It was on a south-west-erly heading coming from the direction of the Skagerrak, off the northern tip of Denmark.

Two more Lightnings were scrambled from Leuchars, and were ordered to rendezvous with a Victor tanker and then maintain a CAP on a 50-mile east-west

front, 200 miles north-east of Aberdeen. As a precaution, two further Lightnings were ordered into the air from Coltishall in Norfolk and, with another tanker, to form a CAP 170 miles east of Great Yarmouth. The contact was somewhere between these two lines of supersonic fighters.

While all this was going on, RAF staff at Fylingdales, which was in constant contact with NORAD at Cheyenne Mountain, heard, ominously, that the Strategic Air Command HQ at Omaha, Nebraska, was ordering its B52 bombers into the air.

It was an order which could only have come from the highest level. What had started as a routine sighting of what was believed to be a Russian aircraft, had now reached the White House and, presumably, President Richard Nixon.

NORAD was told by officials at the Pentagon that a USAF pilot of great experience was presently on an exchange visit with the RAF and was stationed at Binbrook, the North Lincolnshire fighter base a few miles from Grimsby.

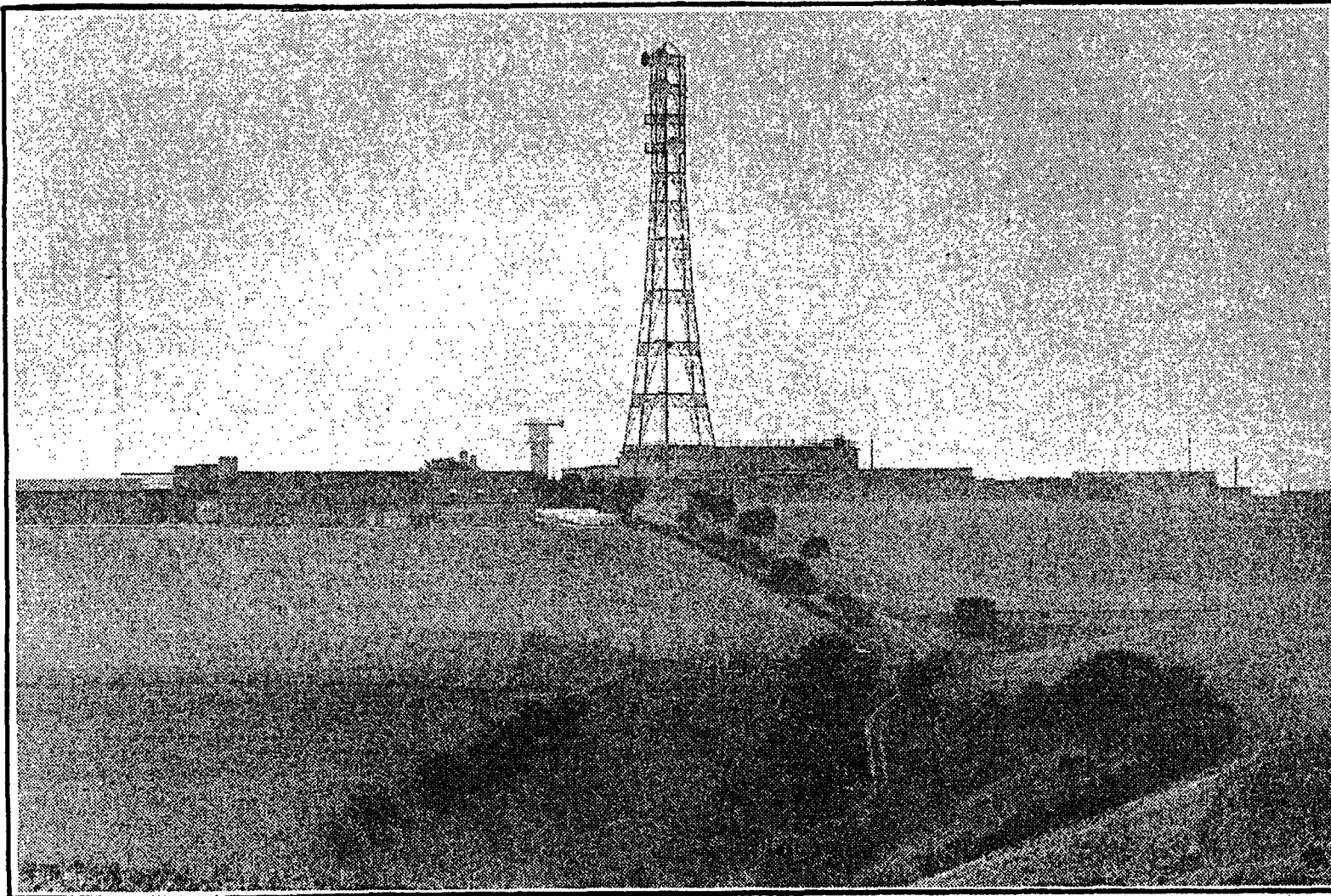
Rapid inquiries were made and it was discovered the pilot was on the station and was, by coincidence, "flight available".

At around 21.45 a request was made from a very high level within NORAD, through Strike Command's UK headquarters at High Wycombe, for RAF Binbrook to send Capt William Schafer "if at all possible" to join the QRA Lightnings looking for the mystery contact.

By this time four Lightnings, two Phantoms and three tankers were already airborne and they were joined by a Shackleton Mk3 from Kinloss, which was ordered to patrol on a north-south heading at 3,000ft, 10 miles out from the east coast.

Binbrook's QRA Lightnings were being held in reserve, but it was decided to send out a single aircraft from the North Lincolnshire airfield — flown by Capt Schafer. The Americans wanted one of their own at the sharp end when it came to cornering the mystery contact.

● **TOMORROW: Contact over the North Sea.**



Staxton Wold radar station near Scarborough — Schafer's link on his last mission.

ed to sign the regulation form signifying he
s happy with the aircraft.
it was armed with two Red Top air-to-air
missiles, one of which was live and the other a
dummy, and enough 30mm cannon shells for a
six-second burst.

One of the men on the ground crew at the time
was Brian Mann of Grimsby, who was driving one
of the fuel bowzers. He remembers XS894 being
refueled at a rate of 150 gallons a minute when
suddenly the engines started. "The windows on
the tanker almost went in. I panicked, took the

Check compass. Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, GCI. I'm alongside it now,
maybe 600ft off my... It's a conical shape. Jeeze,
that's bright, it hurts my eyes to look at it for
more than a few seconds.

Staxton: How close are you now?

Schafer: About 400 feet. He's still in my three
o'clock. Hey wait... there's something else. It's
like a large soccer ball... it's like it's made of
glass.

Staxton: Is it part of the object or independent?
Over.

Schafer: It... no, it's separate from the main
body... the conical shape... it's at the back end,
the sharp end of the shape. It's like bobbing up
and down and going from side to side slowly. It
may be the power source. There's no sign of
ballistics.

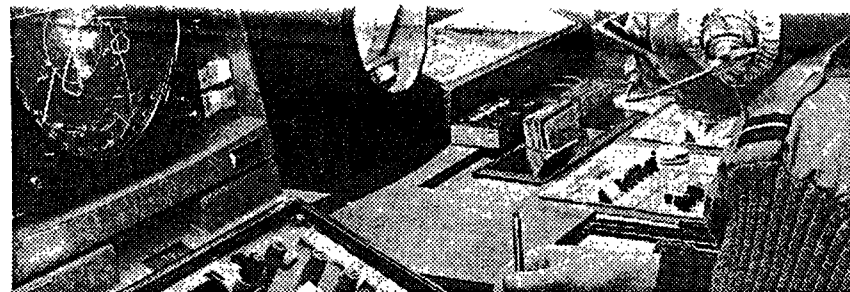
Staxton: Is there any sign of occupation? Over.

Schafer: Negative, nothing.

Staxton: Can you assess the rate...?

Schafer: Contact in descent gentle. Am going
with it... 50... no about 70ft... it's levelled out
again.

Staxton: Is the ball object still with it? Over.



Schafer: Affirmative. It's not actually connec-
ted... maybe a magnetic attraction to the conical
shape. There's a haze of light. Ye'ow... it's within
that haze. Wait a second, it's turning... coming
straight for me... shit... am taking evasive ac-
tion... a few... I can hardl...

Staxton: 94? Come in 94. Foxtrot 94, are you
receiving? Over. Come in 94. Over.

● **NEXT INSTALMENT:** Schafer ditches and dis-
appears.

● **A radar con-
troller vectored
schafer onto the
mystery object**

screen came to a halt it started to move again, accelerating rapidly to 600mph and climbing to 9,000ft, heading south back towards Staxton.

Shortly afterwards, the single blip separated into two, one maintaining its southerly heading, somewhat erratically, at between 600 and 630mph and descending slowly, the other turning through 180 degrees to head north-westerly and vanishing at a speed later calculated to be around 20,400mph.

While all this was going on, a Shackleton MR3, which had been on patrol off the Firth

of Forth, was ordered south to hold station around Flamborough Head.

Then, Staxton Wold re-established contact with Captain Schafer.

Schafer: GCI ... are you receiving? Over.

Staxton: Affirmative 94. Loud and clear. What is your condition? Over.

Schafer: Not too good. I can't think what has happened ... I feel kinda dizzy ... I can see shooting stars.

Staxton: Can you see your instruments? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, but, er ... the compass is u/s ...

Staxton: Foxtrot 94,

turn 043 degrees. Over.

Schafer: Er ... all directional instruments are out, repeat u/s. Over.

Staxton: Roger 94, execute right turn, estimate quarter turn. Over.

Schafer: Turning now.

Staxton: Come further, 94. That's good. Is your altimeter functioning? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, GCI.

Staxton: Descend to 3,500ft. Over.

Schafer: Roger, GCI. **Staxton:** What's your fuel state, 94? Over.

Schafer: About thirty per cent, GCI.

Staxton: That's what

we calculated. Can you tell us what happened, 94? Over.

Schafer: I don't know. It came in close ... I shut my eyes ... I figure I must've blacked out for a few seconds.

Staxton: OK 94. Standby.

At this stage the Shackleton arrived over Flamborough Head and began circling before XS894 was vectored into the area by the Staxton controllers.

Schafer: Can you bring me in, GCI? Over.

Staxton: Er ... Hold station, 94. Over.

Several minutes then

Over. Oscar 77. Over.

Shackleton: 77. Over. **Staxton:** 94 is ditching.

Can you maintain wide circuit? Over.

Shackleton: Affirmative GCI. Over.

Staxton: Thanks 77. Standby. 94, execute ditching procedure at your discretion. Over.

Schafer: Descending now, GCI. Over.

Between six and seven minutes then elapsed.

Shackleton: He's down, GCI. Hell of a splash ... he's down in one piece though. Over.

Staxton: Can you see the pilot yet? Over.

Shackleton: Negative. We're going round again, pulling a tight one.

Two minutes later: **Shackleton:** The canopy's up ... she's floating OK ... can't see the pilot. We need a chopper out here, GCI. No, no sign of the pilot. Where the hell is he?

Staxton: You sure he's not in the water, 77? Check your SABRE receptions. Over. (Note: SABRE was the search and rescue beacon carried by all RAF aircrew).

the crew of the Shackleton were back in contact with Staxton Wold.

Shackleton: She's sunk, GCI. There's a slight wake where she was. Still no sign of the pilot. I say again, GCI, we need a chopper here fast. Over.

Staxton: A Whirlwind's on the way from Leconfield. Are you positive you saw no sign of the pilot? Over.

Shackleton: Nothing GCI. The first pass we assumed he was unstrapping. He must have got out as we went round for a second pass ... but why shut the canopy? Over.

Staxton: That's what we were thinking, Maintain patrol 77, he must be there somewhere. Over.

Shackleton: Roger, GCI. Over.

Shortly afterwards the search and rescue Whirlwind from nearby Leconfield arrived on the scene and began a systematic search of the ditching area. The aircraft were shortly joined by lifeboats from Bridlington, Flamborough and Filey

wife was at Binbrook waiting for news of her husband.

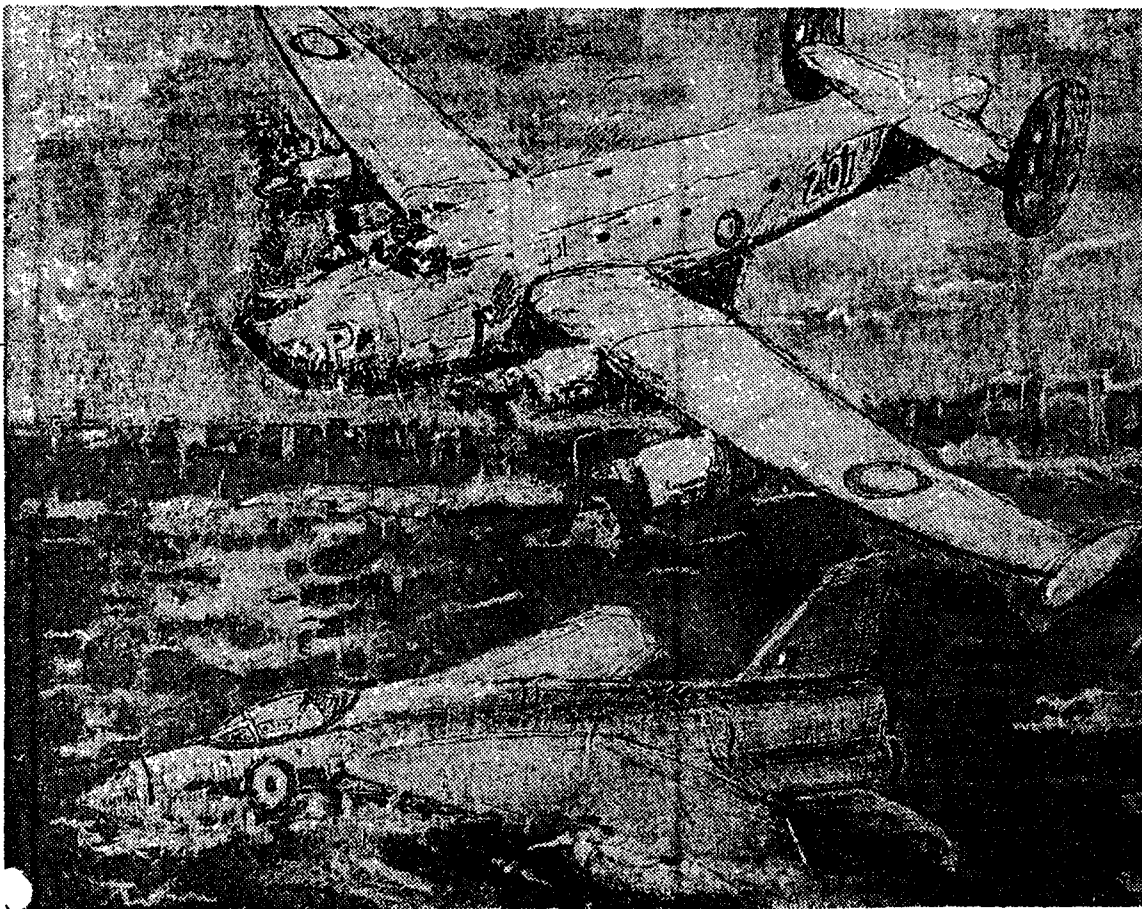
But the Ministry of Defence were doubtful whether there would be any good news for her. "I don't think he got out of the plane," a spokesman told a reporter. "No wreckage has been found."

Three weeks later the Evening Telegraph reported that the fuselage of the aircraft had been located on the seabed and noted that the ejector seat was still intact "giving rise to the belief that the body of the pilot is still in the wreckage".

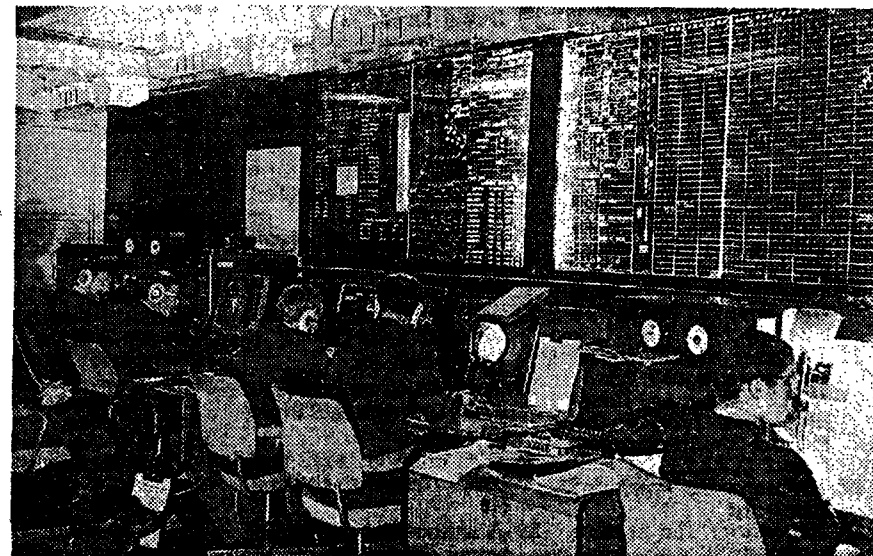
On October 7, the Telegraph reported that divers from HMS Keddleston had inspected the wreckage and said Captain's Schafer's body was still in the cockpit.

But that was the start of the biggest mystery of all. When the aircraft was brought to the surface and returned to Binbrook, there was no trace of Captain Schafer. Just an empty cockpit.

● **TOMORROW:** A cloak of secrecy.



When the Shackleton came round again the Lightning's canopy had closed.
Illustration by TREVOR HARRIES.



The radar plotters watched as the Lightning slowly went down.

which was in remarkably good condition, were taken straight to Binbrook where it was placed behind what appears to have been a series of shutters in the far corner of a hangar.

A team from Farnborough arrived one wet winter's day at Binbrook in the belief that they were about to start a detailed investigation which, in turn, would lead to the preparation of a report on the incident to the Ministry of Defence, the report being used as the basis for an eventual inquiry into the loss of Lightning XS894. But they were in for a surprise.

They were astonished to find many of the cockpit instruments missing. These included the E2B compass, voltmeter, standby direction indicator, standby inverter indicator and the complete auxiliary warning panel from the starboard side of the cockpit below the voltmeter.

This was a serious breach of regulations and, although the investigation team was promised the instruments would be returned shortly, they never were.

The investigators found there was a revolting fusty smell in the cockpit while the whole aircraft still had a slimy feel to it following its month-long immersion in

water. Had any engine fire it, it would have been blown off. It also seems to conflict with the account we have been given of the order from Staxton Wold to Captain Schafer to ditch his aircraft rather than attempt to return to Binbrook or land at Leconfield, only a few minutes' flying time from Farnborough. And, remember, Schafer has told his ground controllers that XS894 was still handling "fine" and he had plenty of fuel left.

During the few hours the investigators were allowed to examine the aircraft, they themselves were constantly supervised by five civilians, two of them Americans.

At the end of the day the investigation team was told curtly that as nothing useful had been discovered, their job was over.

The following day they were all called into the main office at Farnborough and told in no uncertain terms they were not to discuss any aspect of the ditching of XS894, even with their own families. The reason given was simple — national security.

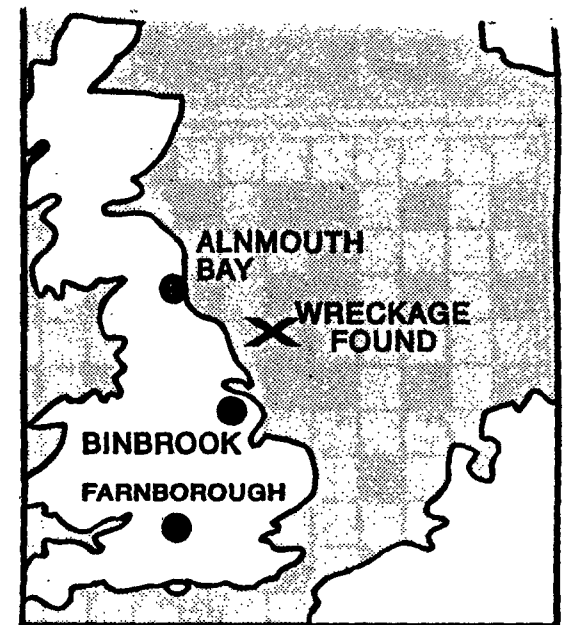
it took about 10 seconds to die down again. Over the following three minutes this happened many times, but the 'lightning' was only visible for a second or two at a time. It appeared very similar to the Northern Lights. The whole spectacle was completely silent.

"After two or three minutes there was another flare-up of 'sheet lightning' which lasted about the same time as the first. This was followed by that awful shrill sensation, only this time it was worse. You could actually feel your ears ringing."

The family called in at the local police station to report what they had seen and heard. Theirs was one of many similar reports that night to both the police and the RAF at nearby Boulmer.

The time and the location fit in exactly with events going on 60 miles south at Staxton Wold and they could have been watching some kind of natural phenomena.

Or there could be another explanation. What do you think?



With Compliments of

E15

Flt Lt Section 40 RAF



OC Test Flt
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UB7 9AU

*Herewith copies of the final
2 nights of the Greenby Evening
Telegraph piece about XS894.*

Section 40

Tel: BT:- Section 40
GPTN:-

New revelations on the watery fate of Foxtrot 94

IT PRECISELY six minutes past 10 on the night of September 8, 1970, a single Lightning jet fighter took off from RAF Binbrook.

Ground crew on the flight line were accustomed to lightnings being scrambled in a hurry at any time of night or day. Binbrook, after all, was a frontline fighter station and its aircraft shared QRA (Quick Reaction Alert) duty with other East Coast airfields to provide cover should any unidentified aircraft appear on the radar screens.

But there was something different about this scramble.

For a start, it was normal for QRA aircraft to take off in pairs. Two aircraft were kept at a state of constant readiness at all times, ready for just such an emergency. It was on this occasion that one aircraft took off. And it wasn't one of the QRA aircraft. Then there was the manner of the take-off. The pilot had raced out on the 5 Squadron crew room, adjacent to the apron, and had climbed aboard while a lightning was in the process of being fuelled.

He angrily waved away ground staff who asked him to sign the form required before any military aircraft leaves the ground and ordered the refuelling to be disengaged. It was no ordinary pilot strapped into the cockpit of the Mach 2

ditched in the sea off Flamborough Head. The ditching was witnessed by the crew of a Shackleton reconnaissance aircraft. Flares were spotted by the Grimsby trawler, Ross Kestrel. But no trace of Capt Schafner was ever found.

More than a month later the wreckage of the aircraft was found on the sea bed by Royal Navy divers. Despite earlier reports to the contrary, the cockpit was empty and the canopy closed. Capt Schafner had vanished — completely and utterly.

Eventually the aircraft was recovered and taken, unusually, to RAF Binbrook. There it was kept under wraps in the corner of a hangar.

When a team from the MoD's Crash Investigation Branch arrived from Farnborough they were permitted to

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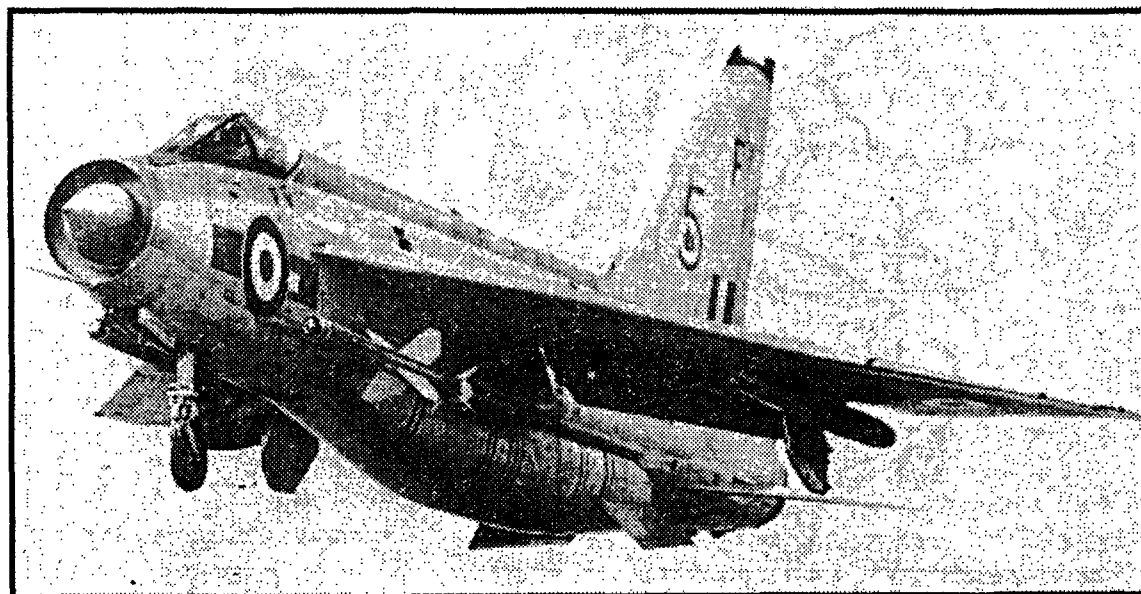
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At that stage I enlisted the aid of Bob Bryant, then Northcliffe Newspapers' aviation correspondent and a man with close links with both the RAF and the USAF.

