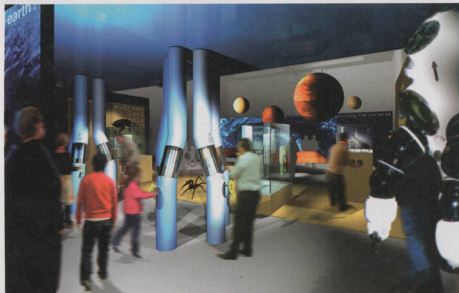




## FLYING SAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY



### DEAD AGAIN?

At the April 2002 UnConvention, a panel of veteran ufologists was lured onstage to debate the question: "Is ufology dead?" (see FT160: 4). Coming hot on the heels of the British Flying Saucer Bureau's announcement that it was suspending its public meetings the very title of the debate was immediately twisted by the national media who were desperate to say: "ufology is dead".

Again in 2004, following the closure of *UFO Magazine*, national newspapers ran stories about the "death of ufology" (FT184:16). So, during this year's silly season, listless hacks must have hardly been able to believe their luck when Cumbrian UFO spotter Chris Parr announced breathlessly that, yes you guessed it, ufology was dead – again!

Why all the fuss? Well, "In Cumbria we have gone from 60 UFO sightings in 2003 to 40 in 2004 and none at all this year," moaned Parr before suggesting that if sightings didn't increase he and his pals might have to pack it all in.

The story bounced round the papers for a week or two, with Parr being quoted extensively. The lack of sightings was blamed variously on the end of *The X-Files*, the death of Graham Birdsall and sundry other factors, all of which broadly, if unwittingly, support the psychosocial hypothesis which posits that interest in and sightings of UFOs is more a function of fashions in belief than actual alien activity.

But surely Parr and his team are in danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater?

## HE CLAIMS FILEY AS THE UFO CAPITAL OF GREAT BRITAIN

If extraterrestrial craft do exist then it only takes one good piece of evidence to prove the point, and if UFO hunters aren't prepared to put in the time to wait for this, then ufology may as well be cremated to the strains of the Carpenters' *Calling Occupants of Interplanetary Craft!* Yet, before a week had passed, Parr was claiming that sightings had increased because of the media exposure and that he was hot on the trail again.

Meanwhile, over in North Yorkshire, Parr's sidekick Russ Kellest was claiming the seaside resort of Filey – where he sees and films UFOs regularly – as "the UFO capital of Britain."

What do you mean, "publicity stunt"? *D. Telegraph*, 9 Aug; *Independent*, 10 Aug; *Guardian*, Yorkshire Post, 11 Aug 2005. [www.guardian.co.uk/space/article/0,14493,1546722,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/space/article/0,14493,1546722,00.html)

### NO, REALLY DEAD

As if to make the point that ufology as a hobby is dead, the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) announced that it was cancelling its monthly London lectures. These lectures have run since the early 1960s, featuring a

Who's Who of UK ufology including Arthur Shuttlewood, Brinsley le Poer Trench, Tim Good and many, many others. BUFORA has given no specific reason for discontinuing them, but we suspect plummeting audience figures coupled with general public apathy have led to their demise.

The final BUFORA lecture takes place on 12 November and in a somewhat ironic twist features *FT* columnist Andy Roberts, one of BUFORA's most outspoken critics, speaking on British Saucer Cults & Contactees of the 1950s, alongside Philip Gardiner and Gary Osborn, speaking about *The Serpent Grail* (although quite what this has to do with ufology eludes us). The lectures take place between 2.30 and 5.30pm at The Tournament Public House, 344/346 Old Brompton Road, Earls Court, London SW5 9JU. It'll be historic, trust us. [www.bufora.org.uk/](http://www.bufora.org.uk/)

### ALIEN ANT FARM

If you thought the *Alien Autopsy* film was bizarre, then you may not be quite ready for the latest expression of its cultural impact. Diminutive Georgie TV stars Ant and Dec are starring in a film, currently being shot at Ealing Studios, about the contentious footage.

In a case of life imitating art (we're confident the AA film is a clever hoax) Ant and Dec play Ray Santilli and his sidekick who go to the USA and buy the dodgy autopsy footage from a drug-dealing crop circle fanatic, returning to the UK amid a media circus. Why? You may well ask, but, from what was seen on set, *Empire* magazine thought it would be a film whose sum is better than its parts. Yet while the cast list includes comedians Jimmy Carr and Morwenna Banks, there is no mention of who will play ufology's Philip Mantle, who did more to popularise the film in the UK than anyone else. We suggest Timmy Mallett! [www.empireonline.co.uk/site/news/newsstory.asp?news\\_id=16976](http://www.empireonline.co.uk/site/news/newsstory.asp?news_id=16976); [www.imdb.com/title/tt0466664/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0466664/)

### THE SCIENCE OF ALIENS

While the eternal question "Are we alone?" continues to remain unanswered, the public fascination with all things alien will continue. From 14 October, visitors to London's Science Museum can discover how ideas about alien life have inspired artists and filmmakers and vexed astronomers and philosophers for centuries.

The *Science of the Alien* exhibition (shown above), which runs until February 2006, uses the latest interactive displays to allow visitors to explore the Solar System, control aliens in their own habitat – and even write their own message to an alien. The displays divide aliens into different categories, each of which examines serious aspects of science and culture.

You can purchase your own close encounter now by calling 0870 870 4868. [www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/)