

# ENTITY ENCOUNTER AT RISLEY

*Jenny Randles and Paul Wetnall*

This detailed UFOIN investigation of what appears to be a close encounter of the fourth kind was undertaken following initial enquiries by the Manchester UFO Research Association. Special thanks to members Peter Warrington and Peter Hough must be given.

March 17, 1978, Risley, Cheshire CE4 (EM, Physio, Psycho)\*

READERS will recall that late on the night of January 2, 1978, four young men returning from a night out encountered a strange humanoid figure on a lonely coach road near Rainford, Merseyside. Indeed the early part of 1978 seems to have produced a spate of close encounters in the Merseyside and Cheshire county regions. This particular incident is one more in the series of puzzling observations of apparently UFO-related figures seen without the presence of a UFO. However, in this instance the case proves of much greater interest because of the associative effects. These effects, it is added, came out almost accidentally during the course of the investigations. It was obvious that the witness himself placed no importance on several of them, and quite probably failed to mention them to the other ufologists who descended on him in eager hordes. To our minds this is an interesting point, because it begs the question: "How many other seemingly innocuous sightings might in fact turn out to be of much greater significance if the right questions are asked of the witnesses?"

On Monday March 13, 1978, the feature film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* had a royal premiere in London. For weeks around about this time Britain had been gripped by UFO mania. It was unfortunate for service engineer Ken Edwards that he was the first person after this to experience an apparently genuine close encounter of this type and to have this story made public.

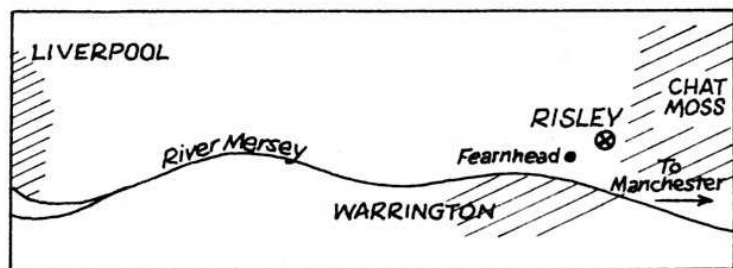
Ken had his encounter late on Friday, March 17 and by the evening of the next day it was being broadcast on all local radio stations, and it appeared in the local press. The next day, Sunday March 19, the national press got hold of the story and carried headlines such as "Close Encounter as Ken meets a monster" (*Sunday People*), "Silvery giant beams light fantastic" (*Sunday Post*) and the ludicrous "Ken and a flasher from outer space" (*News of the World*). This resulted in ufologists, the men from media and plain sightseers swarming around the modest semi-detached home of Ken and Barbara who hardly knew what had hit them! As the fates would have it a conference of the pseudo religious Aetherius Society was scheduled for nearby Warrington some days afterwards and neighbours tell a frightening tale of practically the whole bunch of delegates appearing outside the house in search of the un-

fortunate couple. By this time they had in fact gone into retreat, their plans for a holiday already severely disrupted by this invasion of their privacy.

This aspect of the episode is of importance because it has caused some people to gain a false impression of the witness. In fact it was the police who had told the media of the encounter, informing the local Warrington *Guardian* on the Saturday morning. Ken Edwards recalls giving them permission to do this as they said that the local newspaper often rang for stories of immediate interest such as this. In view of the pressure he was under following his experience this was natural, and Ken insists that he told the police that it was alright to do this "...provided it went no further." Obviously both the police and the witness has misread the current situation (again very understandable as the big movie had not arrived in the north of England at that time, and Ken had no more than an ordinary passing interest in UFOs). The local paper sensing the opportunity for a big story on their doorstep had released details to the agencies and everyone became interested. Ken and Barbara were swept away, although it must be said that they never made a penny out of the publicity that resulted. It was accepted by them, but they did not revel in it. Indeed, Ken is the sort of person who would accommodate anyone, and did not like to say no to anybody who asked to hear his story. The only time he became annoyed was when representatives of the Aetherius Society arrived to tell him that he had been "chosen by God." Whilst not being an over-religious person, he regarded such talk as not only nonsensical but somewhat contemptible — but even then sat out the discomfort and allowed the society to say its piece and then leave.