Bob was to spend weeks checking out a story he found more intriguing by the hour. He paid numerous visits to the Ministry of Defence and spent hours on the telephone to contacts in the United States. But everywhere he heard the ominous sound of doors being slammed.

Intrigued

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examine the remains of XS894. He was so puzzled by what he saw and the treatment the investigation team received that he was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery once and for all.

He had started his inquiries two years earlier and, by a strange coincidence, was in Cleethorpes following up lines of inquiry in and around Binbrook when the

story appeared in the Evening Telegraph.

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Now, four years on, he believes he has peeled back a little bit more of the mystery surrounding XS894 and the disappearance of Capt Schafner.

The Evening Telegraph has a copy of his account of what he believes happened that night. Some of it has come from his dogged investigations; some

from official documents he has obtained; and some, most tellingly, from what he maintains is a transcript of the final conversations between Capt Schafner, a radar controller at Staxton Wold, near Scarborough, and the crew of the Shackleton which witnessed the crash.

This is the story we are going to tell over the next few nights. The information in it is

quite remarkable. Our source has to remain anonymous and we cannot corroborate all the information in his report. What information we can is certainly in line with the results of my own inquiries four years ago.

All we ask you to do is to read our stories carefully — and make up your own mind.

● **TOMORROW:** The final take off of XS894.

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the loss of Lightning XS894 one of the strangest aviation stories of all time.

The information has been sent to us by a man who was involved in the initial investigation of the loss of the aircraft in 1970 and was so disturbed by what he found that he has devoted the last five years to a detailed investigation into the last hours of XS894.

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It was no ordinary pilot strapped into the cockpit of the Mach 2 interceptor. It was Captain William Schafner, of the United States Air Force, who was on his second tour as an exchange pilot with the RAF.

Disappeared

Schafner was a vastly experienced jet fighter pilot with combat time behind him in Vietnam. He had been at Binbrook for some time and his wife was living on the base with him.

No pre-flight checks were made and, as bemused ground crew looked on, the Lightning taxied out to the end of the runway, turned around and immediately took off, using reheat to gain speed and height as quickly as possible.

The aircraft, XS894, a Lightning F6 of 5 Squadron, the call-sign of which that night was Foxtrot 94, turned over the North Sea — and disappeared into what is fast becoming one of the great aviation puzzles of recent times.

Early the following morning XS894

ditched in the sea off Flamborough Head. The ditching was witnessed by the crew of a Shackleton reconnaissance aircraft. Flares were spotted by the Grimsby trawler, Ross Kestrel. But no trace of Capt Schafner was ever found.

More than a month later the wreckage of the aircraft was found on the sea bed by Royal Navy divers. Despite earlier reports to the contrary, the cockpit was empty and the canopy closed. Capt Schafner had vanished — completely and utterly.

Eventually the aircraft was recovered and taken, unusually, to RAF Binbrook. There it was kept under wraps in the corner of a hangar.

When a team from the MoD's Crash Investigation Branch arrived from Farnborough they were permitted to spend only a very brief time examining the wreckage of XS894. What they did discover disturbed them. And what happened later disturbed them even more.

Reticent

I first came across the mysterious story of XS894 six years ago. An outline of the story was related to me by Barry Halpenny, an aviation enthusiast and author who lived at the time in Market Rasen and who was researching for a book on aviation mysteries.

He suggested that I should dig out the cuttings on the crash and look further into it. There was more to the story of XS894 than met the eye, he told me.

I anticipated difficulties in investigating a 16-year-old ditching incident in the North Sea, but not on the scale I was to encounter over the next few weeks.

Normally helpful press contacts at the Ministry of Defence responded initially by

promising to help, but then became very reticent.

Similar inquiries to the United States embassy and to the US Air Force at Alconbury proved also to be dead-ends. Calls were not returned. Contacts were unavailable.

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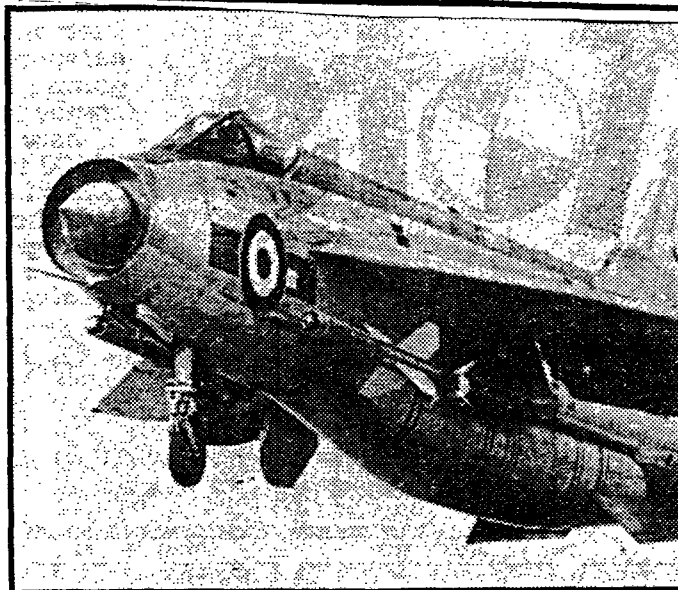
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Barry Halpenny finally published an abridged version of the story in a book which appeared in September, 1988. At the same time the Evening Telegraph carried my story of the mystery of XS894.

Subsequently we were contacted by two former airmen who had both been at Binbrook at the time and added further fuel to the mystery by recalling their memories of that night.

It was a story which puzzled and intrigued thousands of Evening Telegraph readers. But, perhaps most interestingly of all, it was a story which grabbed the attention of a man spending 10 days in a Cleethorpes guest house.

Sixteen years earlier he had been one of the crash investigators who went to Binbrook to



examine the remains of XS894. He was so puzzled by what he saw and the treatment the investigation team received that he was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery once and for all.

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Shedding light on Lightning mystery

By
PAT OTTER

THIS is Foxtrot 94, the E-3 Sentry, the centre of a major mystery since the day it was fished out of the North Sea.

It is pictured slung from the recovery vessel Kinless, Bridlington Bay, after it had crashed on September 8, 1982.

What is remarkable is that the aircraft. It is almost completely undamaged. This could happen when the aircraft hit the sea.

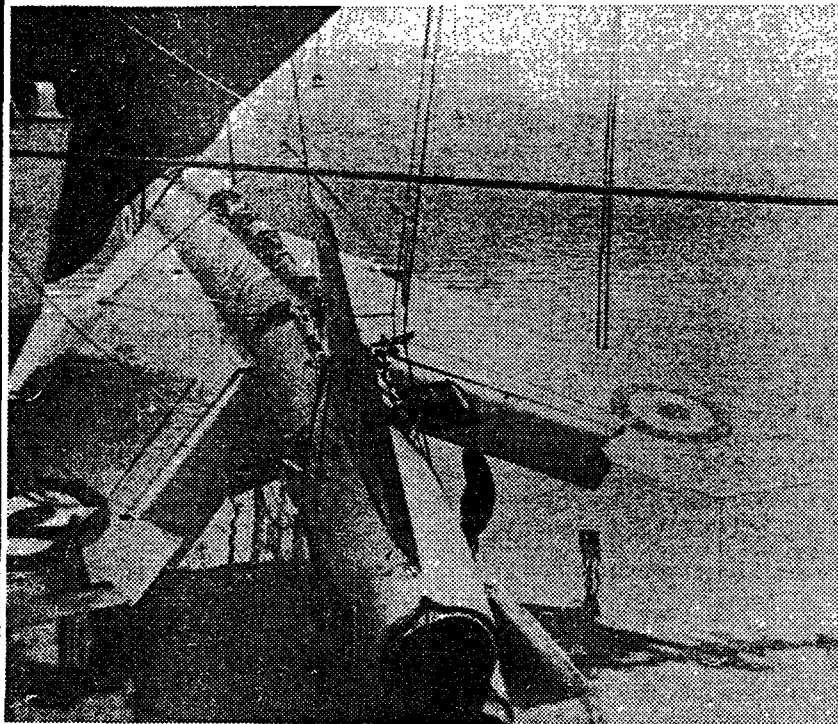
The cockpit, which was empty, is not visible but it is thought that the air brakes on the extended, indicating the plane was slowing as possible when it hit the sea.

Information passed to the Telegraph by a man investigating the aircraft suggests the pilot was ordered to ditch after intercepting a strange aircraft in the North Sea.

But two former Lightning pilots said they believed Foxtrot 94 during a low-level low-altitude mission involving a Shackleton aircraft.

What is not disputed is that the aircraft has never been found of the wreckage.

XS894 has not yet given up its secrets.



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with a second BM Greenland.

The information they collected was relayed to the American Air Defence Command at Cheyenne Mountain US Detection and Tracking at Colorado Springs.

In the meantime, the mouse game over the North Sea between the Lightning and the Phantom was still going on. 21.05 after the fighters had yet another abortive attempt to get close, the contact vanished from the radar screens.

The Lightnings were ordered to return to Leuchars where the Phantom was instructed to carry out a Combat Air Patrol in the east of Iceland.

Unscrambling the riddle of Foxtrot 94

What did happen over the North Sea on the night of September 8, 1970, the night the Lightning jet fighter from RAF Binbrook mysteriously disappeared?

At the time it appeared to be almost a routine mission — an aircraft ditching after something went wrong on a night exercise. But the pilot was never recovered.

Years ago the puzzle turned into a mystery when it was disclosed that when the wreckage of the aircraft was lifted from the seabed near Farnborough the cockpit was found to be empty — and completely empty.

The mystery deepened following publication

of the story when the Evening Telegraph was contacted by former airmen who had been serving at Binbrook at the time and who recalled the strange circumstances leading to the final take-off of that particularly aircraft.

Now new information has been passed to the Evening Telegraph which, if it is correct, makes the loss of Lightning XS894 one of the strangest aviation stories of all time.

The information has been sent to us by a man who was involved in the initial investigation of the loss of the aircraft in 1970 and was so disturbed by what he found that he has devoted the last five years to a detailed investigation into the last hours of XS894.

Four years ago, when the Evening Telegraph conducted its own investigation into the loss of the aircraft and its pilot, Captain William Schafer, an experienced American on an exchange tour with the RAF, we found all official doors firmly closed.

Now we have been handed what we are assured is a transcript of the final hours of XS894 and its pilot. We have no means of authenticating the information. We are asking readers to make their own judgement on the validity of the story we are about to tell.

The Riddle of Foxtrot 94 starts in the Evening Telegraph tomorrow and runs for five nights. Don't miss it!

ne
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By PAT OTTER

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At the start, it was a routine mission for QRA aircraft to take off in a hurry. Two aircraft were at the state of readiness at all times, ready for just an emergency. On this occasion one aircraft took off and it wasn't one of the QRA aircraft.

There was the roar of the take-off. The pilot had raced out of the 5 Squadron operations room, adjacent to the runway, and had boarded while a briefing was in the process of being given.

The pilot angrily waved the ground staff who were required to sign the aircraft before it was sent to the ground and the refuelling to be disengaged. There was no ordinary strapping into the cockpit of the Mach 2

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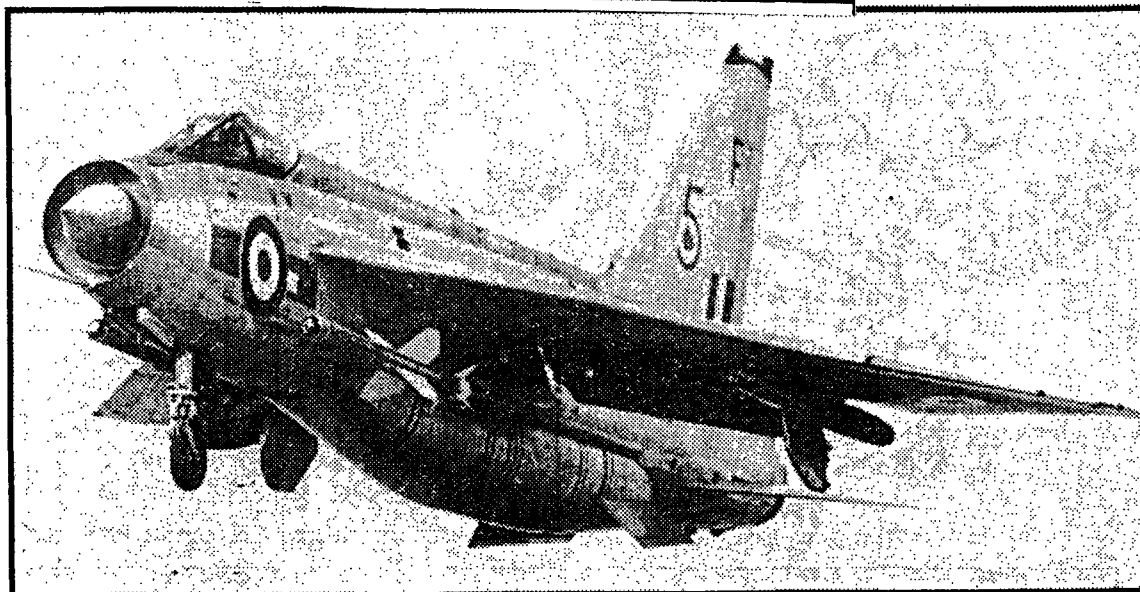
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● **TOMORROW:** The final take off of XS894.

with a second BMEWS in Greenland

Cat-and-mouse with a 17,400mph radar blip

THE chain of events which led to the crash of Lightning XS894 from 5 Squadron at RAF Binbrook and the disappearance of its pilot began at 8.17 on the night of September 8, 1970, in an isolated building on the Shetland Islands.

Saxa Vord was one of the chain of radar stations whose task it was to spot unidentified aircraft approaching the North Sea or the sensitive "Iceland gap".

Remember, this was 1970 when the Cold War was at its height and Russian long-range aircraft made regular sorties into the North Atlantic and along the British coast to test the reaction of Nato fighters.

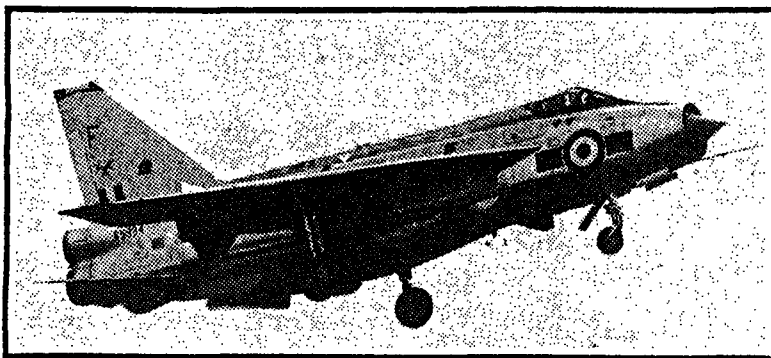
On this particular night, a radar operator at Saxa Vord picked up the blip of an unidentified aircraft over the North Sea halfway between the Shetlands and Alesund, in Norway.

The contact was monitored for several minutes at a steady speed of 630mph, at 37,000ft, holding altitude and on a south-westerly heading. Then Saxa Vord noted the contact was turning through 30 degrees to head due south. It increased speed to 900mph (mach 1.25) and climbed to 44,000ft.

Following laid-down procedures, radar controllers at Saxa Vord flashed a scramble message to the Quick Reaction Alert Flight at the nearest Nato airfield, RAF Leuchars on the east coast of Scotland, not far from Dundee.

There two Lightning interceptors, which had been ready on the flight line for just such an alert.

TONIGHT we start our detailed look at the events leading up to the ditching in the North Sea of Lightning Foxtrot 94, a single-seat fighter from 5 Squadron at Binbrook whose final flight is at the centre of one of the most puzzling aviation stories since the war. Just what was it that its pilot, American William Schafner, was sent to intercept out over the North Sea 22 years ago and why was he eventually ordered to ditch his aircraft off Flamborough Head rather than return to North Lincolnshire? Now new information has been passed to the Evening Telegraph. PAT OTTER reports on a story you may not believe...



XS894 pictured at Binbrook in 1967. It was the first F6 Lightning delivered to 5 Squadron.

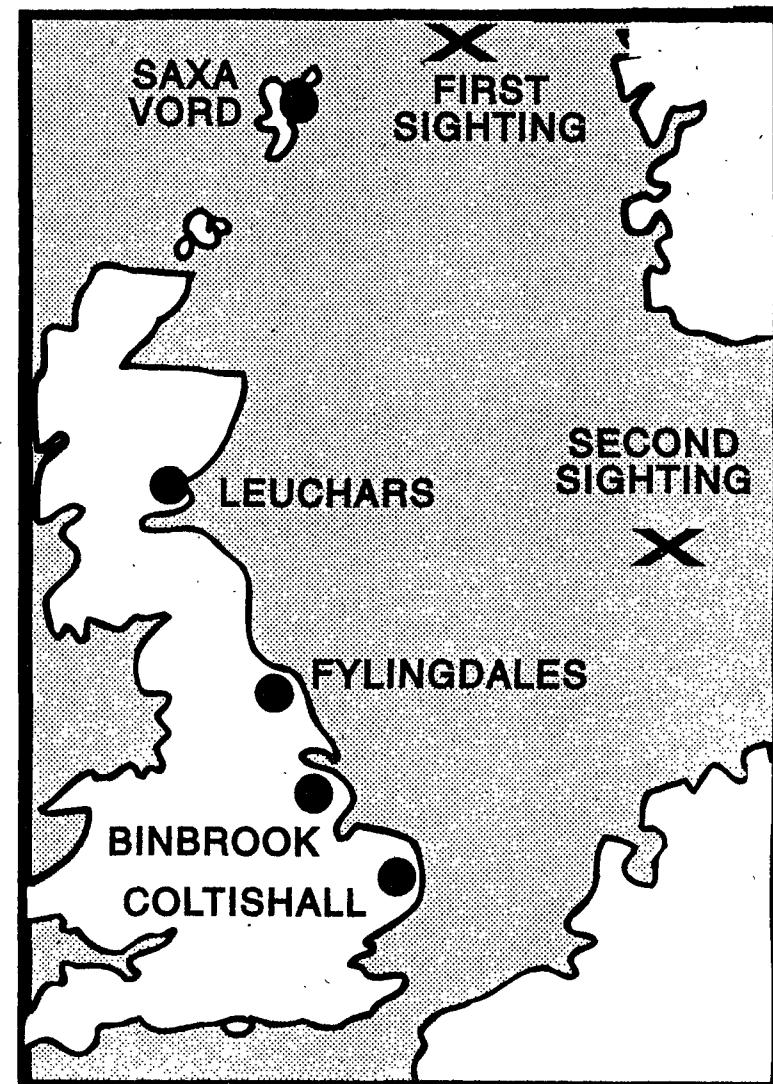
The contact they had been tracking at speeds and altitudes consistent with modern Russian warplanes turned through 180 degrees on a due north heading and within seconds disappeared off their screens. Later they calculated that to do this its speed must have been in the region of 17,400mph.

With the contact now gone, the Lightnings were vectored south to rendezvous with the tanker and remained airborne on Com-

by now beginning to cause some alarm to Nato commanders, they found they were just as impotent as the Lightnings.

The alert had reached such a level that the contact was being monitored by the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System at Fylingdales Moor, near Whitby, along with a second BMEWS in Greenland.

The information they were collecting was relayed to the North



PART THREE OF AN AMAZING SERIES — THE RIDDLE OF FOXTROT 94

Rendezvous with the mysterious intruder

NATO forces were being brought up to full alert by a mystery object picked up on radar over the North Sea. At first it appeared to be yet another Russian aircraft out to test the reflexes of Allied air forces. But then the object began behaving in a way which baffled radar controllers. Nuclear bombers in the United States were ordered into the air while the Pentagon decided that its man on the spot, a experienced Vietnam veteran then on an exchange visit to the RAF at Binbrook, should take a look. PAT OTTER continues the story of the last flight of Foxtrot 94.

CAPTAIN William Schafer was sitting in the crew room of 5 Squadron when the call came from High Wycombe.

The room overlooked the apron where a line of silver Lightnings stood, illuminated by the high-intensity sodium lighting. The crew room itself was sparsely furnished, with ageing chairs which had seen better days, a bar which dispensed nothing stronger than black Nescafe and walls adorned with plaques and photographs donated by visiting RAF and overseas air force units.

Schafer was still in his flying suit, after returning earlier that evening from a training sortie in one of the squadron's aircraft. He is remembered by those at Binbrook as a small, powerfully-built man who loved to fly the single-seat Lightnings, so different from the new generation of sophisticated aircraft then starting to come into service in the USAF.

When the call came, Schafer was helped into the remainder of his flying gear by other 5 Squadron aircrew, went out through the door, turned right and raced across the apron.

Two Lightnings in the line-up were virtually ready for flight. One, XS894, was in the process of having its fuel tanks topped up and was already connected to a power starter.

Schafer climbed the steep ladder, hauled himself into the cockpit, strapped in and started the engines. He waved aside the ground crew, who were expected to help carry out the standard pre-flight checks, ordered the refuelling to stop and

hoses off and got out of the way," he was to say later.

Mr Mann remembered Schafer disregarding the ground marshaler, who was the eyes and ears of the pilot on the ground, as he swung the Lightning round. "His actions were unorthodox to say the least," he said.

At 22.06 XS894 blasted off from Binbrook's main runway into the night sky. Those on the ground saw it disappear with a sheet of flame from its twin tail pipes as Schafer used reheat. It turned over the Wolds and the last they saw was its navigation lights heading out towards the North Sea.

By now the mystery contact which had led to five Lightnings, two Phantoms, three tankers and a Shackleton being scrambled over the North Sea was being tracked by radar controllers at Staxton Wold, which stands on high ground overlooking Scarborough.

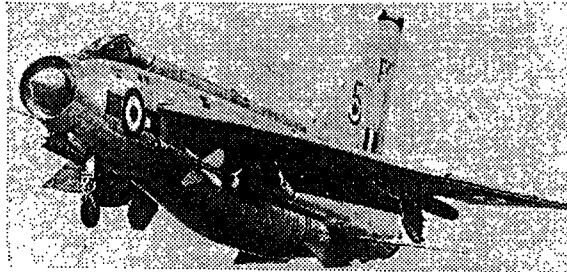
The contact was flying parallel to the east coast 90 miles east of Whitby at 530mph at 6,100ft — an ideal course for an interception by a Binbrook Lightning.

What follows next is drawn from what we have been told is the official transcript of the conversation which took place between Schafer and the radar station at Staxton Wold.

Schafer: I have visual contact, repeat visual contact. Over.

Staxton: Can you identify aircraft type?

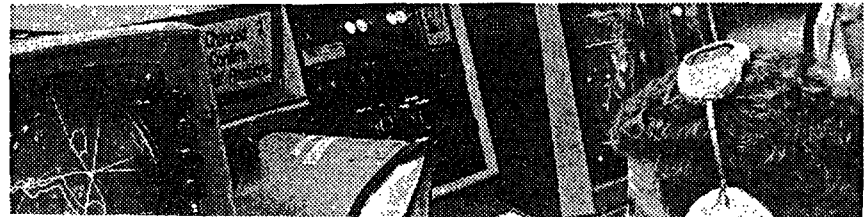
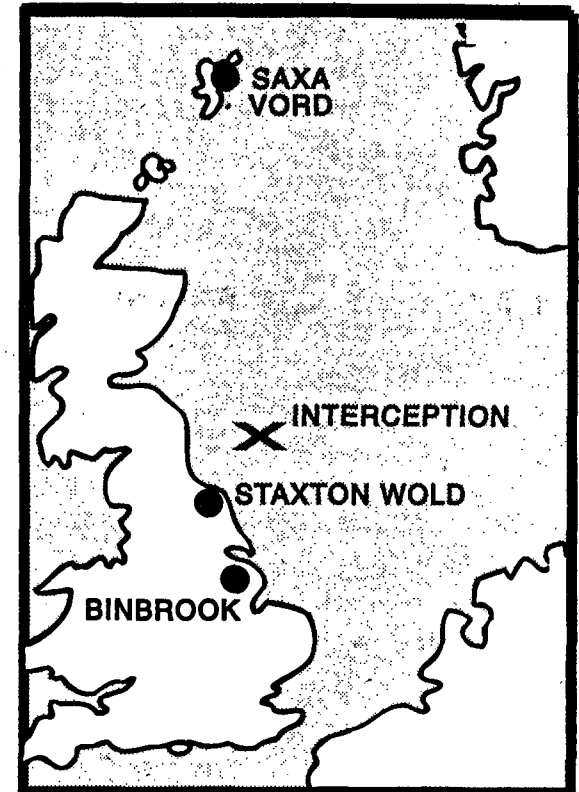
Schafer: Negative, nothing recognisable, no clear outlines. There is ... bluish light. Hell, that's bright ... very bright.



