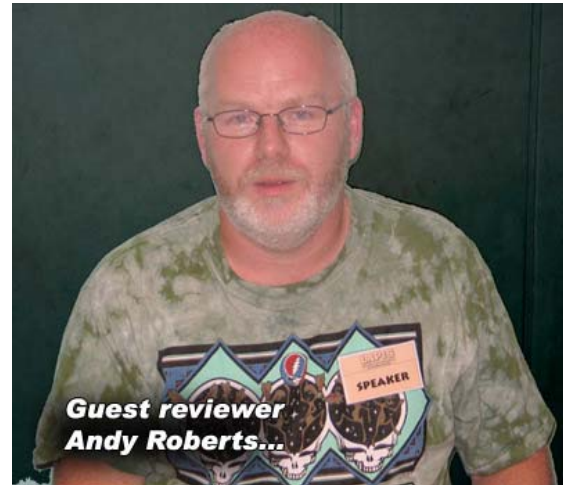




Andy Roberts was a guest speaker at the event, he writes for Fortean Times has written several best selling books on the subject and been involved in some of the subjects 'better' TV documentaries.

Known for not mincing his words and telling it like it is here then is Andy's report, warts and all.

Having known Rob, Janet and the rest of the gang at LAPIS for over ten years now I feel it important that they are aware that people really do appreciate the effort that individuals make and also the personal commitment needed (financial too) to stage a public event of any kind.



There are many professionals out there who will help make events slick and polished but at a price that would mean 'us' poor ufologists having to pay £50-£100 a day for their pleasure.

Of course this is not acceptable to the subject so sometimes our trust is put in others who might not be quite so committed to the subject as us and not see absolute reliability a must.

When staging conferences for UFO Magazine it took months of planning, a lot of money and the need for a big audience to ensure the show would not bankrupt anyone.

The smaller groups who are the life-blood of this subject don't have such luxuries and do a fine job within their limits.

Long may it continue.

I've been staging conferences and giving lectures about UFO related matters since 1988 when I and the Independent UFO Network (IUN) staged the amazing three day conferences in Sheffield, bringing the likes of Hopkins, Vallee and Keel from the USA as well as the cream of UK researchers. These conferences were the best ever staged in the UK and were the historical forerunners of the UFO Magazine events in Leeds. Since that time I've learned a lot about conferences, speaking and the general public.

We all have different requirements from a conference. As a speaker what I want to know is what the hall layout is, have I got a stall and so on.

If you're a punter you may have other priorities, but we're all there for one reason – because we are passionate about ufology.

LAPIS are based in the Blackpool area and over the past ten years I've been to five of their conferences and spoken at three of those. They are always excellent (if for the wrong reasons) and so I was more than pleased to be invited to speak at their conference of 18th June.

It brought back a reveries of LAPIS' gone by – who could forget Joe Dormer storming the stage and telling Harry Harris he was a 'sh** stain on the underpants of ufology' (I have it on film – priceless!), or Jon Downes settling down to do his talk with several cans of premium strength lager and god knows what else under the table or the wild and reckless behaviour of ufologists in the hotel bar (one cherry in my cocktail? – 'dammit' sir, I'll have *two!*). Crazy subject, crazy people or something like that...

As I manoeuvred the saucer into the car park of the St Anne's YMCA at 9.30 am it was clear that the day was going to be a scorcher and I was destined to spend the next eight and a half hours inside a hot room with the windows blacked out. Bummer! But the organisation was pretty good, spacious hall, good sight lines, a few stalls, café and bar downstairs, lycra clad females doing an aerobics class in the next room. Yes, it had the ingredients of being a good day.

I settled in and checked it out.

UFO conferences are always good for seeing people you only ever see at UFO conferences! You can catch up on the latest gossip, buy UFO books etc and generally have fun. Of course some of the people you'd never talk to if you were stood next to them at a bus stop but ufology is a great leveller and you can have some wild and far out

conversations which will convince you that you are much saner than you first thought!

I had lots of fun chatting to people and the only one who was miserable was Margaret Fry, who, it seems, just can't accept constructive criticism of her views on the Berwyn Mountains case.