This, and the impact of the many UFO investigators, each of whom thought they had a right to his time, was the harrowing situation Ken Edwards had been confronted with when we approached him for a complete investigation three weeks following the encounter. This was deliberate policy to allow him time to breathe. We had already established a rapport with him to the extent that we knew the outline of what had happened. In this instance the press are to be congratulated on getting their facts reasonably

\* See "Publishing of UFO Data" on page 22.



**Location of Risley**

correct. The only lamentable thing is the extent of what they left out!

### The encounter

Ken Edwards, aged 39, is a service engineer who lives at Fearnhead, Warrington, Cheshire. The area is on the edge of the Warrington New Town development with several light industry estates (mostly distributive and electrical) and a lot of new housing (much of it not yet occupied). It is pleasantly suburban, and within a mile or so of rural land to the east. Between Warrington and Manchester there stretches about ten miles of peat bog mossland known as Chat Moss. On the fringes of this lies Risley, where apart from a large remand centre, there is an atomic energy research plant attached to Manchester University.

On the Friday night Ken had gone in his van to attend a union meeting. This was at Sale in Greater Manchester, some fifteen miles distant. It was a regular occurrence to attend such meetings, and the route that he took home was a very familiar one, along the newly-built M62 motorway that runs across Chat Moss from East to West. Turning off here about a mile and a half from home he would travel along Dayton Road, passing the new AA Relay site, the fire station, the reactor and other buildings of the Atomic Energy plant. This last section of the journey is even more familiar to Ken, being a daily route on coming home from work.

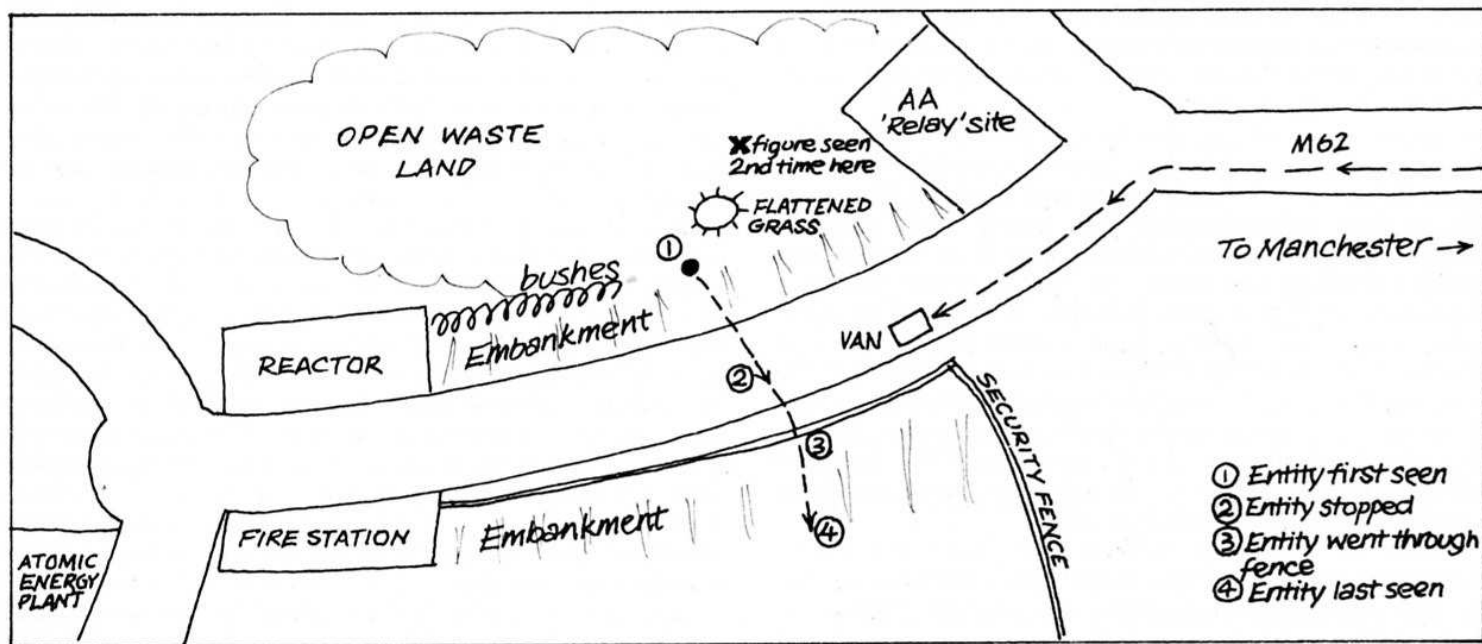
Ken had left Sale at approximately 11.00 p.m. and