● THE LIGHTNING



● BRIAN MANN



Mystery as pilot cannot be found

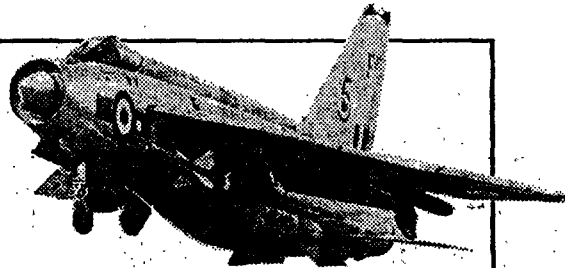
JUST as the controller at Staxton Wold lost contact with Captain Schafer, a radar operator, who had been tracking the Lightning and the mystery object it had intercepted, watched in disbelief.

The two blips on the screen, representing the fighter and its quarry, slowly merged into one, decelerated rapidly from over 500mph until they became stationary 6,000ft above the North Sea 140 miles out off Alnwick.

What exactly happened inside the ground control centre at Staxton is open to conjecture. But our information is that one suggestion was that the two Lightnings then on Combat Air Patrol off the Scottish coast should be sent south immediately but it was over-ruled by the senior fighter controller, who continued to try to re-establish contact with Captain Schafer in Foxtrot 94.

Two and a half minutes after the single

RADAR controllers at Staxton Wold, just south of Scarborough, had guided the Lightning jet fighter from Binbrook to the mystery contact which had been eluding its Nato trackers for almost four hours. The pilot, Captain William Schafer, a USAF pilot on an exchange tour with the RAF, reported seeing something not contained in any of the official aircraft recognition manuals. It was conical in shape and incredibly bright with what Schafer described as something like a "soccer ball" in its wake. Then Schafer's radio went silent. PAT OTTER continues the story of the riddle of Foxtrot 94.



SEABED HUNT FOR FIGHTER

ROYAL NAVY divers went out from Binbrook to establish a location.

Hopes fade for Lincs. jet pilot

HOPES of picking up the pilot of a missing Lightning jet from RAF Binbrook, which crashed in the North Sea, are fading.

Yorks Coast search for jet pilot

Binbrook jet found by divers

ROYAL NAVY divers have found the wreckage of a Lightning jet, which crashed in the North Sea, off the Yorkshire coast.

How the loss was reported in the Evening Telegraph and Scarborough Evening News.

elapsed as Schafer was left to circle the Flamborough area along with the Shackleton.

In the meantime, Strike Command HQ at High Wycombe had instructed Staxton Wold to request Schafer ditch his Lightning off Flamborough.

Although he had plenty of fuel to reach either nearby Leconfield or his home base of Binbrook, it appears the reason for High Wycombe's decision was a fear that the Lightning had somehow become contaminated during its mystery interception over the North Sea.

It may well be that the fear was that the aircraft has suffered radiation contamination although some weeks later, when the wreckage was examined at Binbrook, no trace of contamination by anything other than salt water was found.

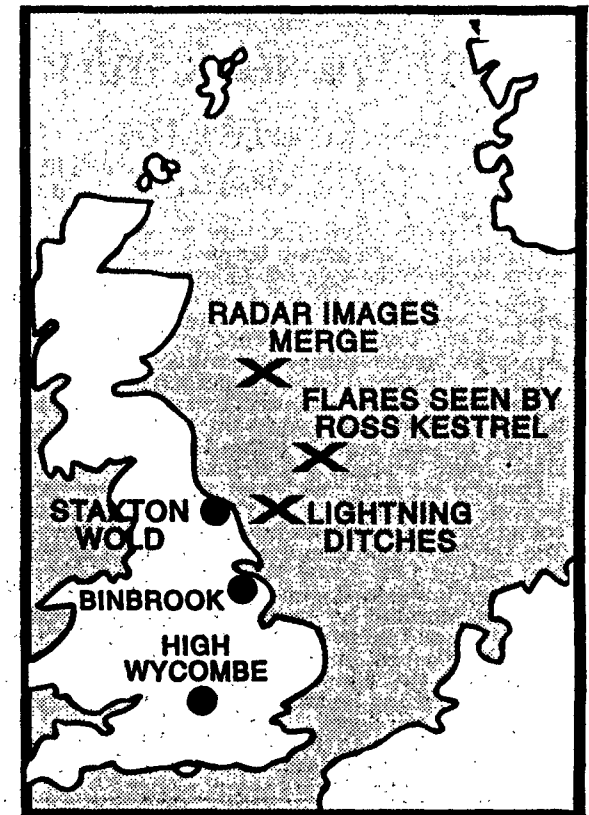
Staxton: Foxtrot 94. Can you ditch aircraft? Over.

Schafer: She's handling fine. I can bring her in. Over.

Staxton: Negative, 94. I repeat, can you ditch aircraft? Over.

Schafer: Yeah ... I guess.

Staxton: Standby 04



Shackleton: No SABRE yet. No flares, either. Hang on. We're going round again.

Another two minutes elapsed.

Shackleton: GCI. Over.

Staxton: Receiving you, 77. Over.

Shackleton: This is odd, GCI. She's sinking fast but ... the canopy's closed up again. Over.

Staxton: Can you confirm pilot clear of aircraft? Over.

Shackleton: He's not in it, we can confirm that. He must be in the water somewhere.

Staxton: Any distress signals or flares yet? Over.

Shackleton: Negative, GCI. Going round again. Over.

as the weather began to deteriorate.

The search continued well into the next day but there were no transmissions from the beacons carried by the pilot and on board the aircraft and the official reports say no distress flares were seen.

However, the following day the Evening Telegraph reported flares had been seen about 10 miles offshore and the Grimsby trawler Ross Kestrel, which was passing through the Flamborough area, had gone to investigate but, even though more flares were seen, she found nothing.

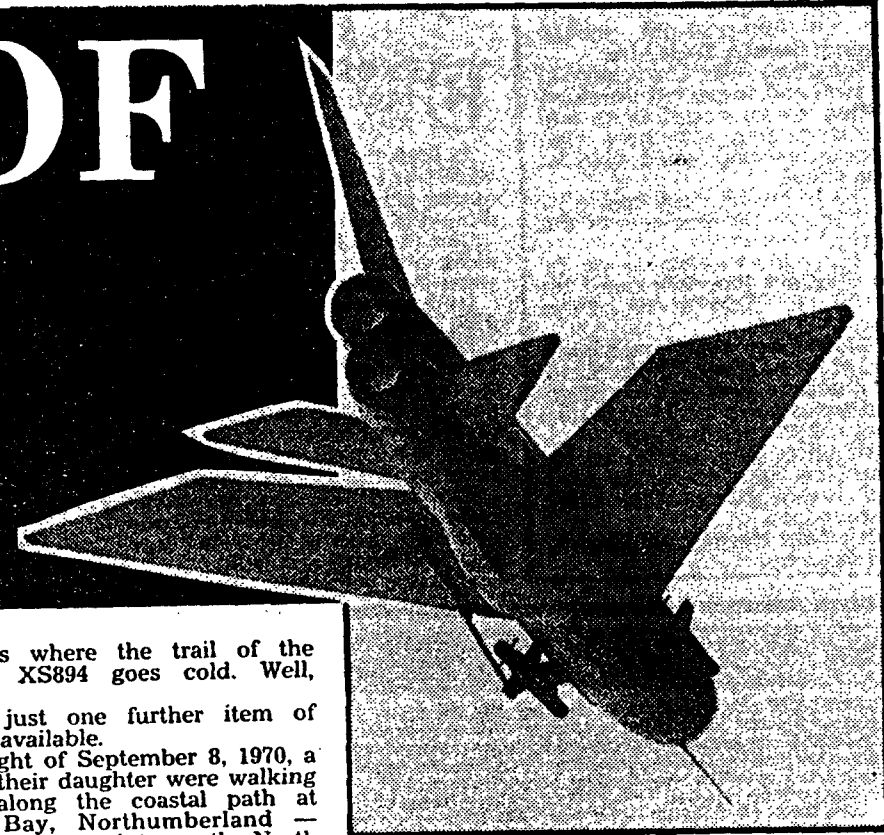
The Telegraph also reported that

THE loss of the Binbrook Lightning and its American pilot had simply been reported as just another air crash by newspapers along the north-east coast of England. Repor-

ters were used to handling stories like this, which occurred with some regularity. The ditching of XS894 provided front-page stories for the Grimsby Evening Telegraph and the

Scarborough Evening News on September 9, 1970. But they only told part of the story. PAT OTTER concludes our investigation into the Riddle of Foxtrot 94.

SHROUD OF SECRECY ON XS894



WHEN the wreckage of XS894 was finally lifted from the sea bed some five miles off Flamborough Head, it was taken in some secrecy straight to RAF Binbrook.

Air crashes in the North Sea in those days were relatively common and much of the wreckage found its way into Grimsby where often Evening Telegraph photographers were on hand to record the event. But not with XS894.

It was also common practice for wrecked aircraft to be taken to the MoD's Crash Investigation Branch at Farnborough where detailed examinations were carried out in an attempt to find the cause of accidents. But this didn't happen with XS894.

the North Sea.

The ejector seat also seemed to be 'wrong' and there was a suspicion later among the investigators that it was not the one fitted to the aircraft when XS894 took off from Binbrook on its final flight. They were even given an assurance by the OC of 5 Squadron that the seat had not been tampered with. But some of the investigators were not convinced.

Interestingly, an Evening Telegraph reader, who was serving at Binbrook at the time, told us in 1988 that he recalled seeing an official report on the crash which suggested that the seat was faulty and this was why Captain Schafer failed to eject.

Brian McConnell, a former sergeant at Binbrook, said the cartridge on the seat had failed to fire because of faulty installation. However, this is very much at odds with the eye-witness account of the Shackleton crew who saw the canopy

And that's where the trail of the mystery of XS894 goes cold. Well, almost.

There is just one further item of information available.

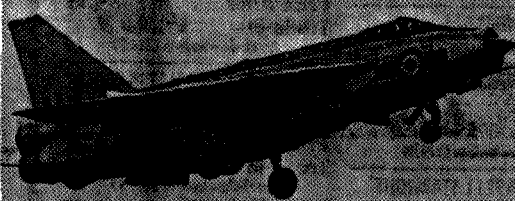
On the night of September 8, 1970, a couple and their daughter were walking their dog along the coastal path at Alnmouth Bay, Northumberland — almost opposite the point over the North Sea where Schafer made his interception — when they saw and heard something strange.

"We had been walking for maybe 10 minutes when we heard a very high-pitched humming noise," they later said in a statement to MoD personnel. "The dog kept cocking her head to one side and growling. It seemed impossible to tell from which direction the noise was coming, it seemed everywhere. It lasted for maybe 10 to 15 seconds.

"About five minutes later the eastern sky was lit up like sheet lightning, only

INVESTIGATORS' JOB CURTAILED





Foxtrot 94: The a pilot who flew

TWO weeks ago the Evening Telegraph began telling the story of XS894, a single seat Lightning jet fighter from 5 Squadron at RAF Binbrook which crashed into the sea off Flamborough Head on the night of September 8, 1970. The aircraft was recovered some time later almost intact.

The cockpit canopy was closed but there was no sign of the pilot, an American on an exchange tour with the RAF. We had told the story some years ago but recently we were given new evidence — which we were unable to corroborate — on the disappearance of the Lightning.

It came from a man who has spent some years investigating the disappearance of XS894 that night. He had been one of the original crash investigators and was so puzzled by what he saw that he was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery.

The result was a report so intriguing that we decided to publish it in full and let you, the reader, make up your own mind. It has proved to be one of the most talked-about stories for years.

The response has been tremendous and tonight we publish some of the views we have received. Certainly, the evidence from the experts — men who were flying Lightnings themselves that night — is compelling. On these pages Mike Streten, a former 5 Squadron CO, and Furz Lloyd, a vastly experienced Lightning pilot, both give their accounts of what they believe did happen to XS894.

But the ultimate mystery still remains — what did happen to the pilot?

ON the night of the loss of Foxtrot 94, September 8, 1970, I was night flying with 23 Squadron, based at Leuchars.

I remember the initial report on the loss of the aircraft well; at that stage I only knew the pilot was missing and I knew that Binbrook was undergoing its annual Tactical Evaluation (TACEVAL).

The immediate facts that we were able to glean on that fateful night were that the pilot had been shadowing and shepherding an Airborne Early Warning (AEW) Shackleton from 8 Sqn based at Lossiemouth. A crew member had reported that he had last seen the navigation lights of the Lightning passing to the rear and below of the aircraft.

The Lightning pilot, Capt William Shaffner (not Schafer as reported at the time), was an experienced USAF pilot who had recently joined 5 Squadron. Immediately following the pilot's failure to acknowledge radio transmissions from both the Shackleton and the controlling



By MIKE STRETEN

radar at Patrington, an initial air/sea search was initiated.

No trace was found and the immediate search was called off for the night. The following morning a comprehensive search of the area was mounted — no trace of wreckage, tell-tale oil slicks of the missing pilot were found. Indeed, it was not until some two months later that a Royal Navy minesweeper found the aircraft virtually intact at the bottom of the sea.

I remember the initial reports on the aircraft very well. The aircraft was effectively in one piece. What was very unusual, however,

was that the canopy was still attached to the aircraft and all the ejection seat straps and the seat dinghy were still in the aircraft. There was no trace whatsoever of the pilot.

IN terms of the mission profile for the shadowing/shepherding procedure, the aircraft told most of the story leading up to the tragic death of its pilot.

To carry out the intercept against a very slow target, in this case doing about 165 knots, the Lightning was required to fly a specific geometric profile which enabled the speed of the target to be determined fairly

accurately. As I recall, once the interceptor had closed with the target, breakaway was initiated at minimum radar range and the procedure repeated so that the target's progression along its track could be covered.

I, therefore, deduced that following the last observation of the Lightning (non-standard since it was observed below the target), the pilot was initiating his breakaway prior to re-initiating the set procedure. The danger was that the Lightning would be flying slowly and that control was therefore commensurately less positive.

From my own extensive night flying experience over the North Sea, with stars above and the lights of fishing boats below, disorientation affected all pilots from time to time.

The evidence indicated that Capt Shaffner had most likely suffered from this since the only way the aircraft could have hit the sea without breaking up was from hitting it at a slow speed at a very shallow glance angle, most probably planing over

it as he rapidly decelerated.

It is a matter of fact that the only way the canopy could be opened and remain with the aircraft was if the aircraft was doing less than 150 knots or so. Therefore the most likely situation that the pilot found himself in was the nightmare of having hit the sea while trying to recover from a slow-speed situation.

With the aircraft on the sea and sinking rapidly, the quickest way out would have been to open the canopy, unstrap and disconnect the seat dinghy lanyard thereby relying on the life jacket for flotation and subsequently the manual activation of SARBE emergency beacon (contained in the pocket of the jacket) to transmit the emergency frequency for location and subsequent rescue.

Since his body has never been found, this must remain a mystery but not along the line of the source of your information.

WHEN Foxtrot 94 took off that night it was to take part in routine exercise. And the aircraft was armed with nothing more than dummy acquisition missiles.

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verdict of that night

Crash was a tragic error of judgement

By
FURZ LLOYD of Middle Rasen, a
former Lightning pilot and now a
member of the Lightning
Association

However, during a Tactical Evaluation Exercise all missions would start following a scramble call, either by telebrief connected to the local radar station or via a radio call to the aircraft. Anyone able to listen in to such transmissions would think that World War Three had started!

To make a TACE VAL more realistic, spurious information relating to raids in other sectors would be broadcast to "flesh out" events in the local sector and thereby make the atmosphere before scramble more realistic.

Thus the reported events off Saxa Vord, the Leuchars Quick Reaction Alert aircraft and the involvement of Phantoms from Keflavik against what the reader must conclude could only have been a UFO, is mere conjecture.

Similarly, the alleged dialogue between NORAD and HQ Strike Command is all "embroidery" and only adds myths to the basic truths of the events that really took place. Of such things all legends have been made! As for any pilot taking a Lightning that had not been fully refueled — ask any former Lightning pilot

whether that ever happened. The aircraft was always "short on fuel", even before engine start. Believe me, it did not happen!

And the purported radio conversations between the pilot and the radar station or indeed the order to ditch, your source has allowed the power of the pen to embroider even more fairytales.

The Lightning was not cleared to ditch under any circumstances and even if a pilot was ordered to do so, he would have ejected since the chances of a successful ditching at sea at night would have been many thousands to one. Nevertheless, when Foxtrot 94 hit the sea with is apparently just what happened. That is an incontrovertible fact. However, it was inadvertent and not planned or ordered by any higher authority as is alleged in the articles.

THERE was no UFO that night. Nor was there anything unusual about the weather.

As for the recovery of the aircraft to Binbrook and the reluctance to allow it to be examined, once a Board of Inquiry had been convened, any pieces of wreckage recovered are

not available to be examined by anyone other than those the Board has given its express permission to do so, hence the hangar screens.

And as for the reluctance of Ministry of Defence officials to reveal details, the findings of the Boards or Inquiry are not revealed to the general public except in the most general terms and, moreover, in 1970 nothing other than a press release would ever have been published officially about the accident. This was the establishment procedure.

However, there was no attempt to hide the facts of the case to the Royal Air Force at large and, moreover, in this case the whole procedure for shadowing and shepherding was reviewed to ensure it was as safe as it could be and the Lightning squadrons were informed accordingly.

To conclude, the tragic death of Captain William Schaffner was most probably caused by a loss of aircraft control at low speed following pilot disorientation during a shadowing and shepherding procedure against an AEW Shackleton during a TACE

VAL of Binbrook and Patrington.

There were no other unusual circumstances and no UFOs. This story must not be allowed to become a myth upon which others who specialise in "mysteries" can base "truths" in the future.

It was a miracle that the aircraft hit the sea in an attitude and at a speed that allowed it to remain in one piece. The mystery is what happened to Captain Schaffner once the aircraft was in the sea and, since his body was never found, we will never know.

● **Mike Streten** flew for some 2,000 hours in Lightnings, was at one time Chief Interceptor Weapons Instructor on the aircraft and in the early 1980s served as CO of 5(F) Squadron at Binbrook.

I WAS an operational Lightning pilot at the time and on the night in question Binbrook was participating in a Tactical Evaluation, a peacetime assessment of a unit's wartime effectiveness.

As part of this exercise, 5 Squadron's USAF exchange officer was airborne on a routine shadowing sortie. At night, or in poor weather conditions, this involved flying the Lightning as slow as was practically possible while maintaining radar contact. This involved weaving behind the target in an attempt to keep the radar blip on the screen.

It was during his attempt to remain behind the target in this demanding exercise that the pilot tragically hit the sea.

XS894 impacted right wing slightly low. The pilot survived the crash and vacated the cockpit prior to the aircraft sinking. It would have been almost impossible for him to extricate himself and his liferaft from the aircraft in this situation.

Evidence from the recovered wreckage suggested that he unstrapped and stepped over the side. A cold North Sea at night without protection from the elements afforded by the liferaft would have presented him with little hope of survival.

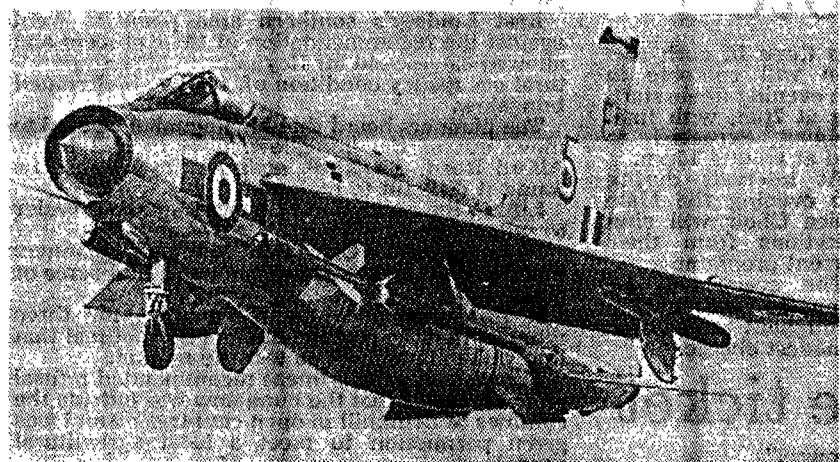
The recovery of the wreckage and the subsequent Board of Inquiry



were subject to no more secrecy than any other accident. The usual procedure was to publish initial and subsequent findings as the Board progressed.

The wreckage of XS894 was displayed openly at Binbrook and photographed without restriction once the investigation was complete. The result of the Inquiry was published routinely in RAF Flight Safety magazine and leaflets and all the events surrounding the crash could be explained logically. This includes the cockpit being shut when the aircraft was recovered, which is easily explained by the loss of hydraulic pressure.

This accident was an unfortunate error or judgement which cost an American pilot his life — not some stranger than fiction tale.



I was a witness to the rendezvous in the sky

□ **I WAS** a witness to some of the events of the night of September 8, 1970.

I had just decided to take some fresh air before retiring for the night and, as I stepped into my back garden I saw a redish object in an east north-easterly position, about 30-degrees above the horizon. It appeared to be stationary for about three minutes. As I watched I heard what appeared to be a jet aircraft heading in the direction of the object I was watching.

Then the object appeared to speed off in a north westerly direction to the north of my position, about 60-degrees above the horizon and appeared to be climbing slightly. As I watched it appeared to change colour from red to a pale blue.

I have seen other objects in the sky at various times with a similar appearance to this one and I now believe they were UFOs. I also believe the authorities which conduct investigations into UFO activity do cover up the truth. I would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in this subject.

— **Norman Whiston**, 3 Jubilee Avenue, New Holland, South Humberside.

○○○○

□ **I FOUND** the story engrossing. But there are inconsistencies,

particularly concerning the order for the pilot to ditch his aircraft. I would have thought this was a risky enough proposition in broad daylight, but much worse by night.

Even if the order was given, why was he not instructed to orbit until a search-and-rescue helicopter to arrive? It does not make sense to order him to ditch and then send the helicopter.

He surely would have been better advised to have turned his aircraft out to sea and then ejected.

I can accept the UFO — but not the ditching. It comes over as very dubious to me.

— **John Walsh**, Grimsby Road, Cleethorpes.

○○○○

□ **I READ** with great interest your series of articles concerning the fate of Foxtrot 94. Clearly, there is a mystery surrounding the jet's disappearance.

I am part of a national group of investigators who specialise in researching such mysteries and I would be glad of any further information readers may have. Any information, no matter how seemingly irrelevant, will be dealt with in confidence and gratefully acknowledged.

— **Andy Roberts**, 84 Elland Road, Brighouse, West Yorks.



