

THE REAL 4400

9pm – Sky One (UK)
Wednesday 19th October 2005



A mere six days after Channel 4 aired *UFOs: The Secret Evidence*, the UK's top digital channel, Sky One broadcast *The Real 4400*. The programme's blurb maintained that this documentary about alien abduction was produced to accompany Sky's showing of the hit US TV show, *The 4400*, but aside from a quick mention at the beginning and the actual name of the programme, the fictional series was never referenced.

Here we had a forty-five minute documentary devoted to alien abduction and, to be honest, it was very well made. It was beautifully photographed and scored and all sides of the debate were given ample opportunity to air their views.

We started off with a brief overview of the phenomenon, with the narrator, Sean Pertwee, telling us about 'missing time' and several experts such as Chris French, Bud Hopkins and Nick Pope popping in a couple of soundbites.



Then we got into the meat of the programme, with Travis Walton, the Arizona woodcutter who was abducted for five days in 1975, making it quite clear that he wished that his experience had never happened to him. He said that claims that he had made up the story for monetary gain were spurious, as the financial gains from a book and Hollywood movie (*Fire in the Sky*) were essentially negative. Assertions that he was in it for the fame were countered by Walton with him saying that he was accused at first of avoiding the media spotlight and then when he did give interviews, he was accused of being a publicity seeker, so he couldn't win! Given what his life had been like since that night, Walton said that he wouldn't have told *anybody* about his experience. He just wanted to get on with his life.

After the obligatory inclusion of a few clips from 1950s B-movies pouring ridicule on the subject, we were told that while the scientific community held no interest in the phenomenon, a few academics were trying to get to the bottom of the mystery.



Michael Carter, an American hospital chaplain, claimed to have been visited by aliens, who sat on the end of his bed whilst illuminating his room 'like it was daytime'. He felt physical effects such as temperature changes during his experience and to this day, he sleeps with the light on.

With that declaration, up popped Professor Chris French, hailed as Europe's leading scientific abduction researcher. With the customary, patronising attitude from many in academic circles, French explained that abductees were not 'mad', they were simply suffering from a complex psychological delusion.

Bud Hopkins, 'the Godfather of the abduction movement', maintained that the phenomenon was real and that it was not psychological.

No programme about abductions would be complete without bringing up the sleep paralysis chestnut, and Dr Chris Idzikowski performed his allotted role with aplomb, explaining to us befuddled masses that it's all in our heads. When sleep paralysis kicks in, we wake up, but cannot move, our heart rate increases, so we think we're going to die (!), we suffer from auditory and visual hallucinations and, basically, we're awake, but still dreaming. Of course, Chris French agreed with him.

Professor David Jacobs said that of the 900+ cases that he had investigated, about half of those occurred while the victim was wide awake.



Nick Pope, former head of the British Ministry of Defence's UFO desk, said that he had investigated about a hundred claims of alien abduction. He was satisfied that some sort of real occurrences were going on.



Next, a British case, that occurred only three months before the

programme aired, was explored. A Lancashire family, Rachel Devereaux, Anne, her mother, and Rachel's two sons were driving home from a local Little Chef restaurant when suddenly a bright light appeared before them. The light was compelling and soothing. It washed them with feelings of love and all the family members said that they wanted to go into it. When it was gone, they all felt a feeling of great loss.

A journey that should have taken twenty minutes lasted for an hour and twenty minutes.

Later in the programme, Rachel underwent hypnotic regression and recounted what happened to her family, describing the bright light and little beings that floated around. Her sons were laughing. Then she felt fear for her children, but a voice told her that they were in no danger. The hypnotist, Steve Burgess, felt that what she had recalled were memories of actual events. While recounting their experiences, both Rachel and Anne were moved to tears.

With this in mind, it was argued that hypnosis can insert false memories into our minds and Chris French gave an amusing story about showing a subject a fictional photograph of a balloon ride during their childhood. He claimed that 'a sizeable majority' of people would integrate this false memory into their real memories, completely unaware that it was an event that had never taken place. David Jacobs countered this by explaining that, although

memory is not infallible, we tend not to forget major incidents that happen to us. If we did, our judicial systems would collapse.

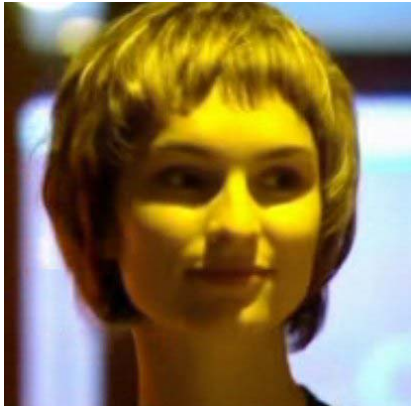
Sceptics argue that there is no good evidence to prove researchers' claims of alien abduction. Enter the implantees!



