

## **‘World of the Strange’ Workshop with Neil Nixon.**

On Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2026 at the monthly u3a meeting at St. Paul’s Church, we were treated to a ‘World of the Strange’ Workshop with Neil Nixon. Neil confessed to a life long interest in the paranormal which has led him to investigate the stranger side of life and to write books on UFOs and ghost sightings.

Kent has many haunted sites, including the village of Pluckley (12 regular ghosts) and the Ghost of Blue Bell Hill. Neil mentioned a radio presenter, Desmond Carrington, who had made the Pluckley ghosts famous in a Radio Times article in 1962 and who claimed to have invented three of them!

The ghostly hitchhiker on Blue Bell Hill has been reported by several people since the 1960s including a Maidstone bus driver, Ian Sharpe, who while driving home on the A229 one evening in 1992, was convinced he had run over a young woman. He stopped and searched beneath his car but found no body. A further investigation by police found no evidence of an accident and they then explained to him the legend of the ghost sightings on the hill.

Alien abductions are also apparently common in Kent and support groups for these have at least 300 members. There are also those who claim to communicate with aliens, who will answer any questions from Earthlings as long as we send a stamped addressed envelope for the answers!

Sometimes the ‘aliens’ are based on Earth. UFOs spotted near Aldershot can be traced to military flares which can move slowly across the sky or appear to hover. Some UFO photos are caused by ‘lens flare’, a reflection of light within the camera lens, or can be optical illusions created by focus or over exposure of photographs. In the U.S.A. many government documents relating to UFO sightings were declassified, firstly by President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s and later by President Bill Clinton in the 1990s. President Donald Trump has promised to release further documents.

Neil then talked about ‘crop circles’ which had begun appearing in the late 1980s and early 1990s and which had been accepted as unexplained phenomena by many paranormal groups. It was only later that pranksters such as Doug Bower and Dave Chorley confessed that they had created these circles with boards, usually after dark and at weekends.

Aliens can also become a new religion and Neil mentioned the Aetherius Society, created by George King, who believe that Jesus and Buddha were extraterrestrials sent to guide Humanity and who believe that they can charge ‘prayer batteries’ with prayer energy. This can be released to solve world problems. Although strange, such beliefs do not seem harmful and can also give some people a reason for living.

Neil then showed a photo of a glass which apparently had ‘jumped’ off a pub shelf and which people were happy to claim was done by the pub ghost. Further investigation showed the lights of a large vehicle reflected in a mirror and it was probably vibration from this which moved the glass. But ghosts are good for business!

After the talk, Neil remained to answer any questions from the meeting and to listen to any weird and wonderful stories which we might want to tell him.