This is a theme which runs through much of UFO research and one we will return to later. People need to learn that an attack on their research isn't an attack on their integrity as a human being (well, not always!). All we need to say at this point is that gossip isn't evidence Margaret!

Still, she was hesitant about selling me a copy of her book (it's rubbish but I happily paid £12.50 for it) and then she refused to sign it! She gave me some rather funny looks which Gaynor (my other half) later told me were meant to be looks of hatred! Talk about laugh – I thought she just had indigestion! Anyway, I escaped that encounter unscathed, if amused, and settled down to drink coffee and shoot the breeze with people who don't hold meaningless grudges.

Watching other speakers is also a bit of an art form. Some you see over and over again, grizzled veterans and escapees from consensus reality, others are newbies who perhaps only do the one gig, never to be heard of again.

First up was Peter Greco talking about lunar anomalies, ie things people have seen on or crossing the surface of the moon. Whilst this subject has been eternally popular and has spawned numerous books and videos, quite frankly it bored me to tears and beyond. I saw the first few minutes

and the last fifteen. I regret my life being shortened by the experience.



Why this is of interest to ufologists is beyond me and is symptomatic of how vague the subject is and how unfocused some people are.

This is astronomy, if you want astronomy go to an astronomy lecture. It's that simple.

Yeah, strange things get seen on the moon, but that doesn't mean they are of interest to ufologists (but has anyone ever defined the criteria of what *is*?). Strange things are seen everywhere! I really didn't 'get' the idea behind this talk.

At one point in the endless darkness Grego passed round a piece of some moon-related rock for us to 'gee whiz' about. Had I have known this was to happen I would have substituted it for a piece of St Anne's stone and watched the assembled masses 'gee whiz' about *that!*

But who would have known and, more pointedly, who would have cared?

The audio visual stuff was playing up and did so throughout the day, but I've

long since accepted that a/v at conferences rarely works properly and we'll draw a veil over that particular problem.

Lunchtime came and we had to suffer a video of some bloody tedious foreign ufologist rabbiting on over dodgy videos of what are clearly large numbers of balloons.

No, you scream!

They can't be balloons; they all move in the same direction and keep the same distance from each other – clearly under intelligent control! Yeah, right, the intelligent control of the funsters who bought a load of balloons tied the strings together with many different long lengths of string to ensure they stayed together, and then let the wind take care of the rest. Puhlease!

Unfortunately many in the audience thought these videos held, if not the secret of life, some very important secret indeed. It was at that point I despaired for the sanity and intelligence of the human race, snorted several ounces of high grade sherbet fountain and strode purposefully towards the stage.

It was showtime!

I was speaking about the UK UFO cults and contactees of the 1950s and 60s. This is a much neglected area of research as its fashionable these days to laugh at this period of time and the claims these people made.

Yet why is it any different to the claims of the abductees from this era?

Ufology has very carefully tried to edit this whole period out of existence, to

minimise its importance. This act of self-censorship, besides being appalling misses some fantastic material and attitudes towards the UFO phenomenon. I used quite a bit of archive footage of Adamski, George King, the Aetherious Society, Bernard Byron and so on, along with OHP slides of newspapers cuttings and other items from my research.

The point I was trying to make is that none of the contactee or abductee claims have led to physical evidence of a UFO phenomenon and if that's the case they should all be treated equally and we need to look at the humans generating those claims and the society and culture from which they spring in an attempt to work out what the real message they are giving is, and why it is.

Of course, I was fabulous! I always am. You may disagree but you'd be very, very, wrong.

I have to believe that otherwise my nerves wouldn't let me stand up in front of groups of people. But no-one walked out or laughed and many people engaged me in meaningful conversation afterwards so as far as I'm concerned it was a success. Oh and did I tell you I was fabulous?



Marcus Allen followed the next break, talking about his and others' theories that the first moon landing was hoaxed in a big shed somewhere in America. Now I don't mind Marcus, he's a nice enough bloke trying to make a living.