was at the Risley turn off at approaching 11.30. He passed traffic on the motorway as he turned off, but met nothing after this until he drove off home after his experience, at a time he consciously recalled details would indicate was about 12.25 a.m. or later. Apparently it is not necessarily significant that no traffic passed by as there is a local effort to keep traffic away from this road while the site is still under development. This is done principally by not sign-posting the directions, so that only local inhabitants are liable to use it as a short cut.

After being off the motorway for a minute or so Ken had accelerated to only about 30 mph. He had passed the AA site on his right and was approaching the fire station on his left (¼ mile ahead) and the reactor on his right (also ¼-mile). On the right was an embankment, about ten feet high, topped by a flat piece of wasteland. A few bushes lined this here and there. On his left was a 10 ft.-high security fence running parallel to the road as far as the fire station (see diagram). The foot of this fence is buried deep into the ground, and is surmounted by barbed wire.

The van's headlights were on full beam, and about 100 yards ahead on the right at the top of the embankment Ken caught sight of a strange figure. At first he thought it was only someone climbing down, unusual as it was at that time of night. However, when he observed the method of "climbing down" and the peculiar garb of the figure he became puzzled, and slowed the van down. During the next ten seconds or so the figure descended to the bottom of the embankment. As it stood there on a verge of grass which flanked the roadside, Ken decided to stop. He pulled into the side about 50 yards from the figure, intrigued but not unduly frightened.

The strangest thing about "it" — as Ken refers to the entity — was that it walked in a stooped fashion. This it did with arms stretched forward, unlike a human who would inevitably have to balance backwards to some extent to prevent toppling over. We have tried this method of walking down an embankment which is steep and by no means easy to



clamber down in any way. There was no way that the entity, as described — if human — could have *walked down* in the manner stated. Ken remains very puzzled by this, but was even more puzzled by the appearance of the figure itself.

The creature was tall (about seven feet) with a broad body and arms that stretched up directly out of the chest and not from the shoulders. The body was stiff, and it seemed to walk from the hips as if it had no knee joints. No markings were noticed on the body, which shone a kind of dull silver as if encompassed totally in a boiler suit type of garment. The only part of the figure that was not silver was the head, and this was dark. It was also very round and gave the impression of being enclosed in a balaclava type helmet. No protruberances were seen such as ears, nose or mouth, but there were two small round eyes. There seemed to be no hair line.

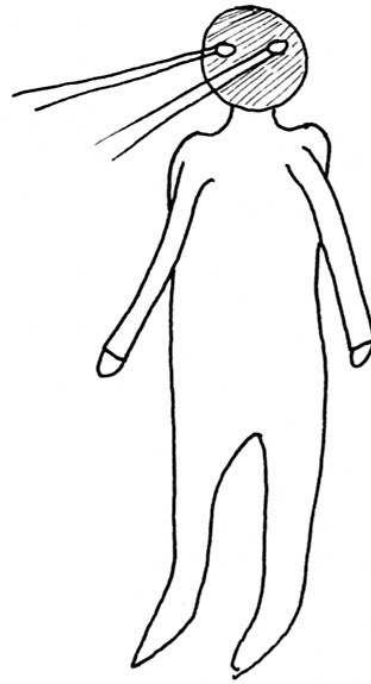
This weird apparition proceeded to cross the road ahead of the witness, moving at an angle across his field of view. It proceeded at a leisurely pace and took perhaps half a minute to walk from the verge to the centre of the road, where it stopped some thirty feet in front of the van. Ken was now aware that this was something very bizarre and he became progressively more frightened.

The figure stood in the centre of the road for about a minute. During this time it turned its head towards the van and two pencil-slim shafts or light were projected from the eyes and struck the witness. Ken Edwards is certain that these were not simply caused by headlight reflection from the eyes, but appeared to be a function of the eyes themselves. These beams of light diverged slightly, but each were still only about six inches wide when they reached the van. They remained in view all the time that the entity looked towards him.