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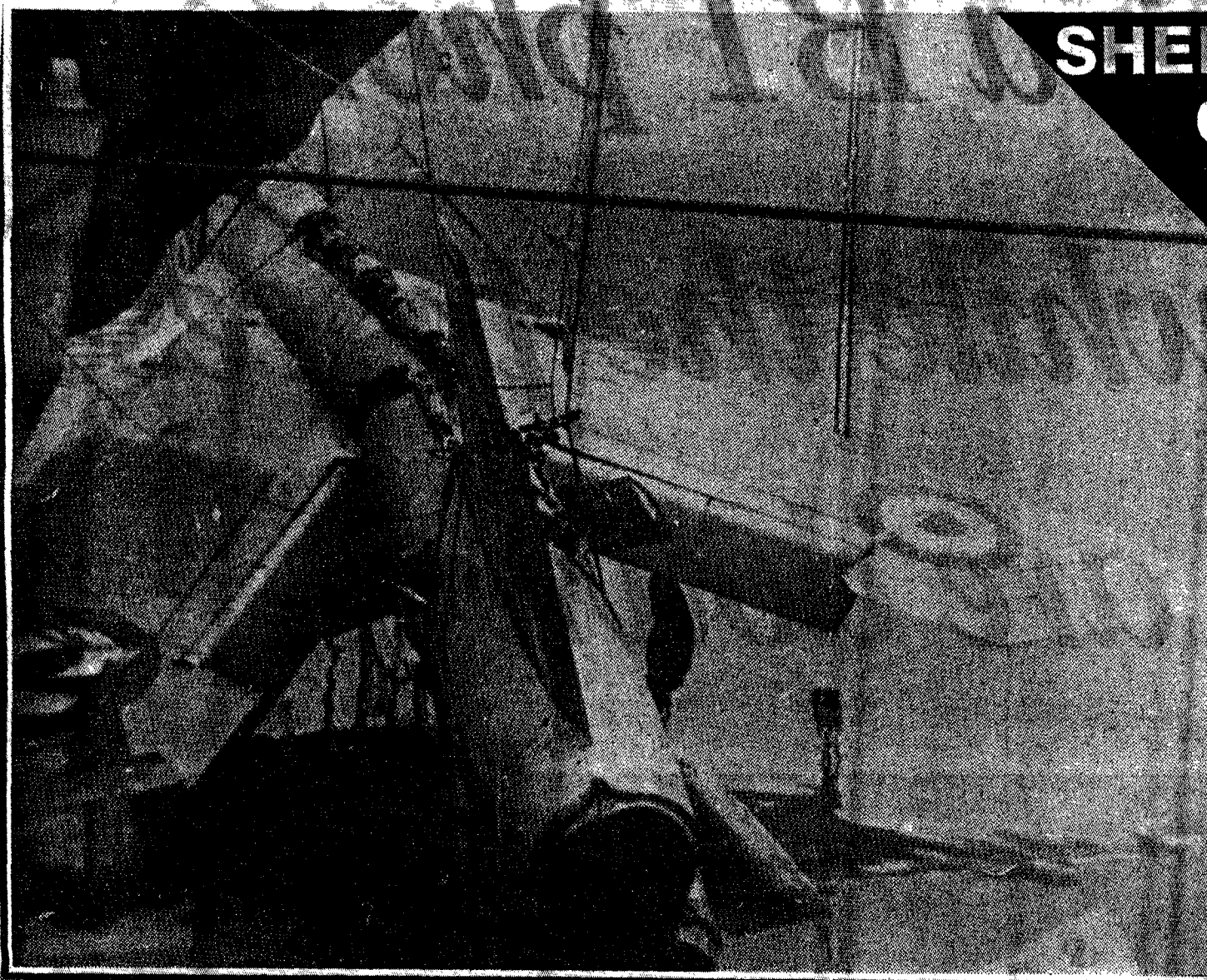
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Fishing out Foxtrot 94



SHEDDING LIGHT ON MYSTERY LIGHTNING

By
PAT OTTER

THIS is Foxtrot 94, the Binbrook Lightning at the centre of a major air mystery, the day it was fished out of the North Sea.

It is pictured slung from the bows of the recovery vessel Kinless, probably in Bridlington Bay, after it had been hauled to the surface some two months after it crashed on September 8, 1970.

What is remarkable is the condition of the aircraft. It is almost completely intact although it does seem the fuselage is damaged. This could have happened when the aircraft hit the sea or during the recovery.

The cockpit, which was closed and empty, is not visible but it is noticeable that the air brakes on the fuselage are extended, indicating the pilot was flying as slowly as possible when the Lightning hit the sea.

Information passed to the Evening Telegraph by a man investigating the loss of the aircraft suggests the American pilot was ordered to ditch the Lightning after intercepting a strange object over the North Sea.

But two former Lightning pilots have said they believed Foxtrot 94 hit the sea during a low-level low-speed exercise involving a Shackleton aircraft.

What is not disputed is that no trace has ever been found of the pilot. XS894 has not yet given up all its secrets.

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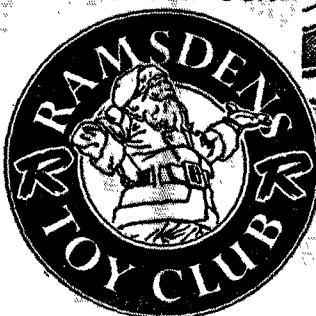
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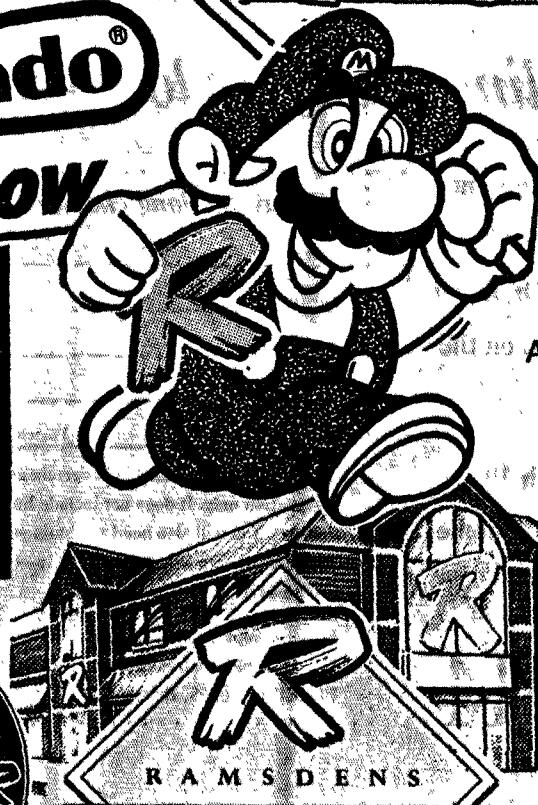
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Thank you for taking the time to let me know your findings regarding the unfortunate incident when the R.A.F. Lightning was lost in 1970. I have extended my area of enquiry into the United States in the hope of getting some feedback from my ex military friends.

I enclose the latest copy of our journal and news clippings regarding the Bonnybridge incidents. I have been promised more and will send them to you when I receive them.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours Sincerely,

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be quite impossible.

"he said.

(See pages 2 and 3)

UFO PROBE STEPS UP

SCIENTISTS from across Britain are set to hit Bonnybridge in a bid to investigate the UFO sightings made in the area.

And the national media has been in the village as news of the phenomenon spreads. More and more sightings of UFOs are being reported — local people claim to have seen lights and other objects in the sky. Now UFO experts have pledged to look further into the reports and will visit the area. (See page 19)

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Local support for UFO claims

MORE people are claiming to have seen UFOs in the Bonnybridge area.

Following last week's Advertiser story on sightings of unidentified flying objects around the village, more people have reported seeing strange lighted crafts in the sky.

Now a team of scientists are urging anyone who has seen anything to contact them.

Malcolm Robinson of the Psychic Phenomena Unit said: "We are taking this whole thing very seriously indeed. I would appeal to anyone who has seen any sort of object to contact me on (0259) 724033."

Local councillor Billy Buchanan has been inundated with calls from people who have had a "close encounter".

"Now that it's out in the open," said Councillor Buchanan, "more people are coming forward. Before, they said nothing for fear of being laughed at".

Councillor Buchanan has also attacked national newspaper reports at the weekend which he said ridiculed the people who had come forward to report the sightings.

Television, radio and national newspaper reporters have been in the area to talk to some of the people who have had sightings.

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14 ADVERTISER · Wednesday November 4 1992

UFO probe

AN investigation is underway into sightings of unidentified flying objects in Falkirk District.

Environmental Health boss Malcolm Macdonald confirmed this week that his department had received an inquiry regarding an UFO sighting in the Bonnybridge area.

And Councillor Billy Buchanan has revealed that

he was approached by a "visibly shaken" local businessman claiming he had seen "a strange lighted object in the sky".

In a statement to the Advertiser, Councillor Buchanan said: "This is not the only sighting in this area and I take the matter seriously. I contacted Falkirk District Council's environment department to check if there had been any military manoeuvres in the area."

Councillor Buchanan also added that he firmly believed the businessman — who wished to remain anonymous — and had known him for many years.

"I could understand his reluctance to speak to anybody on this matter as he quite rightly assumes he would be laughed at and ridiculed," said the Bonnybridge councillor.

"If anyone else has seen something please phone me — I will take it seriously."

Environmental Health boss Malcolm Macdonald said the UFO inquiry would be treated with the same sincerity as any other query.

"It is not one of the usual lines of complaint we receive," he added.

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LAST NIGHT



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Section 40

30/11

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London WC1X 8RU

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DRAFT

In the 1970s, military aircraft accident reports were not available to the public. However, we have been able to obtain permission to bring the following into the public domain, and perhaps lay the mystery of XS894 to rest at last.

On 8 September 1970, RAF Binbrook was taking part in a Tactical Evaluation exercise. During the evening, the evaluation directing staff arranged for Shackleton aircraft to act as targets in order to test the Lightning pilots in the demanding task of intercepting slow flying aircraft.

Captain Schaffner's Lightning was scrambled at 2020 hours and ordered to climb to 10000 feet. He was a United States Air Force pilot serving with the RAF but, although he was relatively experienced on F102 all weather aircraft, he had only flown 120 hours on Lightnings. He was steered towards the target by a ground based radar controller and informed that the aircraft was flying at 1500 feet and 150 knots. Because of its handling characteristics, the Lightning was difficult to fly at such a relatively low speed and the intercept was, therefore, a very difficult one. Eleven minutes after take-off, Captain Schaffner's Lightning was seen by another Lightning pilot in the vicinity, approximately one mile behind the Shackleton, slightly above it, and in a left hand turn. Contact with the Lightning was then lost, and a search began.

The Lightning was located and recovered some 2 months later. It was remarkably intact, except that the left hand wing and some fuselage panels were missing. The canopy was attached, and open, but there was no sign of the pilot.

An inquiry determined that the cause of the accident was that the pilot had inadvertently flown into the sea, while performing a difficult task. He had skinned the water and attempted to recover the situation by selecting reheat. However, this was unsuccessful.

and he attempted to eject. This was also unsuccessful because the ejection seat sequence failed to operate correctly. Realising that the ejection sequence had failed, the pilot had unstrapped and abandoned the aircraft, only to drown during or after his escape. The inquiry also discovered that the ejection sequence malfunction was due to servicing error.

Following the investigation, a number of changes were made in the training of pilots for such intercepts and the servicing methods employed on the ejection system.

Conclusion as original.

No attribution to I of PS(RAF).

CONCLUSIONS?

So, how did this tragic accident come to be represented as a sinister conspiracy of silence redolent of UFOs and official cover ups? Without doubt some elements of the official report can be seen in the

newspaper stories but exotic blue lights and hyper-sonic targets? One theory advanced by 2 former Lightning pilots who have commented on the Grimsby Evening Telegraph stories is that the Taseval scenario could have included an escalating level of alert with RAF bases chasing supersonic intruders around the Iceland - Faroes gap. However, there we must leave the story.

Acknowledgements

Section 40

We would like to thank [REDACTED] of the Grimsby Evening Telegraph for permission to print and reproduce their photograph and other published material.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building Whitehall London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct Dialling) Section 40
(Switchboard)
(Fax)

Section 40

Your reference

Our reference

D/Sec(AS)12/3

Date

23 November 1992

Dear

Section 40

When I wrote to you on 5 November, I said that I was trying to locate an Unclassified Military Aircraft Accident Summary (MAAS) for the crash that occurred on 8 September 1970, involving a Lightning F6 aircraft from RAF Binbrook. I have found out that the procedure whereby a MAAS is issued for every military aircraft crash was not set up in 1970, and there is therefore no documentation on this accident that I can release.

I have now tracked down the file relating to this crash, and a thorough read of it has not turned up any information that might support any of the UFO stories that are being told about the accident. The file is classified - as are all such files on aircraft crashes - so I will not be able to release any papers. The facts of the accident are, as I indicated in my last letter, that the aircraft flew into the sea while taking part in an exercise which involved the interception of Shackleton aircraft. The facts simply do not match up with any of the allegations made in any of the articles that you kindly sent me; there was no high speed UFO, no order to ditch the aircraft, no contamination of the wreckage, and nothing unusual about the handling of the Board of Inquiry.

On another matter, when we last spoke, you mentioned that you were investigating a spate of sightings in Bonnybridge, and asked whether we had received any reports that might tie in with what was described. At the time we had not, and I can confirm that this is still the case.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40



LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)12/6

16 Nov 92

DI55c - Wg Cdr [Section 40]

CRASH OF LIGHTNING F6 XS894 - ALLEGED UFO INCIDENT

1. We spoke last week about the stories that are currently circulating concerning the crash of a Lightning F6 on 8 September 1970. Essentially, it is alleged that this aircraft was ordered to ditch following an encounter with a UFO.

2. I have attached copies of all the correspondence on this alleged encounter, together with the newspaper articles that first carried the story. I have tracked down the Aircraft Accident Report, and as you will see, there is no indication that there was any UFO sighting at any time during the period running up to the crash. The original file on the accident, which will contain the full Board of Inquiry report, is being sent to us from Archives.

3. I would be grateful for any views you have on this matter. I will keep you informed of developments.

[Section 40]

[REDACTED]

Sec(AS)2a

[Section 40]

From: Section 40 Secretariat(Air Staff)2a, Room Section 40



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building Whitehall London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct Dialling) Section 40
(Switchboard)
(Fax)

Section 40

Your reference

Our reference

D/Sec(AS)12/3

Date

12 November 1992

Dear Section 40,

Your letter to Sqn Ldr Section 40 at RAF Kinloss has been passed to this department, as we are the focal point for all enquiries on UFOs and related matters.

Following a number of recent approaches from researchers, who had heard stories that a Lightning F6 aircraft crashed on 8 September 1970, during an encounter with a UFO, I tracked down the Aircraft Accident Report (AAR) for this particular crash. This document is classified Restricted, as is the case for all AARs, and cannot therefore be released. From my reading of this document I can tell you that the Lightning was taking part in a Tactical Evaluation Exercise designed to practise the night shadowing and shepherding of low speed targets. For the purpose of the exercise, the targets involved were Shackleton aircraft. The Lightning crashed into the sea while attempting to intercept one of the Shackletons. There is no indication of any unidentified target having been encountered, and no reason to suggest that there is any sort of UFO incident in any way connected with this tragic crash.

I hope this is helpful, and I wish you luck with your own research.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40



UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

KIN/20/1/6/2/Air

Royal Air Force
Kinloss
Forres
Moray IV36 CRA

Forres Section 40

MODUK Air - SEC(AS)2

9 Nov 92

UFOs - LIGHTNING INCIDENT - 8 SEP 70

Reference: Letter from Section 40 5 Nov 92 (attached).

1. Further to our conversations about the renewed interest in the fatal accident involving a Lightning from RAF Binbrook on 8 Sep 70, I have today received the attached letter from a Section 40 - researcher (and probably entire staff of) Strange Phenomena Investigations. Enclosed with Section 40 letter are 5 articles, dated between 9 and 13 Oct 92, from the Evening Telegraph, which is apparently published by Grimsby and Scunthorpe Newspapers Ltd. Section 40 Section 40 The articles are the work of Section 40
2. I am reluctant to "add fuel to the fire" over this issue, as the newspaper articles are somewhat sensationalised, and imply that the MOD has shrouded the whole issue in a security blanket. Similarly, the articles apparently quote "official transcripts" of conversation between the Lightning pilot and the radar controller at Staxton Wold.
3. I think that the attached letter perhaps warrants a reply from you, although it is likely that any line will be interpreted by the researchers as further evidence of "sinister doings".
4. The newspaper articles are too poor to fax: they will follow in the 1st class mail.
5. Finally, I shall withhold my reply to Section 40 until I hear from you about this matter. Sorry to pass the buck, but this one could be messy if handled incorrectly.

Section 40

Sqn Ldr
for OC

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

STRANGE PHENOMENA INVESTIGATIONS

Section 40

STRANGE PHENOMENA
INVESTIGATIONS RESEARCHER

Section 40

5th November 1992.

Tele: Section 40

Dear Section 40

Please find enclosed the articles regarding the UFO sighting and subsequent loss of a XS894 Lightning aircraft (and missing pilot ?)

As I said on the phone, this case is currently being researched, not only in this country, but overseas as well, and I shall keep you up to date on any important breakthroughs. Please let me know how you got on with your own enquiries, any help from yourself would be greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Section 40

Founder S.P.I.

File note,

Sec (AS) 1 + IFS agree
this is going too far - IFS
intent to produce a MAAR
in slow time.

Section 40

13/11



Section 40

20 1 2 delete.

Section 40

has informed me that
RAF West Prayton plan to publish an article in
their station magazine re the loss of X5894.
The article draws from the existing press coverage
and then gives an account of what actually
happened. Relevant extract attached. Are you
content with this?

Section 40

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

Unclassified / Restricted

From: (Name)

Sec (AS) 1 Section 40

(Appt)

Sec IFS (RAF)

FS1A

Inspectorate of Flight Safety (RAF)

Ministry of Defence

Room: Section 40

Adastral House

Theobalds Road

London WC1X 8RU

Fax Tel:

Section 40

Section 40

Sec (AS) 2

ARTICLE 1

Date 10 NOV 92

No. of Sheets 1 + 4

IFS - Contact Tel (07) 5410

Copies to:

Please mark any return Fax Sec IFS (RAF) Room 416 AA.

On File Reference

Figure 1

CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF PETROLEUM

To: Sen. Loe Section 40
FBI
IRS
Admiral House

REVIEW OF MATERIAL FOR RAF WEST DRAYTON STATION MAGAZINE

1. The RAF West Drayton station magazine is planning to publish a story in its next issue arising from material in recent editions of the Grimsby Evening Telegraph about the loss of XS894 in Sep 1970. Sgt Ldr [redacted] has supplied me with a copy of the official report on the loss of XS894 and asked that I submit to you the material from the report which we plan to publish, for vetting.

2. I would be grateful if you would review the material I have extracted from the accident report and confirm that we may go ahead with publication. The paragraphs derived from the report are undated. My fax number is [REDACTED]

Section 40

11

Section 40

1405 10:40 CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY SADO.

P.3/5

Schaffner " Yeah..I guess, over"

Then as the Shackleton was vectored toward the planned ditching area, Schaffner prepared himself. The report states that Capt Schaffner's last transmission came as he prepared to ditch the Lightning. " Descending now GCI, over" and goes on to relate how the Shackleton arrived on the scene to see the Lightning floating on the sea, but with no sign of the pilot. Despite a search by the Shackleton and a lengthy air sea rescue operation the next day no sign of Capt Schaffner was ever found. On October 7th 1970 a Navy recovery vessel, HMS KEDDLESTONE located the remarkably intact wreckage of XS894 and brought it to the surface. The ejection seat was still in the cockpit; the canopy was still attached but open.

SHROUD OF SECRECY ON XS894

When the wreckage of XS894 was recovered it was taken straight to Binbrook and kept screened off from prying eyes in one corner of a hangar. The Evening Telegraph report states that investigators from Farnborough were allowed only a cursory inspection and goes on to imply that the real reason for the accident was suppressed and that normally well connected journalists and researchers met with evasive and closed doors when they tried to investigate the affair.

LINK REVEALS THE TRUTH ABOUT XS894!

Twenty two years on the details of military aircraft accidents are perhaps a little less closely guarded. Indeed summaries of most contemporary accident reports are regularly published in Flight and Aviation News. However, we do not think that a summary of a 1970s report has ever been published and we are indebted to the Inspectorate of Flight Safety for their permission to bring the following into the public domain, and perhaps lay the mystery of XS894 to rest at last.

On 8 Sep 70 XS894 was participating in a NATO TACEVAL exercise at RAF Binbrook. Captain W Schaffner was serving as an exchange pilot on the squadron and was relatively inexperienced on the Lightning, although he had 2 years on the F102 Delta Dagger and instructor pilot experience.

On the day of the accident Capt Schaffner was at cockpit readiness for 73 minutes before being scrambled at 1947 hrs. After taxiing the scramble order was cancelled and Schaffner returned to the dispersal where he ordered fuel only and no turn round servicing. This was countermanded by the duty engineering officer who ordered a full turnround. The turnround was delayed and during this delay the pilot was warned that he would be scrambled as soon as he was ready. He asked the

RAF
12-29 18:41 CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY SMOO.
groundcrew to expedite the turnaround, however, before it was completed he called for engine start, failed to sign the servicing certificate and taxied out at 2025 hrs. As he entered the runway a metal board and attached servicing certificate fell from the aircraft. Unknown to the station and the squadron, the TACEVAL scenario had been changed and Schaffner was being scrambled to intercept and shadow a Shackleton aircraft which was flying at 1500' and 160 kts. Such a task was not, at the time, part of the syllabus for Lightning training but it was a war role and was thus subject to Taceval.

The pilot took off at 2030 hrs and still unaware of his target was ordered to Flight Level 100 and handed over to GCI who advised him of his target's details. At a range of 28 miles he was ordered to accelerate to Mach 0.95 to expedite a rapid takeover from another Lightning. Although sounding surprised, Capt Schaffner complied and reported visual contact with lights, whereupon he commenced a series of manoeuvres to slow the aircraft down and position himself for the shadowing task. At 2041 hrs XS894 was seen by the departing Lightning at about 2000 yards astern the target in a port turn and between 300 and 1000 feet above (i.e. 2000' - 2500' above the surface). The Shackleton crew then saw the Lightning apparently very low and when, at 2042 hrs no response was received from Capt Schaffner the GCI controller initiated emergency procedures.

The wreckage was indeed recovered remarkably intact, apart from some missing fuselage panels and a broken off port wing which could be attributed to impact with the sea. Examination revealed that the aircraft had struck the sea at a low speed, in a ball-borne attitude as a minimal roll of descent. Both throttles were in the reheat gate, the gear was up, the flaps down and the door was out. The aircraft, claimed to have played the surface and come to rest comparatively slowly. There was no sign of fire or explosion and expert examination revealed no indication that the aircraft was other than serviceable on impact.

The ejection seat had been initiated but due to a malfunction it had failed to operate correctly.

[The inquiry on a difficult task in rushed circumstances had led the pilot to lose consciousness of his height and as a result he had flown into the sea.] The pilot attempted to recover the situation by ejecting, which was failed to take effect. He then initiated ejection but this was unsuccessful and having survived he manually abandoned the aircraft only to be drowned either during or after his ejection. The ejection sequence failed because of mis-sequencing which was subsequently deemed to have been culpably negligent.

CONCLUSIONS?

So, how did this tragic accident come to be represented as a sinister conspiracy of silence redolent of UFOs and official cover ups? Without doubt some elements of the official report can be seen in the

newspaper stories but eerie blue lights and hyper-sonic targets? One theory suggested by 2 former Lightning pilots who have commented on the Grimsby Evening Telegraph website is that the Tacoval scenario could have included an escalating level of alert with Kurlavik based F4s chasing supersonic intruders around the Iceland - Faeroes gap. However, there we must leave the story.

Acknowledgements

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Section 40

Sgt Ldr R A [REDACTED] (F316 at IFS) checked our material and kindly agreed to the publication of the facts extracted from the official accident report.

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

KIN/20/1/6/2/Air

Royal Air Force
Kinloss
Forres
Moray IV36 ORA

Forres Section 40

MODUK Air - SEC(AS)2

9 Nov 92

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Section 40

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Yours Sincerely,

Section 40

Founder S.P.I.

Cat-and-mouse with a 17,400mph radar blip

THE chain of events which led to the crash of Lightning XS894 from 5 Squadron at RAF Binbrook and the disappearance of its pilot began at 8.17 on the night of September 8, 1970, in an isolated building on the Shetland Islands.

Saxa Vord was one of the chain of radar stations whose task it was to spot unidentified aircraft approaching the North Sea or the sensitive "Iceland gap".

Remember, this was 1970 when the Cold War was at its height and Russian long-range aircraft made regular sorties into the North Atlantic and along the British coast to test the reaction of Nato fighters.

On this particular night, a radar operator at Saxa Vord picked up the blip of an unidentified aircraft over the North Sea halfway between the Shetlands and Alesund, in Norway.

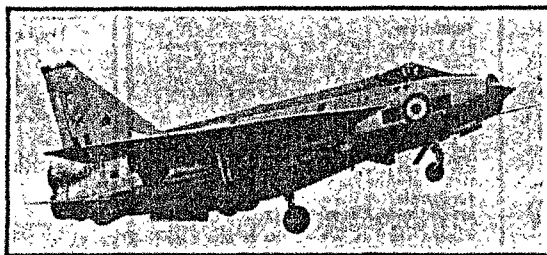
The contact was monitored for several minutes at a steady speed of 630mph, at 37,000ft, heading altitude and on a south-westerly heading. Then Saxa Vord noted the contact was turning through 30 degrees to head due south. It increased speed to 900mph (mach 1.25) and climbed to 44,000ft.