His magazine Nexus is full of the most appalling nonsense but hey, a fool and their money are soon parted and if people want to buy foolish nonsense to keep Marcus in the manner he'd like to be accustomed to that's fine by me.

There isn't and nor will there ever be a cure for stupidity. And that's to Mr Allen's advantage.

Let's consider the premise: Marcus is saying, if I understand him correctly, that the moon landing was hoaxed and this is obvious because there are many, many clues in the still photos taken on the lunar surface by the astronauts.

Marcus does a polished, confident spiel and those with an 'open mind' would be in danger of his pernicious ideas creeping in to replace the sensible stuff that's dropped out.

Marcus tell us that this photo is faked because the angle of the light is wrong and indicates a lighting set up, that photo is faked because you can see a point source of light reflected in the visor, indicating a flash, or that photo is wrong because it couldn't have been taken from the height the astronauts' camera was held at, and so on, and on.

The sheer weight of Marcus' argument sounds convincing at first. He's a photographer and he knows his stuff. Yeah, well. This stupid idea has been debunked at length in several articles including a major one in Fortean Times by people who actually know more about photography and moon

landings than Marcus does. If you believe him I'd suggest you do a little research of your own and see what you find. You'll be surprised!

My major problem with Marcus' theory is this. What Marcus is *really* saying is that the well funded intelligent might of the American military industrial complex planned and executed this hoax. Yet they were so stupid that they left tens of mistakes in the photos so that li'l ol' Marcus and his chums could solve the mystery.

Marcus 1, America 0. It doesn't add up, does it.

Are we really expected to believe that a major world government with zillions of dollars and millions of IQ points at its disposal made such a stupid cock up? Do you really believe that the Russians wouldn't have seized on this immediately and exposed America for the space race charlatans they were? Nah, c'mon kids, please use your brain power. Denying we landed on the Moon when we did is to fail to understand what technology was available at the time and to minimise one of the greatest human achievements of all time.

This, incidentally, is one of the average UFO believers' major problems, rather than acknowledge the power of the human mind they seek to apportion blame to someone else (aliens, the military) or to claim cover up by someone else (the military, MI5 etc). This is living your life as a victim and pretending anything you can't understand is either alien in nature or society being manipulated by the big boys. Grow up!

I crept back in to the latter part of Marcus' talk shaking my head gently and feeling sorry for those with so little

in their lives they had come to believe this.

After another break it was Russ Kellett's turn to tread the boards. Russ and I get on fine – he's got an even worse Yorkshire accent that I have - but we don't see eye to eye on matters ufological. What divides us is that hoariest of chestnuts – evidence and proof.

For Russ these often consist of stories, rumours and what someone possibly told someone else.

For me they mean documents, consistent narratives and taped and dated interviews, all meshing together to indicate the same thing – whatever that thing is.

But ufology is a broad church and over the years we've all learnt to drink at the same watering hole whilst casting nervous glances at the others.

Russ claims he's a contactee. I'm not going to argue with an individual's perceived experience although I may take issue with the source of that experience, but Russ only mentioned this fact in passing. I can however take issue with the substance of his talk, which was videos of, er, 'lights'. Now then, when Russ lived in Bradford he seemed to have an amazing success filming, er, 'lights'. Since Russ moved the Filey no-one in Bradford has been filming, er, 'lights' and Russ has been filming them by the truckload in Filey.

Now I'm sure – certain – that Russ is sincere. A hoaxer or cynical manipulator of ufology would at least try to film something interesting and make their talk much slicker! Although I had to leave ten minutes before the end I can honestly say I haven't been as bored since, ooo, since I watched

Marcus earlier that day. Russ's talk had no structure (figuratively and literally) and no pace, it was just one badly shot vid of, er, 'lights' after another. Some were clearly airplanes, others possibly stars or planets. Some were genuinely odd at first but if you're familiar with helicopters on exercise they suddenly became familiar objects but filmed in a context which made them *appear* odd.