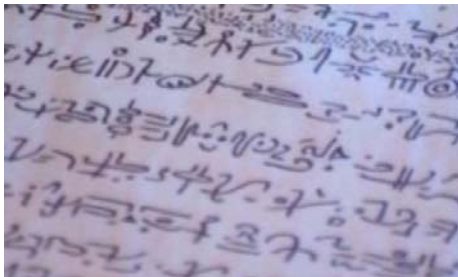
A French air traffic controller, Eric Julien, a man who's job entails working under great stress and making extremely important decisions in terms of air safety every day, believed he had been abducted by aliens and that they had placed something beneath his skin behind his left ear. He said that he once saw an object on his radar screen moving from east to west at 28,000 kilometres per hour.

A visit to a Harley Street doctor and an ultrasound and x-ray scan later, he was told in no uncertain terms that his implant was nothing more than a sebaceous cyst. Eric was not satisfied with this diagnosis and asked how a rectangular 'cyst' could move twelve millimetres in six months!

Bud Hopkins displayed many photographs of abductees showing what are termed 'scoop marks'. These are, sometimes quite large, indentations in the skin that are said to most closely resemble punctures from biopsies. Hopkins suggests that these marks are where aliens take DNA samples from their victims.



Tracy Taylor claimed that she had been abducted since childhood and became concerned that she might be losing her mind. After a battery of tests by psychologists and doctors, she was given the all clear and told, as the experiences were not negative, to get on with her life. She channelled her experiences into art and we were shown many of her impressive paintings and drawings, including one that depicted strange writing that she said linguists had believed was related to Egyptian hieroglyphics and ancient Sumerian.



Tracy said that her artistic style changed radically after her experiences and it was asserted that many abductees claimed to have returned with special 'gifts', such as psychic powers, healing abilities or messages for the good of the world. Of course, academia says that no evidence of this has ever been produced *under controlled conditions*.

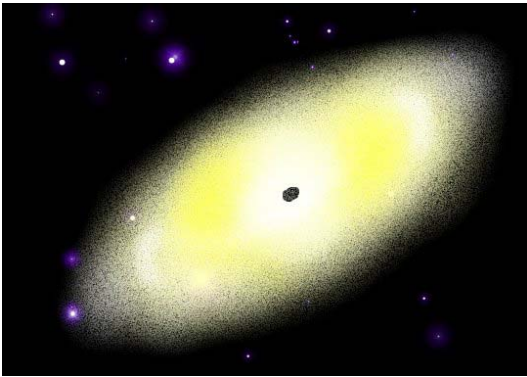


Dr Roger Leir, an American podiatrist, has removed many objects from his patients that he claims are possible alien implants. Using the resources of the National Institute of Discovery Science (NIDS), he had some of the implants tested at Los Alamos National Science Laboratory and New Mexico Tech. The samples were found to contain materials that are normally found only in meteorites.

Despite video evidence of Leir sealing his specimens in front of witnesses and not telling the labs of the origins of the samples, academics made the claim that his research is faulty and open to tampering and/or fraud!

Chris French popped up again and said that if implants were found to be made from materials not normally found on Earth, that this would be a tremendous, scientific breakthrough. Erm, Chris, if you're reading this, look up a couple of paragraphs. Leir's samples *were* found to be made from materials not normally found on Earth. Of course, this doesn't stop the 'experts' from sticking their fingers in their ears and shouting: "La La Laaa!", does it?

The programme draws to a close with academia saying that the evidence does not exist, while researchers say that science is misinterpreting the data. Personally, I think they just *ignore* the evidence in UFO cases, especially the evidence that cannot be easily dismissed.



Dr Brian Cox was brought in to explain that theoretical physics is entering a new golden age, where the promise of multiple dimensions, beyond the four we know about, wormhole travel and even time travel are all becoming theoretical possibilities. This begs the question, of course, that if we, with our relatively new understanding of science and the universe, are just

starting to get to grips with this, what about alien civilisations hundreds or thousands of years in advance of us? It makes you think...

So, what are we to make of this programme, the second major UFO-related documentary in the space of a single week?

It is clear that there is still a yawning gap between the sceptics (or open disbelievers) and the believers. My own view is that the term 'believer' is used far too often by sceptics as a form of insult. I view the subject from a sceptical viewpoint and there's nothing wrong with that. Healthy scepticism is good. I like to look at it like this:

People who have not undergone an abduction experience, but are interested in the phenomenon, should be sceptical. Of course, there are always going to be some who fully *believe* what the abductees are saying, but that is not the same as saying that you are a believer, as in the same way as one might *believe* in God, say.

People who have witnessed a UFO or have been subjected to alien abduction are not *believers* in my view. They are *knowers*! They *know* that something happened to them. They *know* that there is 'something else' out there. They have no reason to *believe* because they *know*!

Again, we have been shown that interest in UFO phenomena is far from waning. If anything, it is gathering pace. *The Real 4400* showed that a serious documentary

can be made about the subject and rather than poo-pooing the evidence, the producers allowed everybody to have their say, which can only be a good thing.

Like *UFOs: The Secret Evidence*, this documentary was aired with little fanfare, however. I only caught it because it was on directly after *Stargate: Atlantis* (I own up, I'm a sci-fi nerd!), so the potential audience, had the show been more rigorously advertised, could have been much higher than I suspect the figures will reflect.

I wonder if this trend of UFO programmes will continue. I certainly hope so!

© Steven Johnson – 2005

All images are the property of Sky Television and Unique Television and are reproduced here solely for review purposes.