Following laid-down procedures, radar controllers at Saxa Vord flashed a scramble message to the Quick Reaction Alert Flight at the nearest Nato airfield, RAF Leuchars on the east coast of Scotland, not far from Dundee. There two Lightning interceptors, which had been ready on the flight line for just such an alert, were scrambled and within minutes were airborne and heading out over the North Sea.

After checking the position of their tanker, a Victor K1A, the two fighters were guided north by Saxa Vord. So far it was a routine scramble for what was then assumed to be a Russian Bear or Badger, the long-range reconnaissance aircraft used to test the nerves of the Royal Air Force.

But it was then that the radar plotters on the Shetland Islands saw something on their screens which they found impossible to believe.

TONIGHT we start our detailed look at the events leading up to the ditching in the North Sea of Lightning Foxtrof 94, a single-seat fighter from 5 Squadron at Binbrook whose final flight is at the centre of one of the most puzzling aviation stories since the war. Just what was it that its pilot, American William Schaffer, was sent to intercept out over the North Sea 22 years ago and why was he eventually ordered to ditch his aircraft off Flamborough Head rather than return to North Lincolnshire? Now new information has been passed to the Evening Telegraph. PAT OTTER reports on a story you may not believe ...



XS894 pictured at Binbrook in 1967. It was the first F6 Lightning delivered to 5 Squadron.

The contact they had been tracking at speeds and altitudes consistent with modern Russian warplanes turned through 180 degrees on a due north heading and within seconds disappeared off their screens. Later they calculated that to do this its speed must have been in the region of 17,400mph.

With the contact now gone, the Lightnings were vectored south to rendezvous with the tanker and remained airborne on Combat Air Patrol.

During the next hour the mystery contact reappeared several times, approaching from the north. Each time the Lightnings were sent north to intercept, it turned and disappeared again.

By now two F4 Phantoms of the US Air Force had been scrambled from the American base at Keflavik in Iceland. They had much more sophisticated radar than the British Lightnings and were able to pick up the mystery contact themselves.

But when they, too, tried to get close enough to identify what was

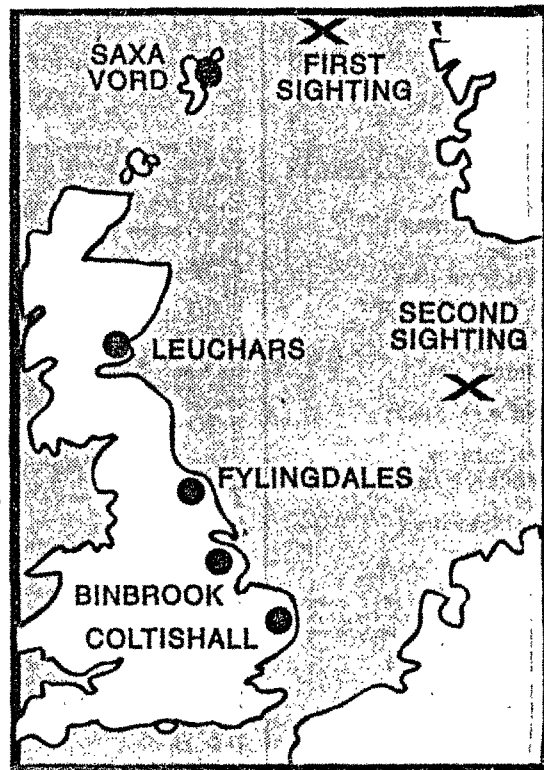
by now beginning to cause some alarm to Nato commanders, they found they were just as impotent as the Lightnings.

The alert had reached such a level that the contact was being monitored by the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System at Fylingdales Moor, near Whitby, along with a second BMEWS in Greenland.

The information they were collecting was relayed to the North American Air Defence Command at Cheyenne Mountain and the US Detection and Tracking Centre at Colorado Springs.

In the meantime, the cat-and-mouse game over the North Sea between the Lightnings and Phantoms and the mystery contact was still going on. Then, at 21.05 after the fighters had made yet another abortive attempt to get close, the contact vanished off the radar screens.

The Lightnings were ordered to return to Leuchars while the Phantoms were instructed to carry out a Combat Air Patrol to the east of Iceland.



The radar stations and airbases put on alert by the first contacts that night.

Then, at 21.39, radar controllers picked up the contact again. This time its speed was decelerating to 1,300mph — almost the limit of both the Lightnings and Phantoms — at a holding altitude of 18,000ft. It was on a south-west-only heading coming from the direction of the Skagerrak, off the northern tip of Denmark.

Two more Lightnings were scrambled from Leuchars, and were ordered to rendezvous with a Victor tanker and then maintain a CAP on a 50-mile east-west

front, 200 miles north east of Aberdeen. As a precaution, two further Lightnings were ordered into the air from Coltishall in Norfolk and, with another tanker, to form a CAP 170 miles east of Great Yarmouth. The contact was somewhere between these two lines of supersonic fighters.

While all this was going on, RAF staff at Fylingdales, which was in constant contact with NORAD at Cheyenne Mountain, heard, ominously, that the Strategic Air Command HQ at Omaha, Nebraska, was ordering its B52 bombers into the air.

It was an order which could only have come from the highest level. What had started as a routine sighting of what was believed to be a Russian aircraft, had now reached the White House and, presumably, President Richard Nixon.

NORAD was told by officials at the Pentagon that a USAF pilot of great experience was presently on an exchange visit with the RAF and was stationed at Binbrook, the North Lincolnshire fighter base a few miles from Grimsby.

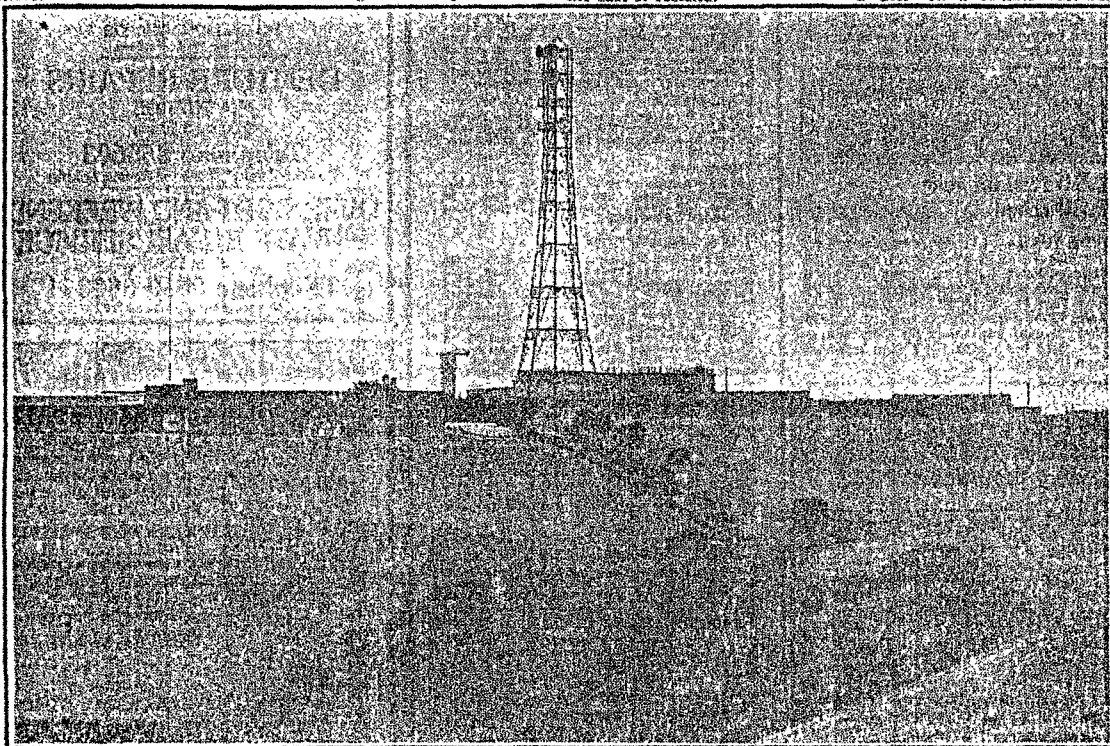
Rapid inquiries were made and it was discovered the pilot was on the station and was, by coincidence, "flight available".

At around 21.45 a request was made from a very high level within NORAD, through Strike Command's UK headquarters at High Wycombe, for RAF Binbrook to send Capt William Schaffer "if at all possible" to join the QRA Lightnings looking for the mystery contact.

By this time four Lightnings, two Phantoms and three tankers were already airborne and they were joined by a Shackleton Mk3 from Kinloss, which was ordered to patrol on a north-south heading at 3,000ft, 10 miles out from the east coast.

Binbrook's QRA Lightnings were being held in reserve, but it was decided to send out a single aircraft from the North Lincolnshire airfield — flown by Capt Schaffer. The Americans wanted one of their own at the sharp end when it came to cornering the mystery contact.

● TOMORROW: Contact over the North Sea.



Staxton Wold radar station near Scarborough — Schaffer's link on his last mission.

GRIMSBY & CO. LTD. 80 CLIFTHORPE RD. GRIMSBY DN31 3EH

'It's turning... straight for me'

CAPTAIN William Schafer was sitting in the crew room of 5 Squadron when the call came from High Wycombe.

The room overlooked the apron where a line of silver-finish Lightnings stood, illuminated by the high-intensity sodium lighting. The crew room itself was sparsely furnished, with ageing chairs which had seen better days, a bar which dispensed nothing stronger than black Nescafe and walls adorned with plaques and photographs donated by visiting



Brian Mann
— I panicked

RAF and overseas air force units.

Schafer was still in his flying suit, after returning earlier than evening from a training sortie in one of the squadron's aircraft. He is remembered by those at Binbrook as a small, powerfully-built man who loved to fly

the single-seat Lightnings, so different from the new generation of sophisticated aircraft then starting to come into service in the USAF.

When the call came, Schafer was helped into the remainder of his flying gear by other 5 Squadron aircrew, went out through the door, turned right and raced across the apron.

Two Lightnings in the line-up were actually ready for flight. One, XS894, was in the process of having its fuel tanks topped up and was already connected to a power starter.

Schafer climbed the steep ladder, hauled himself into the cockpit, strapped in and started the engines. He waved aside the groundcrew, who were expected to help carry out the standard pre-flight checks, ordered the refuelling to stop and failed to sign the regulation form signifying he was happy with the aircraft.

It was armed with two Red Top air-to-air missiles, one of which was live and the other a dummy, and enough 30mm cannon shells for a six-second burst.

One of the men on the ground crew at the time was Brian Mann of Grimsby, who was driving one of the fuel bowzers. He remembers XS894 being refuelled at a rate of 150 gallons a minute when suddenly the engines started. "The windows on the tanker almost went in. I panicked, took the hoses off and got out of the way," he was to say later.

Mr Mann remembered Schafer disengaging the groundcrew, who was the eyes and ears of the pilot on the ground, as he swung



NATO forces were being brought up to full alert by a mystery object picked up on radar over the North Sea. At first it appeared to be yet another Russian aircraft out to test the reflexes of Allied air forces. But then the object began behaving in a way which baffled radar controllers. Nuclear bombers in the United States were ordered into the air while the Pentagon decided that its man-on-the-spot, an experienced Vietnam veteran then on an exchange visit with the RAF at Binbrook, should take a look. PAT OTTER continues the story of the last flight of Foxtrof 94.

the Lightning round. "His actions were unorthodox to say the least," he said.

At 22.06 XS894 blasted off from Binbrook's main runway into the night sky. Those on the ground saw it disappear with a sheet of flame from its twin tail pipes as Schafer used rocket. It turned over the Wolds and the last they saw was its navigation lights heading out towards the North Sea.

By now the mystery contact which had led to five Lightnings, two Phantoms, three tankers and a Shackleton being scrambled over the North Sea was being tracked by radar controllers at Staxton Wold, which stands on high ground overlooking Scarborough.

The contact was flying parallel to the east coast 90 miles east of Whitby at 530mph at 6,100ft — an ideal course for an interception by a Binbrook Lightning.

What follows next is drawn from what we

have been told is the official transcript of the conversation which took place between Schafer and the radar station at Staxton Wold.

Schafer: I have visual contact, repeat visual contact. Over.

Staxton: Can you identify aircraft type?

Schafer: Negative, nothing recognisable, no clear outlines. There is... bluish light. Hell, that's bright... very bright.

Staxton: Are your instruments functioning, 94? Check compass. Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, GCI. I'm alongside it now, maybe 600ft off my... It's a conical shape. Jeeze, that's bright, it hurts my eyes to look at it for more than a few seconds.

Staxton: How close are you now?

Schafer: About 400ft, he's still in my three o'clock. Hey wait... there's something else. It's like a large soccer ball... it's like it's made of glass.

Staxton: Is it part of the object or independent? Over.

Schafer: It... no, it's separate from the main body... the conical shape... it's at the back end, the sharp end of the shape. It's like bobbing up and down and going from side to side slowly. It may be the power source. There's no sign of ballistics.

Staxton: Is there any sign of occupation? Over.

Schafer: Negative, nothing.

Staxton: Can you assess the rate...?

Schafer: Contact in descent gentle. Am going with it... 50... no about 70ft... it's levelled out again.

Staxton: Is the ball object still with it? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative. It's not actually connected... maybe a magnetic attraction to the conical shape. There's a haze of light. Ye'ow... it's within that haze. Wait a second, it's turning... coming straight for me... shit... am taking evasive action... a few... I can hardly...

Staxton: 94? Come in 94. Foxtrof 94, are you receiving? Over. Come in 94. Over.

● **NEXT INSTALMENT:** Schafer ditches and disappears.

'Alarming' greenhouse gas levels

NITROGEN dioxide levels are to be monitored in Grimsby. Four sites will be surveyed as part of a 18-year national survey of air levels of the gas.

Grimsby's Public Health and Licensing Committee approved the recommendation by Ian Bolton, Director of Environmental Services.

Nitrogen dioxide, along with carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, is one of the main greenhouse gases.

The results will offer a judgement on several government anti-pollution policies.

These have included the introduction of catalysts on motor vehicles, and low emission burners on industrial plants which are the main sources of nitrogen dioxide emissions.

The cost of monitoring will be between £500 and £600. A simple device to monitor emissions will be installed at each site. The tube will be replaced each month and taken for testing.

The need for long-term testing became apparent after a 1991 survey showed that nitrogen dioxide concentrations were about 35 per cent greater than in 1986.

"The levels are very alarming," said Mr Bolton. "The results from Grimsby in 1986 were more typical of a rural rather than an urban environment."

"Any increase since then is undesirable. However, a national policy is required to solve the problem," he added.

New safety rules lead to cutbacks in Christmas lighting

NEW safety regulations are set to make sweeping changes to Grimsby's traditional Christmas lights and decorations.

The Council's Events and Allotments Committee, which runs the town's Christmas lighting, has already been forced to spend an extra £2,500 this year to meet the standards.

And they could be asked for the same amount for the next two years until all the work has been completed.

Under the new rules the council needs new transformers if it is to put up lights in St James Square.

Victoria Street will be decorated as usual, as the pedestrianisation scheme was carried out with the regulations in mind.

But there will be no

lights this year on Cleethorpe Road, where they would hang down too low to comply with the regulations.

One-off

Pierre Bibby, Grimsby's Sports and Leisure Officer said: "If we don't pay the one-off amount this year, there wouldn't be the same amount of lighting as in previous years."

The council's extra spending means that the Chamber of Trade must provide all the funding for the charity Christmas Fair.

The committee also heard that the tree presented to Grimsby by the people of Trondheim will be moved from St James' Square to Riverhead Square and that there would be no tree this year on Hainton Avenue.

'Sorry' driver double drink driving limit

SELF-EMPLOYED Uleby glazier John McCann's erratic driving early one morning attracted the attention of a police patrol, a court heard.

And when they stopped him outside his Southfield Close home McCann (31), was unable to provide a breath sample, said Charles Appleby, prosecuting.

However a further sample taken at Grimsby Police Station revealed McCann, at 83 mcgms of alcohol in 100mls of breath, was more than double the legal limit.

He was banned from driving for 18 months and ordered to pay a £300 fine as well as £30 prosecution costs.

In court McCann said he had had a few drinks at the home of a friend.

He said he would now have to employ someone to drive for him.

"I am very sorry for what has happened," he said. "I can't afford for it to happen again."

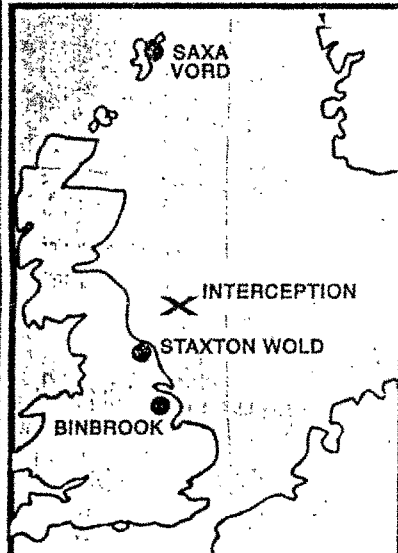
Club seeks flying start

ORGANISERS of a new birdwatching club hope young ornithologists will flock to their new venue.

The Grimsby and District branch of the RSPB wants to encourage more young people to take an interest in wildlife and join regular outdoor trips. They will now be holding monthly meetings of their junior section at the Cleethorpes Winter Gardens.

The first meeting of the Young Ornithologists Club takes place on Thursday from 6pm to 7.15pm.

Admission is 50p and parents are invited to accompany children.



The spot where the interception was made

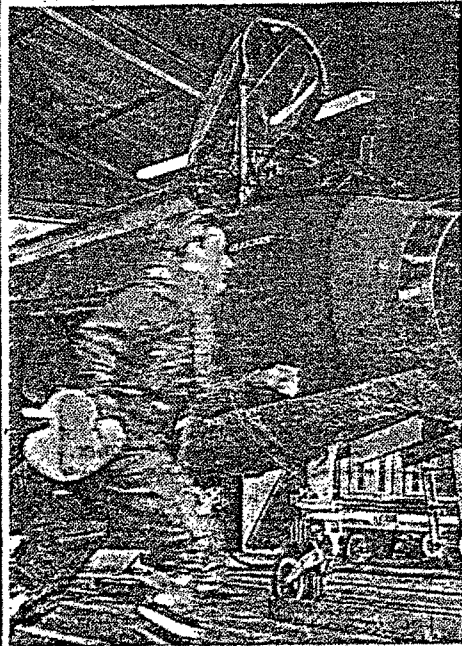


A radar controller vectored Schafer onto the mystery object

New revelations on fate of Foxtrot 94

AT precisely six minutes past 10 on the night of September 8, 1970 a single Lightning jet fighter took off from RAF Binbrook.

Ground crew on the flight line were accustomed to Lightnings being scrambled in a hurry at any time of night or day. Binbrook, after all, was a front-line fighter station and its aircraft shared QRA — Quick Reaction Alert — duty with other East Coast airfields to provide cover should any unidentified aircraft appear on the radar screens.



By
PAT OTTER

But there was something different about this scramble.

For a start, it was normal for QRA aircraft to take off in pairs. Two aircraft were kept at a state of instant readiness at all times ready for just such an emergency. But on this occasion only one aircraft took off. And it wasn't one of the QRA aircraft.

Then there was the manner of the take-off. The pilot had raced out from the 5 Squadron crew room, adjacent to the apron, and had climbed aboard while a Lightning was in the

process of being refuelled.

He angrily waved away ground staff who asked him to sign to appropriate form required before all military aircraft leave the ground and ordered the refuelling lines to be disengaged.

And this was no ordinary pilot strapped into the cockpit of the Mach 2 interceptor. His was Captain William Schafner of the United States Air Force, who was on his second tour as an exchange pilot with the RAF. Schafner was a vastly experienced jet fighter pilot with combat time behind him in Vietnam. He had been at Binbrook for some time and his wife was living on the base with him.

No pre-flight checks were made and, as bemused ground crew looked on, the Lightning taxied out to the end of the runway, turned, and immediately took off, using reheat to gain speed and height as quickly as possible.

The aircraft, XS894, a Lightning F6 of 5 Squadron, whose call-sign that night was Foxtrot 94, turned out over the North Sea and disappeared into what is fast becoming one of the great aviation puzzles of recent times.

Early the following morning, XS894 ditched in the sea off Flamborough Head. The ditching was witnessed by the crew of a Shackleton reconnaissance aircraft. Flares were spotted by the Grimsby trawler, Ross, and press contacts at the Ministry of Defence

Captain Schafner was ever found.

More than a month later the wreckage of the aircraft was found on the sea bed by Royal Navy divers. Despite earlier reports to the contrary, the cockpit was empty and the canopy closed. Captain Schafner had vanished. Completely and utterly.

Later the aircraft was recovered and taken, unusually, to RAF Binbrook. There it was kept under wraps in the corner of a hangar.

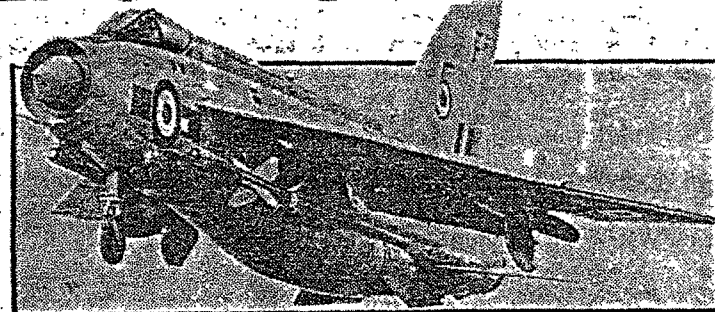
When a team from the MoD's Crash Investigation Branch arrived from Farnborough they were permitted to spend only a very brief time examining the wreckage of XS894. What they did discover disturbed them. And what happened later disturbed them even more.

I first came across the mysterious story of XS894 six years ago. An outline of the story was related to me by Barry Halpenny, an aviation enthusiast and author who lived at the time in Market Rasen, who was researching for a book on aviation mysteries at the time.

He suggested I dig out the cuttings on the crash and look further into it. There was more to the story of XS894 than met the eye, he told me.

I anticipated difficulties in investigating a 16-year-old ditching incident in the North Sea, but not on the scale I was to encounter over the next few weeks.

Normally helpful press contacts at the Ministry of Defence



responded initially by promising to help, but then became very reticent.

Similar inquiries to the United States embassy and to the US Air Force at Alconbury proved also to be dead-ends. Calls were not returned. Contacts were unavailable.

At this stage I enlisted the aid of Bob Bryant, then Northcliffe Newspapers' aviation correspondent and a man with close links with both the RAF and the USAF.

Bob was to spend weeks checking out a story he found more intriguing by the hour. He paid numerous visits to the Ministry of Defence and spent hours on the telephone to contacts in the United States. But everywhere he heard the ominous sound of doors being slammed.

He finally admitted defeat. But Bob was absolutely certain there was an official blanket of secrecy over the events surrounding the crash of that Lightning in the North Sea all those years ago.

Barry Halpenny finally published an abridged version of the story in a book which appeared in September 1988. At the same time the Evening Tele-

graph carried my own story of the mystery of XS894.

Subsequently we were contacted by two former airmen who had both been at Binbrook at the time and added further fuel to the mystery by recalling their own memories of that night.

It was a story which puzzled and intrigued thousands of Evening Telegraph readers. But, perhaps most interestingly of all, it was a story which grabbed the attention of a man spending 10 days in a Cleethorpes guest house.

Coincidence

Sixteen years earlier he had been one of the crash investigators who went to Binbrook to examine the remains of XS894. He was so puzzled by what he saw and the treatment the investigation team received that he was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery once and for all.

He had started his inquiries two years earlier and, by a strange coincidence, was in Cleethorpes following up lines of inquiry in and around Binbrook when the story appeared in the Evening Telegraph.

Now, four years on, he believes he has peeled back a little bit more of the mystery surrounding XS894 and the disappearance of Captain Schafner.

The Evening Telegraph now has a copy of his account of what he believes happened that night. Some has come from his dogged investigations. Some from official documents he has obtained. And some, most tellingly, from what he maintains in a transcript of the final conversations between Captain Schafner, a radar controller at Staxton Wold, near Scarborough, and the crew of the Shackleton which witnessed the crash.

This is the story we are going to tell over the next few nights. The information in it is quite remarkable. Our source has to remain anonymous and we cannot corroborate all the information in his report. What information we can is certainly in line with the results of my own inquiries four years ago.

All we ask you to do is to read our stories carefully and make up your own mind.

● TOMORROW: The final take off of XS894.

Mystery as pilot cannot be found

JUST as the controller at Staxton Wold lost contact with Captain Schafer, a radar operator, who had been tracking the Lightning and the mystery object it had intercepted, watched in disbelief.