One shot at first looked genuinely bizarre and I caught myself thinking 'wow'! It was a long wiggly vertical 'tube', slightly lit against the night sky, changing shape slightly. Suddenly it appeared to fill with light from the inside and from the bottom before fading again. What the feck was that, I thought? The solution, as I saw it, was fascinating. Because all we had was an almost black screen with an oddity on it which changed shape and illumination, but had no points of reference it would be easy to say yeah, anomalous phenomena, way to go Russ.

But nah, it wasn't to be. What Russ had filmed – and I'm sure he'll dispute this was the moon! No way! Yes way! And it goes like this....

Cloudy night-Moon almost full-Invisible due to clouds.

Clouds start to move until the edge is *just* illuminated by the moon's light. This creates the barely lit squiggly thing.

Clouds move a little bit more allowing the full light of the moon to flood the edge of the clouds, making it look s though the 'squiggly thing' is self illuminated! It may sound complicated – but nature is complicated, perception is complicated. Put the two together;

add a bald man with a video recorder and mystery is created!

I could be wrong – but I'll bet I'm not. If I'd have taken notice of the date the video was shot I'll bet a pound to a penny that the moon was almost full and in the direction of filming but, as Pink Floyd say, obscured by clouds.

UFODATA

The clip Andy is referring to is indeed interesting, I have offered on several occasions including my time as editor of UFO Magazine to present Russ Kelletts material in printed form. But time after time Russ Kellett changed his mind and dropped his offer to share his stuff.

I believe that the footage deserves real objective analysis, I can offer to have that done independently by experts who have the ability and qualifications to do the job.

My colleagues asked Russ for a short interview at the Lapis event, when he was told it was for UFODATA 'or sorry rather me' he declined to even have his photograph taken.

The offer is open Russ. You are quite welcome to have your say and tell people what you told me about that fascinating clip.

Russ Kellett's website
<http://www.ufoparanormal.com/>

Russel Callaghan.

And so it went on, light after frigging light. Marcus had fallen asleep at his table by now and people were sneaking out. I had to go as well and on the way out I passed Russ's sidekick, Jody. I pointed out that even

Russ's Video Vigilantes TV programme was better than this.

Yeah, nodded Jody sadly, it's not his best stuff. And indeed it wasn't. I gather that the question and answer session which followed was, in the words of my informant, 'the most embarrassing I have ever had the misfortune to witness'. Russ was asked some very pertinent questions such as 'did you use binoculars' (he didn't because he claims the 10x digital zoom on his camera is good enough – it's not Russ, you need to be seeing things optically not digitally), he was told by people who live in the area that at least one of his images was helicopters because they saw them regularly. Russ disagreed and I understand he was quite, er, rude.

Now I'm the last one to complain about this because I can be obnoxiousness and personified if in an argument. But Russ, these people had *paid* to listen to your tripe and whether you agree with them or not there are ways of dealing with people you disagree with don't just pi** them off.

Charm school must have been closed on the day Russ was due to go! I think that LAPIS, and indeed any other conference organiser, should make sure they've seen someone give a talk before they hire them.

If we are trying show ufology in its best light and to encourage fresh people into the subject it just isn't gonna happen when the main course is lunar anomalies, alleged NASA hoaxes and badly filmed prosaic phenomena. And if it is then it's time to set a course for more interesting waters.

LAPIS organisers, Rob, Janet, Maureen and John are to be applauded for taking the time and

trouble to stage these events. Although, to my mind the majority of the speakers were utter rubbish, the event was well organised and reasonably attended. And the audience, by and large, lapped it up.

LAPIS are among the few people keeping this subject (your subject) going.

I know there are still several hundred people active in ufology yet only a handful were at LAPIS on Saturday.

Why?

Because you are all too lazy to make the effort to support people who bring you live ufology.

'Shame on you'.

People put their lives into this subject to bring information, however misguided, to your attention the least you can do is support them. And if you think you can do better organise your own!

I hope LAPIS are having another conference next year. If they are and you live within a 300 mile radius of Blackpool, there's no excuse for your absence.

Call yourselves ufologists? Pah!

Andy Roberts.

If you are organising or know of any UFO related events you can advertise it free with us at UFO DATA and on our internet radio station 'Talk UFO'

Simply send the details to whatson@ufodata.co.uk