After a minute of this 'staring match' the entity continued to walk along the line that it had originally taken, and passed within fifteen feet of the van. It then approached the security fence just ahead of the van. At no point did the witness have a full frontal view of the entity due to the route it took across the road. Instead, he had a side view — it turned its head to project the beams of light — and a partial view of the back; no differences were observed in the "suit" worn by the figure.

Upon approaching the security fence the entity raised its arms so that the fingers appeared to point towards the fence. (Ken could not see any fingers so this is pure supposition.) The entity then stopped momentarily, lowered its arms, and walked forwards straight through the fence: At no point did he notice the fence or figure turn transparent or lose its solid appearance. The creature just walked through it as if it were not there, and then was seen at the far side with the fence still completely intact. There is no sign at all of any damage to the fencing, and no manner in which optical illusion could have caused the reported effect. There appears to be no rational explanation for this aspect of the story at all.

Once at the other side of the fence the figure continued walking at the same speed and clambered up the embankment (which was slightly higher on that side) and disappeared over the top. Total



The entity, based on Ken Edward's sketch

duration of this sequence of events (including approximately one minute when the figure was stopped in the middle of the road) can have been no more than three or four minutes.

#### Subjective aspects of the encounter

So far the encounter sounds very straightforward, and typical of other similar incidents. However, clues as to something further were forthcoming when the witness described having the feeling that the incident had lasted much longer than it obviously could have done. He said that he knew it could not have lasted more than three or four minutes, but subjectively it was as if it had lasted at least fifteen minutes. When we probed into the time aspect Ken's wife attested to the fact that he had arrived home at about 12.30 am (one hour after first encountering the entity). The drive from this spot to his home (which Ken says he did much faster than usual once he got going) takes less than five minutes. In other words we have a large inconsistency here, with something like three quarters of an hour remaining to be accounted for.

Ken is aware of this discrepancy. However, he does not consider there is anything sinister behind it. His opinion is that he was so terrified after the encounter that he sat in a state of great fear for this length of time before being able to drive away. His comment was; "Twenty minutes seems a long time I know, but I was petrified and I do not want to go through that again." Regardless of the fact that this is a probable after-reaction, it does seem most unlikely that he would remain in the one spot for so long, then drive off at great speed. His mind is blank as to anything that might have happened, and the time discrepancy remains.

When the entity looked towards Ken and shone the beams of light at him he says he felt weird. His



head began to swim with strange thoughts, hundreds of them seemingly rushing through his mind at once. Of these he can only recall one. Prior to this experience he had no views on the UFO phenomenon one way or another, but the dominant thought during the "staring match" was ". . . is this something from outer space and what does it want with me?"

Also during this phase of the experience the witness felt a curious sensation. He describes it as being like ". . . someone with two enormous hands pressing down on me from the top. The pressure was tremendous." This force, or whatever it was, seems to have paralysed him, and it remained for some minutes after the figure had disappeared. He recalls trying to bring his hands off the steering wheel to move away, but for an unknown period of time he could not do so. Nor could he move any muscles of the body, except the eyes, which had followed the course of the entity around to the side of the van.

Ken does not know whether there were any effects on the engine or lights. He does not recall any, and also does not recall switching the engine off or back on again. If it ran for the duration of the experience there were no subsequent noticeable effects on the performance of the van or the amount of petrol used by it. It is also interesting to note that the only traffic to pass him during the experience came along just as he moved away to drive home (this would be at about 12.25 am or almost fifty minutes after the entity had supposedly vanished). He considered stopping the other vehicles but decided against it. He thought the driver would think him mad.

#### **Objective after-effects**

When her husband reached home Barbara Edwards immediately noticed something was wrong. Ken was white and shaking and poured himself a whisky to calm his nerves. He said to her, "I've seen a silver man." After recovering his composure he started to get ready for bed and partook of a night beverage. Then suddenly he got fully dressed again and said; "I think I had better go to the police. Will you take me?"

Barbara drove him to the police station at Padgate, a mile or so away. They took his story very seriously and made out a complete report. Once satisfied that he was sober, genuine, and still very frightened, they went with him to the scene. There was nothing to be found and no indications of anything having passed through a perfectly intact fence. They then went to the Atomic Energy plant and related the story. They took a full report and promised to look into it.