The two blips on the screen, representing the fighter and its quarry, slowly merged into one, decelerated rapidly from over 500mph until they became stationary 6,000ft above the North Sea 140 miles out, off Alnwick.

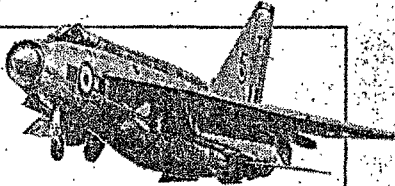
What exactly happened inside the ground control centre at Staxton is open to conjecture. But our information is that one suggestion was that the two Lightnings then on Combat Air Patrol off the Scottish coast should be sent south immediately but it was over-ruled by the senior fighter controller, who continued to try to re-establish contact with Captain Schafer in Foxtrot 94.

Two and a half minutes after the single blip on the radar screen came to a halt it started to move again, accelerating rapidly to 600mph and climbing to 9,000ft, heading south back towards Staxton.

Shortly afterwards, the single blip separated into two, one maintaining its southerly heading, somewhat erratically, at between 600 and 630mph, and descending slowly, the other turning through 180 degrees to head north-westerly and vanishing at a speed later calculated to be around 20,400mph.

While all this was going on a Shackleton MR3, which had been on patrol off the Firth

RADAR controllers at Staxton Wold, just south of Scarborough, had guided the Lightning jet fighter from Binbrook to the mystery contact which had been eluding its Nato trackers for almost four hours. The pilot, Captain William Schafer, a USAF pilot on an exchange tour with the RAF, reported seeing something not contained in any of the official aircraft recognition manuals. It was conical in shape and incredibly bright with what Schafer described as something like a "soccer ball" in its wake. Then Schafer's radio went silent. PAT OTTER continues the story of the riddle of Foxtrot 94.



SEABED HUNT FOR FIGHTER

Hopes fade for Lincs. jet pilot

Yorks Coast search for jet pilot

Binbrook jet found by divers

How the loss was reported in the Evening Telegraph and Scarborough Evening News.

of Forth, was ordered south to hold station around Flamborough Head.

Then, Staxton Wold re-established contact with Captain Schafer.

Schafer: GCI... are you receiving? Over.
Staxton: Affirmative 94. Loud and clear. What is your condition? Over.

Schafer: Not too good. I can't think what has happened... I feel kinda dizzy... I can see shooting stars.
Staxton: Can you see your instruments? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, but, er... the compass is u/s...
Staxton: Foxtrot 94.

turn 043 degrees. Over.

Schafer: Er... all directional instruments are out, repeat u/s. Over.

Staxton: Roger 94, execute right turn, estimate quarter turn. Over.

Schafer: Turning now.

Staxton: Come further, 94. That's good. Is your altimeter functioning? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, GCI.

Staxton: Descend to 3,500ft. Over.

Schafer: Roger, GCI.

Staxton: What's your fuel state, 94? Over.

Schafer: About thirty per cent, GCI.

Staxton: That's what

we calculated. Can you tell us what happened, 94? Over.

Schafer: I don't know, it came in close... I shut my eyes... I figure I must've blacked out for a few seconds.

Staxton: OK, 94. Standby.

At this stage the Shackleton arrived over Flamborough Head and began circling before XS894 was vectored into the area by the Staxton controllers.

Schafer: Can you bring me in, GCI? Over.

Staxton: Er... Held station, 94. Over.

Several minutes then

elapsed as Schafer was left to circle the Flamborough area, along with the Shackleton.

In the meantime, Strike Command HQ at High Wycombe had instructed Staxton Wold to request Schafer ditch his Lightning off Flamborough.

Although he had plenty of fuel to reach either nearby Leconfield or his home base of Binbrook, it appears the reason for High Wycombe's decision was a fear that the Lightning had somehow become contaminated during its mystery interception over the North Sea.

It may well be that the fear was that the aircraft has suffered radiation contamination although some weeks later, when the wreckage was examined at Binbrook, no trace of contamination by anything other than salt water was found.

Staxton: Foxtrot 94. Can you ditch aircraft? Over.

Schafer: She's handling fine. I can bring her in. Over.

Staxton: Negative, 94. I repeat, can you ditch aircraft? Over.

Schafer: Yeah... I

Staxton: Standby 94.

Over. Oscar 77. Over.

Shackleton: 77. Over.

Staxton: 94 is ditching.

Can you maintain wide circuit? Over.

Shackleton: Affirmative GCI. Over.

Staxton: Thanks 77.

Standby: 94, execute ditching procedure at your discretion. Over.

Schafer: Descending, now, GCI. Over.

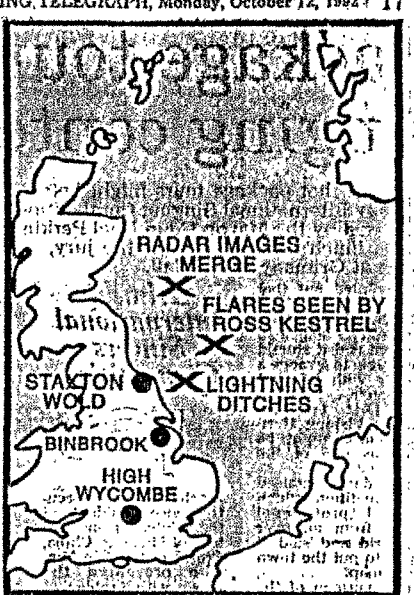
Between six and seven minutes then, the pilot of the Lightning was seen, sign of the pilot? Over.

Shackleton: Nothing GCI. The first pass was assumed he was unstrapping. He must have got out as we went round for a second pass... but why shut the canopy? Over.

Staxton: That's what we were thinking. Maintain patrol 77, he must be there somewhere. Over.

Shackleton: Roger, GCI. Over.

Shortly afterwards the search and rescue Whirlwind from nearby Leconfield arrived on the scene and began a systematic search of the ditching area. The aircraft were shortly joined by lifeboats from a Bridlington Flamborough and Filey



Shackleton: No flares either. Hang on. We're going round again. Another two minutes elapsed.

Shackleton: GCI. Over.

Staxton: Receiving you 77. Over.

Shackleton: This is odd, GCI. She's sinking fast but the canopy's closed up again. Over.

Staxton: Can you confirm pilot clear of aircraft? Over.

Shackleton: He's not in it, we can confirm that. He must be in the water somewhere.

Staxton: Any distress signals or flares yet? Over.

Shackleton: Negative, GCI. Going round again? Over.

Staxton: Ninety seconds later the crew of the Shackleton were back in contact with Staxton Wold.

Shackleton: She's sunk, GCI. There's a slight wake where she was. Still no sign of the pilot. I say again, GCI, we need a chopper.

Staxton: A Whirlwind here, fast. Over.

Shackleton: A Whirlwind on the way from Leconfield. Are you positive you saw no sign of the pilot? Over.

Shackleton: Nothing GCI. The first pass was assumed he was unstrapping. He must have got out as we went round for a second pass... but why shut the canopy? Over.

Staxton: That's what we were thinking. Maintain patrol 77, he must be there somewhere. Over.

Shackleton: Roger, GCI. Over.

Shortly afterwards the search and rescue Whirlwind from nearby Leconfield arrived on the scene and began a systematic search of the ditching area. The aircraft were shortly joined by lifeboats from a Bridlington Flamborough and Filey

as the weather began to deteriorate. The search continued well into the next day but there were no transmissions from the beacons carried by the pilot and on board the aircraft and the official reports say no distress flares were seen.

However, the following day the Evening Telegraph reported flares had been seen about 10 miles offshore and the Grimby trawler Ross Kestrel, which was passing through the Flamborough area, had gone to investigate. But even though more flares were seen, the found nothing.

The Telegraph also reported that Captain Schafer's wife was at Binbrook waiting for news of her husband.

But the Ministry of Defence were doubtful whether there would be any good news for her. "I don't think he got out of the plane," a spokesman told a reporter. "No wreckage has been found."

Three weeks later the Evening Telegraph reported that the fuselage of the aircraft had been floated by the seabed.

On October 7, the Telegraph reported that divers from HMS Keddleston had inspected the wreckage and said: Captain Schafer's body was still in the cockpit.

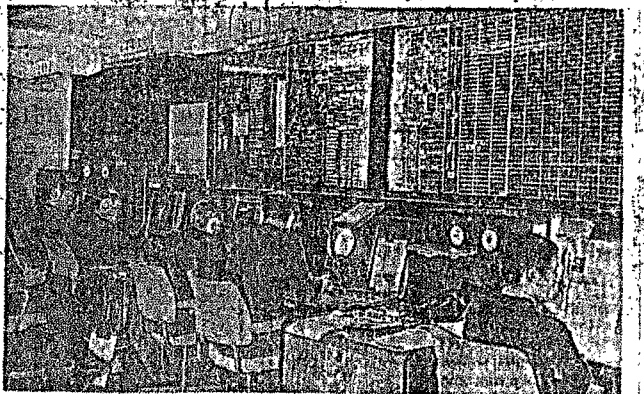
But that was the start of the biggest mystery of all. When the aircraft was brought to the surface, there was no trace of Captain Schafer. Just an empty cockpit.

● TOMORROW: A cloak of secrecy.



When the Shackleton came round again the Lightning's canopy had closed.

Illustration by TREVOR HARRIES.



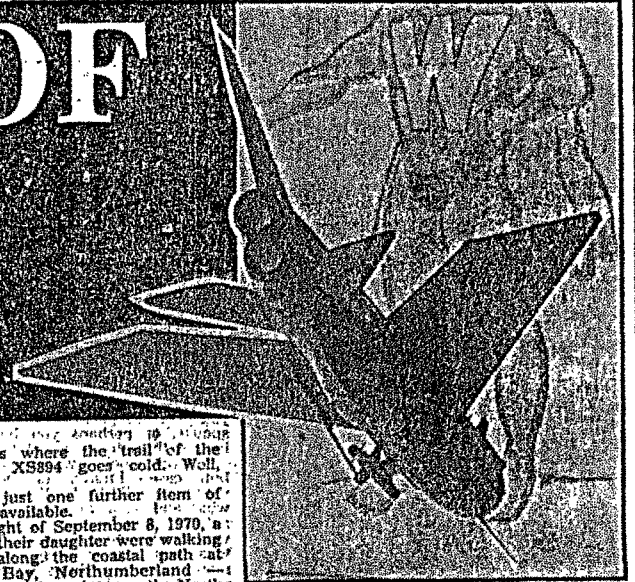
The radar plotters watched as the Lightning slowly went down.

THE loss of the Binbrook Lightning and its American pilot had simply been reported as just another air crash, by newspapers along the north-east coast of England. Repor-

ters were used to handling stories like this, which occurred with some regularity. The ditching of XS894 provided front-page stories for the Grimsby Evening Telegraph and the

Scarborough Evening News on September 9, 1970. But they only told part of the story. PAT OTTER concludes our investigation into the Riddle of Foxtrot 94.

SHROUD OF SECRECY ON XS894



WHEN the wreckage of XS894 was finally lifted from the sea bed some five miles off Flamborough Head, it was taken in some secrecy straight to RAF Binbrook.

Air crashes in the North Sea in those days were relatively common and much of the wreckage found its way into Grimsby where often Evening Telegraph photographers were on hand to record the event. But not with XS894.

It was also common practice for wrecked aircraft to be taken to the MoD's Crash Investigation Branch at Farnborough where detailed examinations were carried out in an attempt to find the cause of accidents. But this didn't happen with XS894.

Instead the remains of the aircraft, which was in remarkably good condition, were taken straight to Binbrook where it was placed behind what appears to have been a series of shutters in the far corner of a hangar.

A team from Farnborough arrived one wet winter's day at Binbrook in the belief that they were about to start a detailed investigation which, in turn, would lead to the preparation of a report on the incident to the Ministry of Defence, the report being used as the basis for an eventual inquiry into the loss of Lightning XS894. But they were in for a surprise.

They were astonished to find many of the cockpit instruments missing. These included the EZB compass, voltmeter, standby direction indicator, standby inverter indicator and the complete auxiliary warning panel from the starboard side of the cockpit below the voltmeter. This was a serious breach of regulations and, although the investigation team was promised the instruments would be returned shortly, they never were.

The investigators found there was a revolting fusty smell in the cockpit while the whole aircraft still had a slimy feel to it following its month-long immersion in

the North Sea.

The ejector seat also seemed to be 'wrong' and there was a suspicion later among the investigators that it was not the one fitted to the aircraft when XS894 took off from Binbrook on its final flight. They were even given an assurance by the OC of 5 Squadron that the seat had not been tampered with. But some of the investigators were not convinced.

Interestingly, an Evening Telegraph reader, who was serving at Binbrook at the time, told us in 1988 that he recalled seeing an official report on the crash which suggested that the seat was faulty and this was why Captain Schafer failed to eject.

Brian McConnell, a former sergeant at Binbrook, said the cartridge on the seat had failed to fire because of faulty installation. However, this is very much at odds with the eye-witness account of the Shackleton crew who saw the canopy raised. Had any attempt been made to fire it, it would have been blown off. It also seems to conflict with the account we have been given of the order from Staxton Wold to Captain Schafer to ditch his aircraft rather than attempt to return to Binbrook or land at Leconfield, only a few minutes' flying time from Farnborough. And, remember, Schafer has told his ground controllers that XS894 was still handling 'fine' and he had plenty of fuel left.

During the few hours the investigators were allowed to examine the aircraft, they themselves were constantly supervised by five civilians, two of them Americans.

At the end of the day the investigation team was told curtly that as nothing useful had been discovered, their job was over.

The following day they were all called into the main office at Farnborough and told in no uncertain terms they were not to discuss any aspect of the ditching of XS894, even with their own families. The reason given was simple — national security.

And that's where the 'trail' of the mystery of XS894 goes cold. Well, almost. There is just one further item of information available.

On the night of September 8, 1970, a couple and their daughter were walking their dog along the coastal path at Alnmouth Bay, Northumberland — almost opposite the point over the North Sea where Schafer made his interception — when they saw and heard something strange.

"We had been walking for maybe 10 minutes when we heard a very high-pitched humming noise," they later said in a statement to MoD personnel. "The dog kept cocking her head to one side and growling. It seemed impossible to tell from which direction the noise was coming, it seemed everywhere. It lasted for maybe 10 to 15 seconds.

"About five minutes later the eastern sky lit up rather like sheet lightning, only it took about 10 seconds to die down again. Over the following three minutes this happened many times, but the lightning was only visible for a second or two at a time. It appeared very similar to the Northern Lights. The whole spectacle was completely silent.

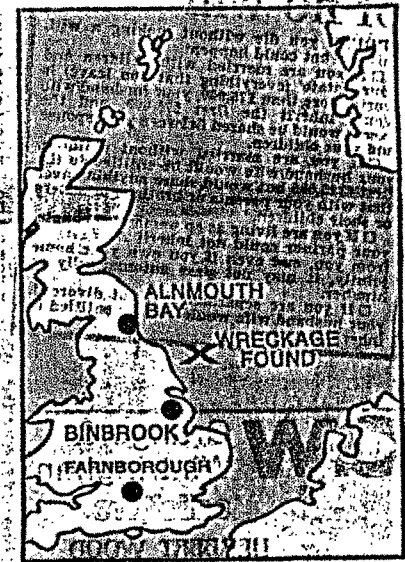
"After two or three minutes there was another flare-up of sheet lightning, which lasted about the same time as the first. This was followed by that awful shrill sensation, only this time it was worse. You could actually feel your ears ringing."

The family called in at the local police station to report what they had seen and heard. Theirs was one of many similar reports that night to both the police and the RAF at nearby Boulmer.

The time and the location fit in exactly with events going on 60 miles south at Staxton Wold and they could have been watching some kind of natural phenomena.

Or there could be another explanation. What do you think? — *Pat Otter*

INVESTIGATORS' JOB CURTAILED





MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building Whitehall London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct Dialling) Section 40
(Switchboard)
(Fax)

See also E 70, 76 + 80

Section 40

Your reference

Our reference

D/Sec(AS)12/3

Date

5 November 1992

Dear

Section 40

I thought it would be useful if I wrote to confirm the points I made yesterday when we spoke about the crash of a Lightning F6 aircraft, on 8 September 1970.

Following a number of approaches from researchers, who had heard stories that this aircraft had crashed during an encounter with a UFO, I tracked down the Aircraft Accident Report (AAR) for this particular crash. This document is classified Restricted, as is the case for all AARs, and cannot therefore be released. From my reading of this document I can tell you that the Lightning was taking part in a Tactical Evaluation Exercise designed to practise the night shadowing and shepherding of low speed targets. For the purpose of the exercise, the targets involved were Shackleton aircraft. The Lightning crashed into the sea while attempting to intercept one of the Shackletons. There is no indication of any unidentified target having been encountered, and no reason to suggest that there is any sort of UFO incident in any way connected with this tragic crash.

As I mentioned, I am trying to track down further papers relating to this accident, in the hope that there will be an Unclassified Military Aircraft Accident Summary (MAAS), that I can release. Given the time that has elapsed since the accident, there are no guarantees that I will be successful. I will let you know what, if anything, I track down.

I hope this is helpful, and I wish you luck with your own research.

Yours Sincerely,

Section 40





Section 40

Mr. Section 40
 Secretariat (Air Staff)2a,
 Room Section 40
 Ministry Of Defence,
 Main Building,
 Whithall,
 London SW1A 2HB.

TE

5. 11. 92.

Dear Section 40

Pleased find enclosed the newspaper articles on the strange circumstances surrounding Capt. Schafer and his lightening aircraft, call sign Foxtrot 94.

I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions from the files in your possession. Obviously within the areas of your permitted release instructions, although after 22 years I find it hard to imagine what is still secret about the operation. Unless the aircraft did have an encounter with a UFO.

- 1/ Why was an American pilot scrambled to intercept the object, when English pilots were on duty at scramble readiness ready to fly identical aircraft from the same base.
- 2/ Why was the lightening aircraft left in the water for such a long period after crashing. Was there any fear of contamination from whatever it had encountered.
- 3/ Why was the pilot ordered to ditch the aircraft when he told the control that the aircraft was airworthy and had plenty of fuel.
- 4/ What were the findings of the enquiry into the the missing pilot, particularly when the aircraft canopy was closed when the aircraft was recovered and the ejector seat was still in position.

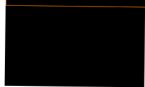
5/ What were the findings of the enquiry regarding the amazing speeds of the UFO tracked on radar in excess of 20,000 mph.

6/ Where there any electro/magnetic abnormalities found when the aircraft was examined.

I would be grateful for any answers you could let me have which would throw some light on this incident.

Yours Sincerely.

Section 40

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Making sense of lights in the sky

UFOS over Humberside are not just the experience of fighter pilots — one Bridlington mother is still trying to make sense of what she saw 20 years ago. After reading the Hull Daily Mail's account of one of the most puzzling aviation stories of the century, Mrs June Cooper recalled what she saw in 1970 — and is seeking others who might also have seen something, but who have kept quiet until now.

In a two-part feature the Mail looked at events leading up to the final flight of a fighter plane before it ditched in the sea off Flamborough Head.

Mrs Cooper was in her Queensgate home one September afternoon about 20 years ago while her four-year-old son Grahame was playing in the garden. He came rushing in and with

By Hull Daily Mail

NEWS REPORTER

great excitement insisted that his mum hurry out to the garden to see the strange objects in the sky.

Mrs Cooper said: "When I got outside I could see bright things in the sky. But it wasn't until I got out my binoculars and had a good look that they became clear.

"Through the binoculars I could see six saucer-like objects. They were silver metallic with centres like the jet exhaust of a plane.

"I was even more amazed to see yellow and orange swirling flames inside the centres."

Just then Mrs Cooper's telephone rang and she went indoors to answer it. When she got back to the garden the objects had disappeared.

Mrs Cooper said: "I told my husband and family what I

had seen, but none of my neighbours were home when it happened and I didn't mention it to them.

"It is not the sort of thing that happens in Bridlington, so I didn't want anyone to think I had imagined it.

"But I know what I saw, and Grahame still remembers it. I couldn't wait to read the papers next day and listen to the news, but there was no mention of anything out of the ordinary having happened in this area."

Mrs Cooper's family forgot the incident until she read the Mail's story.

She added: "It brought it all back to me and I could not help wondering if the incidents were connected.

"They both happened about the same time. I would be interested to know if anyone else witnessed what I saw that afternoon."

Cash for community schemes

GUARDIANS of two similarly-titled funds to help rural areas are hoping confusion surrounding them will be dispelled after a shake-up.

Humberside Community Chest and Humberside Economic Chest were administered by the Community Council of Humberside and Humberside County Council respectively.

After a meeting last week, the county council agreed to relinquish control of the Economic Chest, in favour of the Community Council, a registered charity based in Howden which tries to help rural communities.

Mr Roger Newton, project officer with the Community Council of Humberside said very often in the past, the funds in the two chests

had remained unclaimed because people did not know anything about them, or even that they existed.

"From now on, the Community Council will administer both funds. Both are aimed at encouraging community initiatives but the Economic Chest is more from community enterprise, whereas the Community Chest is more for social projects.

"From now on, both will be under one heading and we will sort out from which pot a particular project may be funded."

All district councils in Humberside contribute to the Community Chest. Holderness Borough Council has given £750 for the past three years.

To NIGHTS Hull Daily Mail : TUES 3RD NOVEMBER 1992



PAT OTTER

TONIGHT we start our two-part detailed look at the events leading up to the ditching in the North Sea of Lightning Foxtro 94, a single-seat fighter from 5 Squadron at Binbrook whose final flight is at the centre of one of the most puzzling aviation stories since the war. Just what was it that its pilot, American, William Schafer, was sent to intercept out over the North Sea 22 years ago and why was he eventually ordered to ditch his aircraft off Flamborough Head rather than return to North Lincolnshire? Now new information has come to light. Pat Otter, assistant editor of the Mail's sister paper, The Grimsby Evening Telegraph, reports.

At last, the sensational true story behind Capt Schafer

The chain of events which led to the crash of Lightning XS894 from 5 Squadron at RAF Binbrook and the disappearance of its pilot began at 8.17pm on the night of September 8, 1970, in an isolated building on the Shetland Islands. Saxa Vord was one of the chain of radar stations whose task it was to spot unidentified aircraft approaching the North Sea or the sensitive 'Iceland gap'. Remember, this was 1970 when the Cold War was at its height and Russian long-range aircraft made regular sorties into the North Atlantic and along the British coast to test the reaction of Nato fighters. On this particular night, a radar operator at Saxa Vord picked up the blip of an unidentified aircraft over the North Sea halfway between the Shetlands and Alesund in Norway. The contact was monitored for several minutes at a steady speed of 630mph, at 37,000ft holding altitude and on a south-westerly heading. Then Saxa Vord noted the contact was turning through 30 degrees to head due south. It increased speed to 900mph (Mach 1.25) and climbed to 44,000ft. Following laid-down procedures, radar controllers at Saxa Vord flashed a scramble message to the Quick Reaction Alert Flight at the nearest Nato airfield, RAF Leuchars on the east coast of Scotland not far from Dundee. There two Lightning interceptors, which had been ready on the flight line for just such an alert, were scrambled and within



After checking the position of their tanker, a Victor K1A, the two fighters were guided north by Saxa Vord. So far, it was a routine scramble for what was then assumed to be a Russian Bear or Badger, the long-range reconnaissance aircraft used to test the nerves of the Royal Air Force.

But it was then that the radar plotters on the Shetland Islands saw something on their screens which they found impossible to believe.

The contact they had been tracking at speeds and altitudes consistent with modern Russian warplanes, turned through 180 degrees on a due north heading and within seconds disappeared off their screens. Later they calculated that to do this its speed must have been in the region of 17,400mph.

With the contact now gone, the Lightnings were vectored south to rendezvous with the tanker and remained airborne on Combat Air Patrol.

During the next hour, the mystery contact reappeared several times, approaching from the north. Each time the Lightnings were sent north to intercept, it turned and disappeared again. By now two F4 Phantoms of the US Air Force had been scrambled from the American base at Keflavik in Iceland. They had much more sophisticated radar than the British Lightnings and were able to pick up the mystery contact themselves.

But when they, too, tried to get close enough to identify what was by now beginning to cause some alarm to Nato commanders, they found they were just as impotent as the Lightnings.

The alert had reached such a level that the contact was being monitored by the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System at Fylingdales Moor, near Whitby, along with a second BMEWS in Greenland.

The information they were collecting was relayed to the North American Air Defence Command at Cheyenne Mountain and the US Detection and Tracking Centre at Colorado Springs.

In the meantime, the cat-and-mouse game over the North Sea between the



Lightnings and Phantoms on one hand and the mystery contact, was still going on. Then, at 21.05 after the fighters had made yet another abortive attempt to get close, the contact vanished off the radar screens.

The Lightnings were ordered to return to Leuchars while the Phantoms were instructed to carry out a Combat Air Patrol to the east of Iceland.

Then, at 21.39, radar controllers picked up the contact again. This time its speed was decelerating to 1,300mph - almost the limit of both the Lightnings and Phantoms - at a holding altitude of 18,000ft. It was on a south-westerly heading coming from the direction of the Skagerrak, off the northern tip of Denmark.

Two more Lightnings were scrambled from Leuchars, and were ordered to rendezvous with a Victor tanker and then maintain a CAP on a 50-mile east-west front, 200 miles north-east of Aberdeen.

As a precaution, two further Lightnings were ordered into the air from Coltishall in Norfolk and, with another tanker, to

form a CAP 170 miles east of Grimsby. The contact was some distance between these two lines of super fighters.

While all this was going on, RAF Fylingdales, which was in constant contact with NORAD at Cheyenne Mountain, heard ominously, that the Strategic Air Command HQ at Omaha, Nebraska was ordering its bombers into the air.

It was an order which only have come from the highest level. What started as a routine sighting of what was believed to be a Russian aircraft, had now reached the White House and, presumably, President Richard Nixon.

Richard Nixon. NORAD was told by officials at the Pentagon that a USAF pilot of great experience was presently on an visit with the RAF and was stationed at Binbrook, the North Lincolnshire base a few miles from Grimsby. Rapid inquiries were made and discovered the pilot was on the flight and was, by coincidence, 'flight'. At around 21.45 a request was made

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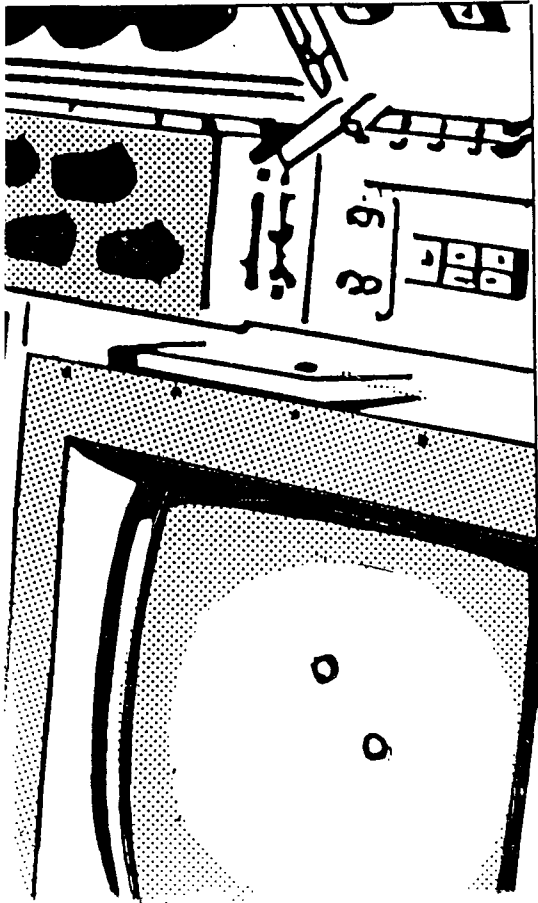
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Tomorrow: Revealed - what Capt Schafer e

the ditching of Lightning Foxtrot 94 in September, 1970

Schafer's last flight



QRA - Quick Reaction Alert - duty with other East Coast airfields to provide cover should any unidentified aircraft appear on the radar screens. But there was something different about this scramble.

For a start, it was normal for QRA aircraft to take off in pairs. Two aircraft were kept at a state of instant readiness at all times ready for just such an emergency. But on this occasion only one aircraft took off. And it wasn't one of the QRA aircraft. Then there was the manner of the take-off. The pilot had raced out from the 5 Squadron crew room, adjacent to the apron, and had climbed aboard while a Lightning was in the process of being refuelled.

He angrily waved away ground staff who asked him to sign the appropriate form required before all military aircraft leave the ground and ordered the refuelling lines to be disengaged. And this was no ordinary pilot strapped into the cockpit of the Mach 2 interceptor. This was Captain William Schafer of the United States Air Force, who was on his second tour as an exchange pilot with the RAF. Schafer was a vastly experienced jet fighter pilot with combat time behind him in Vietnam. He had been at Binbrook for some time and his wife was living on the base with him.

No pre-flight checks were made and, as bemused ground crew looked on, the Lightning taxied out to the end of the runway, turned and immediately took off, using reheated to gain speed and height

Calls were not returned. Contacts were unavailable.

At this stage I enlisted the aid of Bob Bryant, then Northcliffe Newspapers' aviation correspondent and a man with close links with both the RAF and USAF. Bob was to spend weeks checking out a story he found more intriguing by the hour. He paid numerous visits to the Ministry of Defence and spent hours on the telephone to contacts in the United States. But everywhere he heard the ominous sound of doors being slammed. He finally admitted defeat. But Bob was absolutely certain there was an official blanket of secrecy over the events surrounding the crash of that Lightning's in the North Sea all those years ago. Barry Halpenny finally published an abridged version of the story in a book which appeared in September, 1988. Subsequently we were contacted by two former airmen who had both been at Binbrook at the time and added further fuel to the mystery by recalling their own memories of that night.

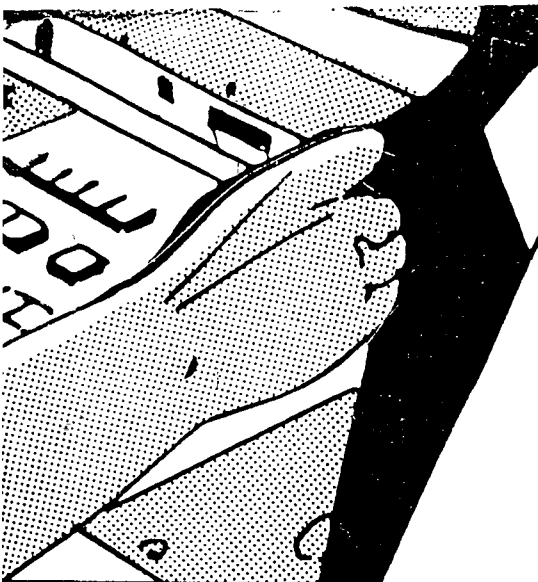
It was a story which puzzled and intrigued readers. But, perhaps most interestingly of all, it was a story which grabbed the attention of a man spending 10 days in a Cleethorpes guest house. Sixteen years earlier he had been one of the crash investigators who went to

Binbrook to examine the remains of XSW894. He was so puzzled by what he saw and the treatment the investigation team received that he was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery once and for all.

Now, four years on, he believes he has peeled back a little bit more of the mystery surrounding XSW894 and the disappearance of Captain Shafner. I now have a copy of his account of what he believes happened that night. Some has come from his dogged investigations. Some from official documents he has obtained. And some, most tellingly, from what he maintains is a transcript of the final conversations between Captain Schafer, a radar controller at Staxton Wold, near Scarborough, and the crew of the Shackleton which witnessed the crash.

This is the story we are going to tell tomorrow. The information in it is quite remarkable. Our source has to remain anonymous and we cannot corroborate all the information in his report. What information we can is certainly in line with the results of my own inquiries four years ago.

All we ask you to do is to read our stories carefully - and make up your own mind.



North Sea - and disappeared into what is fast becoming one of the great aviation puzzles of recent times. Early the following morning XSW894 ditched in the sea off Flamborough Head. The ditching was witnessed by the crew of a Shackleton reconnaissance aircraft. Flares were spotted by the Grimsby trawler Ross Kestrel as reported in the Hull Daily Mail. But no trace of Captain Schafer was ever found.

More than a month later the wreckage of the aircraft was found on the sea bed by Royal Navy divers. Despite earlier reports to the contrary, the cockpit was empty and the canopy closed. Captain Schafer had vanished. Completely and utterly.

Later the aircraft was recovered and taken, unusually, to RAF Binbrook. There it was kept under wraps in the corner of a hangar.

When a team from the MoD's Crash Investigation Branch arrived from Farnborough they were permitted to spend only a very brief time examining the wreckage of XSW894. What they did discover disturbed them. And what happened later disturbed them even more.

I first came across the mysterious story of XSW894 six years ago. An outline of the story was related to me by Barry Halpenny, an aviation enthusiast and author who lived at the time in Market Rasen, who was researching for a book on aviation mysteries at the time.

He suggested I dig out the cuttings on the crash and look further into it. There was more to the story of XSW894 than met the eye, he told me.

I anticipated difficulties in investigating a 16-year-old ditching incident in the North Sea, but not on the scale I was to encounter over the next few weeks.

Normally helpful press contacts at the Ministry of Defence responded initially by promising to help, but then became very reticent.

Similar inquiries to the United States embassy and to the US Air Force at Alconbury proved also to be dead-ends.

a very high level within NORAD, through Strike Command's UK headquarters at High Wycombe, for RAF Binbrook to send Captain William Schafer "if at all possible" to join the QRA Lightnings looking for the mystery contact. By this time four Lightnings, two Phantoms and three tankers were already airborne and they were joined by a Shackleton Mk3 from Kinloss, which was ordered to patrol on a north-south heading at 3,000ft, 10 miles out from the east coast. Binbrook's QRA Lightnings were being held in reserve but it was decided to send out a single aircraft from the North Lincolnshire airfield - flown by Capt Schafer. The Americans wanted one of their own at the sharp end when it came to cornering the mystery contact.

At precisely six minutes past 10 on the night of September 8, 1970, a single Lightning jet fighter took off from RAF Binbrook. Ground crew on the flight line were accustomed to Lightnings being scrambled in a hurry at any time of night or day. Binbrook, after all, was a front-line fighter station and its aircraft shared

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countered off Flamborough Head

In yesterday's Mail we revealed how an unidentified flying object evaded fight

'Hell, that's bright



PAT OTTER

NATO forces were being brought up to full alert by a mystery object picked up on radar over the North Sea. At first it appeared to be yet another Russian aircraft out to test the reflexes of Allied air forces. But then the object began behaving in a way which baffled radar controllers. Nuclear bombers in the United States were ordered into the air while the Pentagon decided that its man-on-the-spot, an experienced Vietnam veteran then on an exchange visit with the RAF at Binbrook, should take a look. Pat Otter concludes the story of the last flight of Foxtrot 94.

Captain William Schafer was sitting in the crew room of 5 Squadron when the call came from High Wycombe. The room overlooked the apron where a line of silver-finish Lightnings stood, illuminated by the high-intensity sodium lighting. The crew room itself was sparsely furnished, with ageing chairs which had seen better days, a bar which dispensed nothing stronger than black Nescafe, and walls adorned with plaques and photographs donated by visiting RAF and overseas air force units. Schafer was still in his flying suit, after returning earlier that evening from a training sortie in one of the squadron's aircraft. He is remembered by those at Binbrook as a small, powerfully-built man who loved to fly the single-seat Lightnings, so different from the new generation of sophisticated aircraft then starting to come into service in the USAF. When the call came, Schafer was helped into the remainder of his flying gear by other 5 Squadron aircrew, went out through the door, turned right and raced across the apron. Two Lightnings in the line-up were virtually ready for flight. One, XS894, was in the process of having its fuel tanks topped up and was already connected to a power starter. Schafer climbed the steep ladder, hauled himself into the cockpit, strapped in and started the engines. He waved aside the ground crew, who were expected to help carry out the standard pre-flight checks, ordered the refuelling to stop and failed to sign the regulation form signifying he was happy with the aircraft. It was armed with two Red Top air-to-air missiles, one of which was live and the other a dummy, and

enough 30mm cannon shells for a six-second burst. One of the men on the ground crew at the time was Brian Mann of Grimsby, who was driving one of the fuel bowlers. He remembers XS894 being refuelled at a rate of 150 gallons a minute when suddenly the engines started. "The windows on the tanker almost went in. I panicked, took the hoses off and got out of the way," he was to say later. Mr Mann remembered Schafer disregarding the ground marshal, who was the eyes and ears of the pilot on the ground, as he swung the Lightning round. "His actions were unorthodox to say the least," he said.

At 22.06 XS894 blasted off from Binbrook's main runway into the night sky. Those on the ground saw it disappear with a sheet of flame from its twin tail pipes as Schafer used reheats. It turned over the Wolds and the last they saw was its navigation lights heading out towards the North Sea.

By now the mystery contact which had led to five Lightnings, two Phantoms, three tankers and a Shackleton being scrambled over the North Sea was being tracked by radar controllers at Staxton Wold, which stands on high ground overlooking Scarborough.

The contact was flying parallel to the east coast 90 miles east of Whitby at 530mph at 6,100ft — an ideal course for an interception by a Binbrook Lightning. What follows next is drawn from what we have been told is the official transcript of the conversation which took place between Schafer and the radar station at Staxton Wold.

Schafer: I have visual contact, repeat visual contact. Over.

Staxton: Can you identify aircraft type?

Schafer: Negative, nothing recognisable, no clear outlines. There is bluish light. Hell, that's bright very bright.

Staxton: Are your instruments functioning, 94? Check compass. Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, GCI. I'm alongside it now, maybe 600ft off my It's a conical shape. Jeeze, that's bright, it hurts my eyes to look at it for more than a few seconds.

Staxton: How close are you now?

Schafer: About 400ft, he's still in my three o'clock. Hey wait there's something else. It's like a large soccer ball it's like it's made of glass.

Staxton: Is it part of the object or independent? Over.

Schafer: It no, it's separate from the main body the conical shape it's at the back end, the sharp end of the shape.

It's like bobbing up and down and going from side to side slowly. It may be the power source. There's no sign of ballistics.

Staxton: Is there any sign of occupation? Over.

Schafer: Negative, nothing.

Staxton: Can you assess the rate?

Schafer: Contact in descent gentle. Am going with it 50ft no about 70ft it's levelled out again.

Staxton: Is the ball object still with it? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative. It's not actually connected maybe a magnetic attraction to the conical shape. There's a haze of light. Ye'ow it's within that haze.

Wait a second, it's turning coming straight for me am taking evasive action a few I can hardly.....

Staxton: 94? Come in 94. Foxtrot 94, are you receiving? Over. Come in 94. Over.

Just as the controller at Staxton Wold lost contact with Captain Schafer, a radar operator, who had been tracking the Lightning and the mystery object it had intercepted, watched in disbelief.

The two blips on the screen, representing the fighter and its quarry, slowly merged into one, decelerated rapidly from over 500mph until they became stationary 6,000ft above the North Sea 140 miles out off Alnwick.

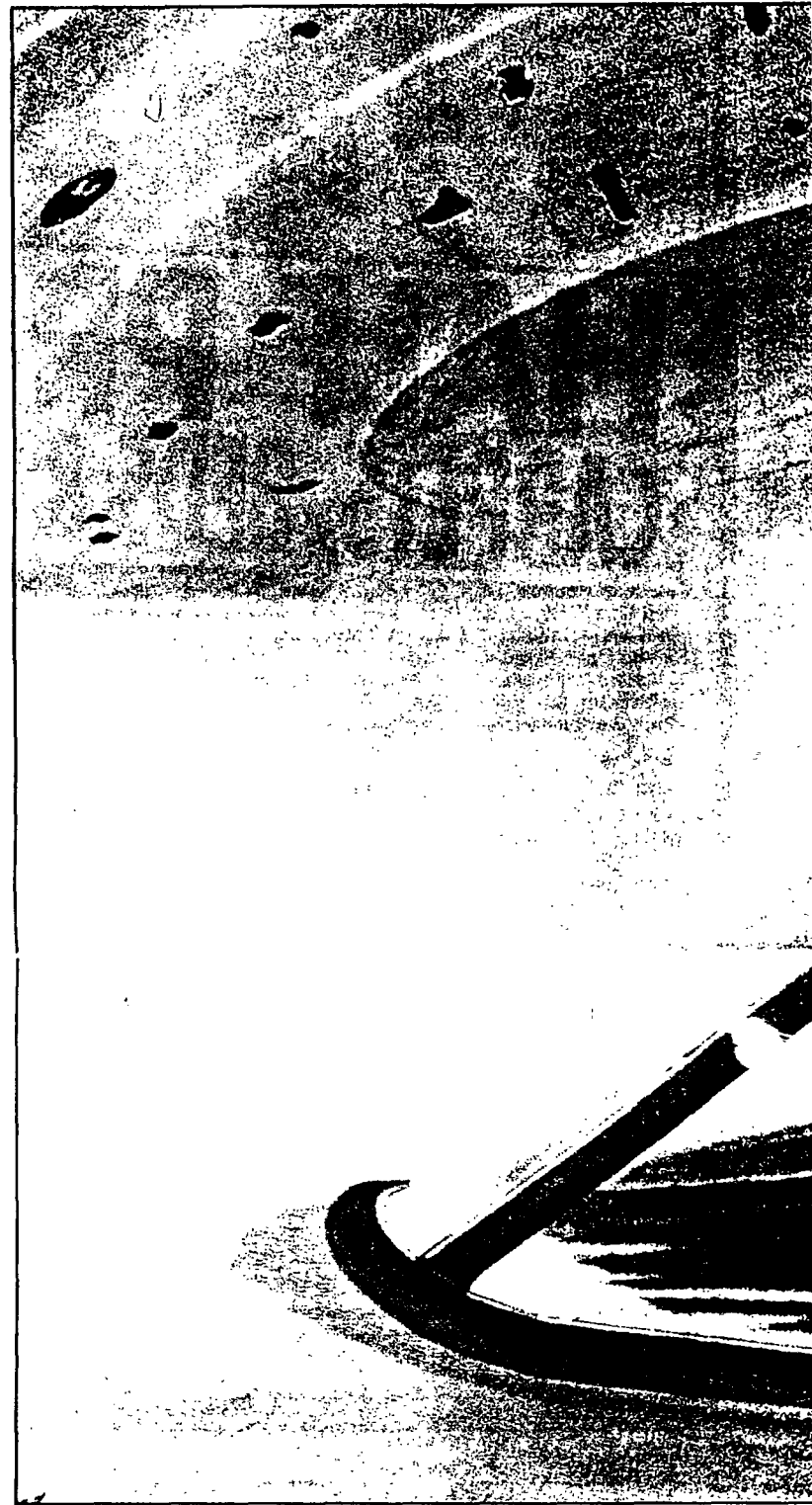
What exactly happened inside the ground control centre at Staxton is open to conjecture. But our information is that one suggestion was the two Lightnings then on Combat Air Patrol off the Scottish coast should be sent south immediately but it was overruled by the senior fighter controller, who continued to try to re-establish contact with Captain Schafer in Foxtrot 94.

Two-and-a-half-minutes after the single blip on the radar screen came to a halt it started to move again, accelerating rapidly to 600mph and climbing to 9,000ft, heading south back towards Staxton.

Shortly afterwards, the single blip separated into two, one maintaining its southerly heading, somewhat erratically, at between 600 and 630mph and descending slowly, the other turning through 180 degrees to head north-westerly and vanishing at a speed later calculated to be around 20,400mph. While all this was going on, a Shackleton MR3, which had been on patrol off the Firth of Forth, was ordered south to hold station around Flamborough Head.

Then, Staxton Wold re-established contact with Captain Schafer.

Schafer: GCI are you receiving? Over.



Staxton: Affirmative 94. Loud and clear. What is your condition? Over.

Schafer: Not too good. I can't think what has happened I feel kinda dizzy I can see shooting stars.

Staxton: Can you see your instruments? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, but, er the compass is u/s.....

Staxton: Foxtrot 94, turn 043 degrees. Over.

Schafer: Er all directional instruments are out, repeat u/s. Over.

Staxton: Roger 94, execute right turn, estimate quarter turn. Over.

Schafer: Turning now.

Staxton: Come further, 94. That's good. Is your altimeter functioning? Over.

Schafer: Affirmative, GCI.

Staxton: Descend to 3,500ft. Over.

Schafer: Roger, GCI.

Staxton: What's your fuel state, 94? Over.

Schafer: About thirty per cent, GCI.

Staxton: That's what we calculated. Can you tell us what happened, 94? Over.

Schafer: I don't know. It came in close I shut my eyes I figure I must've blacked out for a few seconds.

Staxton: OK 94. Standby.

At this stage the Shackleton arrived over Flamborough Head and began circling before XS894 was vectored into the area by the Staxton controllers.

Schafer: Can you bring me in, GCI? Over.

Staxton: Er Hold station, 94. Over.

Several minutes then elapsed as Schafer was left to circle the Flamborough area along with the Shackleton.

In the meantime, Strike Command HQ at High Wycombe had instructed Staxton Wold to request Schafer ditch his Lightning off Flamborough.

Although he had plenty of fuel to reach either nearby Leconfield or his home base of Binbrook, it appears the reason for High Wycombe's decision was a fear that the Lightning had somehow become contaminated during its mystery interception over the North Sea. It may well be that the fear was that the aircraft had suffered radiation contamination although some weeks later, when the wreckage was examined at Binbrook, there



FLASHBACK to the Hull Daily Mail on Wednesday, September 9, 1970, and a report of how hopes were fading of finding American pilot Capt W Schafer following an intensive search.

aircraft. Today, we reveal what happened when contact was finally made

ht, very bright'



ILLUSTRATION: Geoff Woolston

o trace of contamination by
ing other than salt water.
ton: Foxtrot 94. Can you ditch
raft? Over.

ifer: She's handling fine. I
bring her in. Over.

ton: Negative, 94. I repeat, can
ditch aircraft? Over.

ifer: Yeah I guess.

ton: Standby 94. Over. Oscar
Over.

ckleton: 77.

ton: 94 is
ing. Can you
tain wide
it? Over.

ckleton:
rmative GCI.

ton: Thanks 77.
dby. 94, execute
ing procedure at
discretion. Over.

ifer:
ending now, GCI. Over.

en six and seven minutes
elapsed.

ckleton: He's down, GCI.
of a splash he's down in
piece though. Over.

ton: Can you see the pilot yet?

Shackleton: Negative. We're
going round again, pulling a
tight one.

Two minutes later:

Shackleton: The canopy's up
she's floating OK can't see
the pilot. We need a chopper out
here, GCI. No, no sign of the
pilot. Where the hell is he?

Staxton: You sure he's not in the
water, 77? Check your
SABRE receptors.
Over. (Note: SABRE
was the search and
rescue beacon carried
by all RAF aircrew).

Shackleton: No
SABRE yet. No
flares, either. Hang
on. We're going
round again.

Another two minutes
elapsed.

Shackleton: GCI.
Over.

Staxton: GCI. Over.

Shackleton: This is odd, GCI.
She's sinking fast but the
canopy's closed up again. Over.

Staxton: Can you confirm pilot
clear of aircraft? Over.

Shackleton: He's not in it, we
can confirm that. He must be in
the water somewhere.

Staxton: Any distress signals or
flares yet? Over.

Shackleton: Negative, GCI.
Going round again. Over.

Ninety seconds later the crew of the
Shackleton were back in contact.

Shackleton: She's sunk, GCI.
There's a slight wake where she
was. Still no sign of the pilot. I
say again, GCI, we need a
chopper here fast. Over.

Staxton: A Whirlwind's on the way
from Leconfield. Are you positive
you saw no sign of the pilot? Over.

Shackleton: Nothing GCI. The
first pass we assumed he was
unstrapping. He must have got
out as we went round for a
second pass but why shut the
canopy? Over.

Staxton: That's what we were
thinking. Maintain patrol 77, he
must be there somewhere. Over.

Shackleton: Roger, GCI. Over.

Shortly afterwards the search and
rescue Whirlwind from nearby
Leconfield arrived on the scene and
began a systematic search of the
ditching area. The aircraft were
shortly joined by lifeboats from
Bridlington, Flamborough and
Filey as the weather began to
deteriorate.

The search continued well into the

next day but there were no
transmissions from the beacons
carried by the pilot and on board
the aircraft and the official reports
say no distress flares were seen.
However, the following day it was
reported flares had been seen about
10 miles offshore and the Grimsby
trawler Ross Kestrel, which was
passing through the Flamborough
area, had gone to investigate but,
even though more flares were seen,
she found nothing.

It was also reported that Captain
Schafer's wife was at Binbrook
waiting for news of her husband.
But the Ministry of Defence were
doubtful whether there would be
any good news for her. "I don't
think he got out of the plane," a
spokesman told a reporter. "No
wreckage has been found."

Three weeks later it
was reported that
the fuselage of the
aircraft had been
located on the
seabed and noted that the ejector
seat was still intact "giving rise to
the belief that the body of the pilot
is still in the wreckage."

On October 7, it was reported that
divers from HMS Keddleston had
inspected the wreckage and said
Captain Schafer's body was still in
the cockpit.

When the wreckage of XS894 was
finally lifted from the sea bed some
air crashes in the North Sea in

those days were
relatively common and
much of the wreckage
found its way into
Grimsby where often
photographers were on
hand to record the
event. But not with
XS894.

It was also com- mon
practice for wrecked
aircraft to be taken to
the MoD's Crash
Investigation Branch at
Farnborough where
detailed examinations

were carried out in an attempt to
find the cause of accidents. But this
didn't happen with XS894.

Instead, the remains of the aircraft,
which was in remarkably good
condition, were taken to Binbrook
where it was placed behind shutters
in the far corner of a hangar.

A team from Farnborough arrived
one wet winter's day at Binbrook in
the belief that they were about to
start a detailed investigation
which, in turn, would lead to the
preparation of a report on the
incident to the Ministry of Defence,
the report being used as the basis
for an eventual inquiry into the loss
of Lightning XS894. But they were
in for a surprise.

They were astonished to find many
of the cockpit instruments missing.
These included the E2B compass,
voltmeter, stand-by direction
indicator, stand-by inverter
indicator and the complete
auxiliary warning panel from the
starboard side of the cockpit.
This was a serious breach of
regulations and, although the
investigation team was promised
the instruments would be returned
shortly, they never were.

The ejector seat also seemed to be
'wrong' and there was a suspicion
later among the investigators that
it was not the one fitted to the
aircraft when XS894 took off from
Binbrook on its final flight. They
were even given an assurance by
the OC of 5 Squadron that the seat
had not been tampered with. But
some of the investigators were not
convinced.

Interestingly, the reader, who was

serving at Binbrook at the time,
told us in 1988 that he recalled
seeing an official report on the
crash which suggested that the seat
was faulty and this was why
Captain Schafer failed to eject.
Brian McConnell, a former sergeant
at Binbrook, said the cartridge on
the seat had failed to fire because of
faulty installation. However, this is
very much at odds with the eye-
witness account of the Shackleton
crew who saw the canopy raised.
Had any attempt been made to fire
it, it would have been blown off. It
also seems to conflict with the
account we have been given of the
order from Staxton Wold to Captain
Schafer to ditch his aircraft rather
than attempt to return to Binbrook
or land at Leconfield, only a few
minutes' flying time from
Flamborough. And, remember,
Schafer has told his ground
controllers that XS894 was still
handling "fine" and he had plenty
of fuel left. During the few hours
the investigators were allowed to
examine the aircraft, they
themselves were constantly
supervised by five civilians, two of
them Americans.

At the end of the day the
investigation team was told curtly
that as nothing useful had been
discovered, their job was over.
The following day they were all
called into the main office at
Farnborough and told in no
uncertain terms they were not to
discuss any aspect of the ditching of
XS894 with the public.

mystery of XS894
goes cold. Well,
almost.

There is just one
further item of
information
available. On the
night of September
8, 1970, a couple and
their daughter were
walking their dog
along the coastal
path at Alnmouth
Bay,

Northumberland -
almost opposite the

point over the North Sea where
Schafer made his interception -
when they saw and heard
something strange.

"We had been walking for maybe 10
minutes when we heard a very
high-pitched humming noise," they
later said in a statement to MoD
personnel. "It seemed impossible to
tell from which direction the noise
was coming, it seemed everywhere.
It lasted for maybe 10 to 15 seconds.

"About five minutes later the
eastern sky lit up rather like sheet
lightning, only it took about 10
seconds to die down again.

Over the following three minutes
this happened many times, but the
'lightning' was only visible for a
second or two at a time. It appeared
very similar to the Northern
Lights. The whole spectacle was
completely silent.

"After two or three minutes there
was another flare-up of 'sheet
lightning'.

This was followed by that awful
shrill sensation, only this time it
was worse. You could actually feel
your ears ringing."

The family called in at the local
police station to report what they
had seen and heard. Their's was
one of many similar reports that
night to both the police and the
RAF at nearby Boulmer.

The time and the location fit in
exactly with events going on 60
miles south at Staxton Wold and
they could have been watching
some kind of natural phenomena.

Or there could be another
explanation. What do you think?

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Section 40

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Dear

Section 40

Your letter dated 20 October to RAF West Drayton, in which you asked about the crash of an RAF Lightning on 8 September 1970, has been passed to this office.

I have done some research into the loss of the aircraft, and have discovered that it was taking part in a Tactical Evaluation Exercise designed to practise the night shadowing and shepherding of low speed targets. For the purpose of the exercise, the targets involved were Shackleton aircraft. The Lightning crashed into the sea while attempting to intercept one of the Shackletons. There is no indication of any "unidentified aircraft" having been encountered, and no reason to suggest that there is any sort of UFO incident in any way connected with this tragic crash.

I hope this is helpful, and I wish you luck with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40



INDEPENDENT

Section 40

UFO

NETWORK

Tels: Section 40

Date: 20.10.92.

Dear Sir,

I wonder could you help me with some information. I am attempting to research an incident that took place on September 8, 1970.

The incident in question involved an RAF Lightning jet from RAF Binbrook piloted by Captain William Schafner. The aircraft, XS894, a Lightning F6, was Foxtrot 94 on the evening in question.

On the evening in question (October 8, 1970) unfortunately the aircraft piloted by Captain Schafner crashed after being 'ordered' to intercept an "unidentified aircraft" picked up on radar by Saxon Vord amongst others. A number of other aircraft were also involved as well as other defence establishments.

I would therefore like to request any and all data that you have on this particular incident.

Yours Sincerely,

Section 40

Section 40

Secretariat(Air Staff)2a, Room Section 40

E4



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building Whitehall London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct Dialling) Section 40
(Switchboard)
(Fax)

See also E76,
+ E80, E85

Section 40

Your reference

Our reference

D/Sec(AS)12/3

Date

21 October 1992

Dear

Section 40

Thank you for your letter dated 15 October in which you asked if we had any material relating to an alleged UFO incident that occurred during 1970.

Regrettably, if we had received a UFO report, the appropriate file would by now have been archived, and sent to the Public Record Office, where it would be covered by the 30 year rule, and not be available for viewing until 30 years after the last action was taken. Although it does not help in this instance, you will wish to be aware that all UFO reports (even if they were made by pilots) should be submitted to this office. I have certainly not heard this story before, and have come across no references to any such incident.

While we do not have a UFO report, I have been able to trace information relating to the loss of the Lightning aircraft. The aircraft concerned was taking part in a Tactical Evaluation Exercise designed to practise the night shadowing and shepherding of low speed targets. For the purpose of the exercise, the targets involved were Shackleton aircraft. There is no indication of any UFO sighting having occurred, and no indication of any unusual or high speed contact.

I hope this is helpful, and I wish you luck with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40



Recycled Paper

60011992

Section 40

15/10/92

Dear Section 40

Having been directed to you as one who deals with UFO reports I wonder if you can help with my enquiry.

My enquiry concerns a UFO sighted and tracked by the RAF during 1970. The details are as follows:

At 20.17 on the night of September 8th 1970 radar operators at Saxa Vord picked up an unidentified target travelling south west. Thinking this was an ordinary intrusion by Russian 'planes they scrambled two Lightnings from RAF Leuchars. As the 'planes were vectored onto the target in accelerated to approx 17,400 mph and vanished from the screen. Hardly the speed of anything flying at the time, I'm sure you will agree. Two F4 Phantoms were then scrambled from the USAF base at Keflavik in Iceland. These also failed to locate the target, despite having radar contact.

Eventually a Lightning was scrambled from RAF Binbrook in Lincolnshire and vectored onto the target by radar controllers at RAF Staxton Wold. The Lightning, number XS894, left Binbrook at 22.06 and managed a visual contact with the object, now off the Yorkshire coast. The Lightning pilot described the object as a UFO, being too bright to look at easily and of a conical shape. As he closed on the object it turned toward him and all radio contact was lost. The Lightning was later found on the sea bed of Flamborough Head.

As the details of time, place etc are so specific perhaps you could let me know anything else which exists on file about this case. If perhaps the information would be elsewhere as the UFO sighting was made by a pilot then perhaps you could forward me the name and address of the correct person to approach. I look forward to receiving your reply and hopefully further details about this fascinating, and obviously well-documented case.

Yours Sincerely

Section 40

See also E70 + E80, E85.

Section 40

Dear Section 40

246

On several occasions, AHB 3 and AHB 5

07 10, 92.

have been very helpfull to me. You will probably recall from my file, that I am a former PR I/O MoD (RAF.) I still take a profound interest in the RAF and it's reserves in which I served for many years.

Currently, I am seeking information which has confused me for many years. Now that East-West political relations have "eased" according to general information, perhaps you could give me lots of information on the Lightning Interceptor Fighter No. XS894, which took off from RAF Binbrook during 1970? It was piloted by an American Captain by the name of Schaftner or Shafner. He was on exchange from the USAF; or perhaps secondment. I would like as much as is known/permisible, as I would like to write a bit about it sometime. Actually, I vaguely recall the occurance but had nothing to say about it. The month was September. Perhaps you could also give me a USAF address in that I may obtain another view of it?

I am also seeking information on which RAF station trained air gunners during the second year of the Korean War (Emergency) Maybe it was the one near Blackpool which was also a Driver's School; Weston?

Finally. Could you please tell me which RAF squadron went to Korea and Japan; also what type of Bombers/Fighters it had. What was its home base, also the Japanese and Korean bases? I am also looking for some aircrew names, mainly pilots; gunners and Wireless Operators.

We last corresponded during Feb, 1990., Ref: D/AHB(RAF)8/1. I am now 63 years of age, but I wish I was young enough to enlist with AHB. Such History would put me in my natural element. One day, I may want to know about the early WW1 signals system, and the radio sets which were used, but that may come later as "enough is enough" for both of us. I am willing to pay for the research of information. Thank you for your past help.

I am, Yours sincerely.

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AHB3. RAF.

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See AHB

23
G. : Q LIGHTNING+(CAT4,CAT5)?
SUBG. : REPO XS894?
SORTED BY:

DATES: 70

1 hits

IDENTIFICATION

ACCIDENT CAT5
08SEP70 TIME: 2142A
LIGHTNING F6
5 SQN
CL: AIRCREW FACTOR

ACC. NO.: 70-0034
USN: 01N191170
TAIL NO.: XS894
BINBROOK
SAFETY EMERGENCY EQUIP

SUMMARY
2412N 0002W. Crew Fatality. During exercise. TACEVAL.
During an interception. Low flying.
At night. 1700Z. SNK.
Ejection seat. Parachute detached. Distraction. Aircraft flew into ground. Ejection abandonment.
THE SQUADRON COMMANDER CLEARED THE PILOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TACEVAL. THEREFORE, IN THE BELIEF THAT HE WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN A SHADOWING OR SHEPHERDING MISSION. UNKNOWN TO THE STATION AND SQUADRON, THE TACEVAL TEAM HAD JUST CHANGED THE EXERCISE SCENARIO FROM NORMAL INTERCEPTIONS TO INTERCEPTION, OR SHADOWING OR SHEPHERDING ON SLOW SPEED LOW FLYING TARGETS. THE TARGETS WERE SHACKLETON A/C FLYING AT 160 KNOTS, AND AT THE MINIMUM AUTHORIZED HEIGHT OF 1500 FEET AS SPECIFIED IN GROUP ORDERS. THE PILOT TOOK OFF AND WAS STILL UNAWARE OF THE TYPE OR HEIGHT OF HIS TARGET. HE WAS TOLD TO ACCELERATE TOWARDS THE TARGET WHICH WAS 28 NMS AWAY. AT 2039Z, THE PILOT ACKNOWLEDGED INSTRUCTIONS. HE WAS GIVEN VARIOUS ALTERATIONS TO HEADING UNTIL HE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS IN CONTACT WITH LIGHTS BUT WOULD HAVE TO MANOEUVRE TO SLOW DOWN. HIS VOICE SOUNDED STRAINED AS THOUGH HE WAS AFFECTED BY 'G'. AT 2041Z THE A/C WAS SEEN BY THE OTHER LIGHTNING PILOT, WHO HAD JUST BROKEN AWAY FROM THE TARGET, TO BE ABOUT 2,000 YARDS ASTERN AND 500 TO 1,000 FEET ABOVE THE SHACKLETON, IN A PORT TURN. THE SHACKLETON CREW THEN SAW THE A/C, APPARENTLY VERY LOW. WHEN AT 2042Z THE LIGHTNING PILOT FAILED TO ACKNOWLEDGE INSTRUCTIONS, HE INSTITUTED EMERGENCY PROCEDURES. HOWEVER, HE EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY IN MAKING CONTACT WITH THE SHACKLETON BECAUSE HE DID NOT HAVE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO 243.0 MHZ. AN IMMEDIATE AIR SEARCH BY THE TARGET SHACKLETON, AND SUBSEQUENT AIR/SEA SEARCH THE FOLLOWING DAY, FAILED TO DETECT ANY TRACE OF THE A/C OR PILOT. FROM CALCULATIONS PROVIDED BY THE BOI AND EXPERT SOURCES, A SEARCH BY A RN MINESWEEPER "LOCATED" THE WRECKAGE, NEARLY 2 MONTHS LATER. THE A/C WAS IN A COMPLETE STATE EXCEPT THAT THE PORT WING HAD BROKEN OFF AND BUCKLED UNDER THE FUSELAGE, AND SOME FUSELAGE PANELS WERE MISSING. THE COCKPIT CANOPY WAS ATTACHED BUT NOT CLOSED AND THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE PILOT. EXAMINATION OF THE WRECKAGE SHOWED THAT THE A/C HAD STRUCK THE SEA AT A LOW SPEED, IN A TAIL-DOWN ATTITUDE WITH A MINIMAL RATE OF DESCENT. IT APPEARED TO HAVE PLUNGED ON THE SURFACE AND COME TO REST COMPARATIVELY SLOWLY. BOTH THROTTLES WERE IN THE REHEAT GATES, THERE WAS A NOSE-UP TRIM OF 6 DEG, LNC WAS UP, FLAPS DOWN AND AIRBRAKES OUT. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF FIRE OR EXPLOSION AND EXPERT EXAMINATION REVEALED NO INDICATION THAT THE A/C WAS OTHER THAN SERVICEABLE AT IMPACT. THE BOARD CONCLUDED THAT A COMBINATION OF A DIFFICULT TASK IN RUSHED CIRCUMSTANCES AND LACK OF TRAINING IN THE LOW SPEED VISIDENT AND SHEPHERDING TECHNIQUES, LED TO A SITUATION WHERE THE PILOT FAILED TO MONITOR THE HEIGHT OF HIS A/C WHILST SLOWING DOWN AND ACQUIRING HIS TARGET, AND THAT HE HAD INADVERTENTLY FLOWN HIS A/C INTO THE SEA. THE PILOT HAD ATTEMPTED TO RECOVER THE SITUATION BY SELECTING REHEAT, WHICH FAILED TO TAKE EFFECT, WITH THE A/C TAIL SKIMMING ON THE WATER.
Cause found.

Alfred J. Brown.
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Q. LIGHTNING+(CAT4,CAT5)?
SUBG. REPO XS894?
SORTED BY:

1 Hits

DATES: 70

IDENTIFICATION

ACCIDENT CAT5
08SEP70 TIME: 2142A
LIGHTNING F5
S SQN
CL: AIRCREW FACTOR

ACC. NO.: 70:0054
USN: BIN\5\170
TAIL NO.: XS894
BINBROOK
SAFETY EMERGENCY EQUIP

SUMMARY: CONTD :

Probably maint.
Lack of skill.
Inadequate orders or briefing.
Error of skill.

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Lightning F6 XS894
5 Squadron
8 September 1970

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ROYAL AIR FORCE
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT

Date: 8 September 1970
Aircraft: Lightning Mk F6 XS 894
Crew: One
Sortie: Tactical Evaluation Exercise - Night
Shadowing and Shepherding of Low Speed
Targets
Casualties: One killed
Aircraft Damage: Category 5
Unit: No 5 Squadron, RAF Binbrook

Circumstances

1. No 5 Squadron was participating in a Strike Command Tactical Evaluation (Taceval) exercise at RAF Binbrook. The pilot of the accident aircraft was a USAF exchange officer whose experience included two tours of duty on USAF F102 all weather fighter aircraft. He had accumulated 121 hours on Lightning aircraft, of which 18 were at night, and had obtained a Green Instrument Rating. He had been categorised as "limited combat ready" after 8 weeks on the Squadron. This was an unusually short period but the category was justified by his USAF experience as squadron pilot and OCU instructor, and by his results in simulator training and dual flying tactical and weapons checks on the Lightning. The limitation on his operational status was due to his need for further training in maximum effective use of the Lightning weapons system and because he had not yet met the requirement for full visident missions, he had completed only two of the specified three phases of preparation. In consequence at his stage of training at the time of the accident he would only have been cleared for shadowing and shepherding tasks with the target in full visual contact. The Squadron Commander cleared the pilot to participate in the Taceval, therefore, in the belief that he would not be involved in a shadowing or shepherding mission.

2. On the day of the accident the pilot was ordered to his aircraft at 1834Z hours, and, after waiting on readiness, was scrambled at 1947Z hours. He started taxiing, however his scramble was cancelled and he was ordered back to dispersal. On return he ordered fuel only and no turnaround servicing. According

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to standing instructions the engineer officer on duty ordered a full turnround. The turnround was delayed, and during this delay the pilot was warned that he would be scrambled as soon as he was ready. He asked the groundcrew to expedite the turnround, however, before it was completed he called for engine starting, failed to sign the servicing certificate and taxied out at 2025Z hours. As he entered the runway the metal turnround board and attached servicing certificate fell off the aircraft.

3. Unknown to the station and squadron, the Taceval team had just changed the exercise scenario from normal interceptions to interception, or shadowing or shepherding on slow speed low flying targets. The targets were Shackleton aircraft flying at 160 knots, and at the minimum authorised height of 1500 feet as specified in Group Orders. The minimum speed for Lightning aircraft for visident practices is 200 knots, which was not specified as an order, but was referred to in the Lightning squadron training syllabus. The syllabus made no reference to shadowing or shepherding techniques. Shadowing and shepherding are however included in the war task of Lightning squadrons and, thus, were theoretically subject to Taceval.

4. The pilot took off at 2030Z and was ordered to climb to FL 100; he was still unaware of the type or height of his target. He was handed over to the MRS and was given in a short space of time, the QNH, and height of target (1,500 ft), and a shadowing task with target speed of 160 knots. He was told to accelerate towards the target which was 28 nms away. At 2039Z, the pilot acknowledged instructions to accelerate to 0.95M to effect a rapid take over from another Lightning, this in a tone of surprise. He was given various alterations to heading until he announced that he was in contact with lights but would have to manoeuvre to slow down; his voice sounded strained as though he was affected by 'G'. At 2040Z the MRS broadcast that the Controller was being changed; at this time the Lightning was turning port at about 220 knots. At 2041Z the aircraft was seen by the other Lightning pilot, who had just broken away from the target, to be at about 2,000 yards astern and 500 to 1,000 feet above the Shackleton, in a port turn. The Shackleton crew then saw the aircraft, apparently very low. The MRS Chief Controller had appreciated that this was a difficult interception, and had monitored the latter stages very closely. When at 2042Z the Lightning pilot failed to acknowledge instructions, he instituted

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emergency procedures, however, he experienced difficulty in making contact with the Shackleton because he did not have immediate access to 243.0 Mhz. An immediate air search by the target Shackleton, and subsequent air/sea search the following day, failed to detect any trace of the aircraft or pilot.

Determination of Causes

5. From calculations provided by the Board of Inquiry and expert sources, a search by a RN minesweeper "located" the wreckage nearly 2 months later. The aircraft was in a complete state except that the port wing had broken off and buckled under the fuselage, and some fuselage panels were missing. The cockpit canopy was attached but not closed and there was no sign of the pilot. Examination of the wreckage showed that the aircraft had struck the sea at a low speed, in a tail-down attitude with a minimal rate of descent. It appeared to have planed on the surface and come to rest comparatively slowly. Both throttles were in the reheat gates, there was a nose-up trim of 6° , undercarriage was up, flaps down and airbrakes out. There was no sign of fire or explosion and expert examination revealed no indication that the aircraft was other than serviceable at impact.

6. The ejection seat lower handle had been pulled to the full extent allowed by the interrupter link on the main gun sear. The canopy gun sear had been withdrawn, but the canopy gun cartridge had received only a light percussion strike and had not fired. The canopy had been released by the normal operating lever, the harness QRB was undone, the PEC disconnected and the PSP lanyard had been released from the life preserver and was lying tangled in the cockpit.

7. The Board concluded that a combination of a difficult task in rushed circumstances and lack of training in the low speed visident and shepherding techniques, led to a situation where the pilot failed to monitor the height of his aircraft whilst slowing down and acquiring his target, and that he had inadvertently flown his aircraft into the sea. The pilot had attempted to recover the situation by selecting reheat, which failed to take effect, with the aircraft tail skimming on the water. He had then initiated an ejection which was unsuccessful because of the interruption of the sequence by the failure of the canopy to jettison. He then manually abandoned the aircraft but because he has not been found, he was presumed to have drowned during or after his escape.

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8. The light percussion strike on the canopy gun cartridge occurred because of negligent servicing, in that the firing unit was incorrectly seated because of damaged screw threads.

9. The Board made a number of recommendations relating to inconsistencies and omissions in orders, instructions and the training syllabus, concerning low speed visidents and the shadowing and shepherding techniques. They also made recommendations concerning the access of MRSs to emergency frequencies, and for remedial action concerning Lightning canopy ejection guns.

Remarks of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief

10. The AOC-in-C stated that in common with so many accidents, this accident had no single root cause, and he agreed with the Board's conclusions. He said that the pilot made an error of judgment in allowing his aircraft to get into a position from which he was unable to recover. Because of mitigating circumstances, his error was excuseable.

11. The AOC-in-C's comments on the Board's recommendations are covered below.

Subsequent Action

12. The Board's recommendation concerning access to the emergency radio frequency by the MRS was not accepted by the AOC-in-C, who stated that MRSs already have the facility to select 243.0 Mhz although they do not normally monitor it. He considered that the allocation of a safety frequency for use during all peacetime exercises had more merit.

13. The hitherto undetected weakness in training for the identification, shadowing and shepherding of low altitude, low speed targets, have been rectified as follows:

- a. No 11 (Fighter) Group Air Staff Orders now specify a minimum speed for visident targets, and minimum target speeds and heights for shadowing and shepherding operations by day and night.
- b. New tactics have been devised and published in the Lightning Tactics Manual.
- c. Shadowing and shepherding tasks have been included in the Annual Training Syllabus for Lightning Squadrons.

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d. Pilots of aircraft under GCI control must now read back altimeter settings before descending to low level.

e. A radio safety frequency is allocated for all exercises.

f. During all pertinent exercises, a target radio frequency plan will be available so that two way communication between the MRS and target aircraft can be established rapidly in any emergency situation.

14. Servicing procedures for the inspection, re-arming and servicing of canopy firing units have been amended.

15. All ejection seat firing units of a type similar to that which prevented ejection in this accident have been inspected for signs of damage.

16. The design of the canopy firing unit has been examined. No change will be made, however, the Design Authority has been made aware of the failure for consideration in future designs.

17. The deficiencies revealed by the change of controller at the MRS and the over-rapid attempt to effect the changeover of the intercepting aircraft, have been drawn to the attention of the MRS.

18. The effect of the false scramble and the interrupted turnaround in producing conditions of stress, has been drawn to the attention of all 11 Group Stations.

19. The deficiencies in planning, and liaison with the station operations staff concerning the change of exercise scenario, have been investigated with the MRS and Taceval Team.

20. Negligence in the fitting of the canopy jettison firing unit could not be attributed to any specific person. The Corporal who was responsible for servicing the unit was found excusably negligent. No disciplinary action was taken against him because of the involvement of other personnel, the lack of clear servicing instructions and guidance on the acceptable degree of burring of the screw threads, the lack of evidence that he had caused the damage to the threads, and because he did not finally fit the unit to the jettison gun.

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DFS(RAF) Cause Coding

21. Main Cause Group: Aircrew Error.

22. Codes:

690.6	Inadequate orders.
330.5	Servicing error.
470.3	Inexperience on aircraft type.
716.4	Rushed operation.
410.9	Distraction.
540	Error of skill (failed to monitor altitude during low level exercise at night) - MAIN
232.12	Ejection seat, miscellaneous (canopy firing unit)

Section 40

Ministry of Defence

30 June 1972

See Distribution List

Air Commodore
Director of
Flight Safety (RAF)

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