It was well after 4.00 am when Ken finally returned home. He was unable to sleep and was up very early, feeling "very rough." He did not feel ill, physically, but for the next few nights he did not sleep properly. The experience had obviously had a deep effect on him, and his wife attests to this. "He had been very badly shaken," she said, "and I don't know what to make of it. I would have to see it myself to really believe it. But he saw something very strange, I know." The first unusual thing Ken Edwards noticed the next day was that his watch had

stopped at 11.45. Presumably this was at some stage of the encounter, and most likely at the conclusion of it. He took the watch off and tried to get it to work, but without success. It was an old manual watch and seemed to have a fairly standard fault. However, he decided that he had best not try to get it repaired in case it was important. Several people later tried unsuccessfully to get it to work. Jenny Randles handled it but it did not function, then at one point during the interview Paul Whetnall picked it up idly and then put it down again. When it was checked some minutes later it was found to be working normally. On checking two weeks after this interview it was working absolutely normally, and once more keeping perfect time.

The second unusual thing that Ken noticed was the appearance during this first weekend of three dark marks on the inside of three fingers. There were the little finger, and the two adjacent fingers on the right hand, and the mark extended along the length of the fingers. It was just like a deep sunburn, and faded slowly over the course of the next three weeks. At interview this was only just detectable. The witness had placed no real significance on these marks, although he is certain that they developed immediately following the encounter. He has not suffered any skin ailments in the past.

Of prime importance, however, seem to be the effects on the expensive radio transmitter and receiver incorporated into the van. Being a service engineer, this is in regular use, and is vital to Ken's work. It had last been used to transmit on the Thursday, but was receiving normally on the Friday before the encounter. It was next to be used on the Monday when Ken returned to work, and it was immediately apparent that it was not functioning. Being the property of the company for which he worked it was returned, and it was only a day or so prior to our interview that the radio set, and the service department's conclusions, were returned. Apparently there had been a massive power surge through the set which had burnt out the whole of the transmitting diode circuit, and most of the capacitors. The damage was so extensive (in excess of £200 to repair) that it was cheaper to obtain a new set than to repair this one. The speculation was that the surge had been picked up through the aerial. No other parts of the electrical system of the van were affected.

One other thing that may or may not be of significance: a few days after the encounter a dead rabbit was found by the witness on the roadside verge at the spot where the entity had first appeared. It had no markings on it to indicate why it was dead, and it had gone when we reached the scene. Rabbits are not uncommon in the region.

The area itself showed no obvious signs of anything having landed. There was one oval patch of flattened grass immediately atop the embankment, which most probably was not significant.

#### **Other experiences for the witness**

Ken Edwards had never seen a UFO, nor has he had any psychic experiences prior to this incident.

However, following the encounter he has had three strange experiences. On Thursday March 23, 1978, six days after the initial encounter he had been interviewed by a freelance UFO investigator from Leeds. Having been kept late, he took the man to the scene of the incident around midnight. At the spot he suddenly felt a return of the strange sensation that he had felt during the "staring match." complete with the pressure on the head. He got out of the car and walked with the investigator towards the embankment which they climbed. On top the investigator left him and walked away, and it was then, in the distance, that he saw the figure again, atop the waste land and walking away from him. It was in view just a few seconds and, in fear, he left the embankment and returned home.

At 2.00am on April 2 he was returning by van from a day out in Yorkshire. With him was his wife. Coming off the M62 motorway they followed the same road and he was again subjected to the strange feeling. For some reason he stopped by the roadside and got out. He stood in the middle of the road and the sensation grew stronger. For an instant his vision blacked out completely. When he recovered he got back into the car and drove home at speed. Since that time he has driven a long way round purposely to avoid the area and at the time of writing (April 25) has had no recurrences of the strange feeling. Nor has he had any odd dreams.

At 3.00am on the morning of April 12 he was awakened by a strange noise. It was like a deep humming sound that seemed to fill the house. He got out of bed to see if he could find out what it was (believing something electrical had been left on). He did not awaken his wife, but found nothing. He then opened the window and looked outside. The noise was louder, but he saw nothing. Then it just stopped suddenly and he returned to bed. It was later discovered that two men on a site at Risley had heard the noise and, looking up, had seen a red oval object pass across the sky.

### UFO activity around the date in question

While the encounter itself is fascinating there is no apparent direct involvement of the UFO phenomenon. However, it is interesting to note that there are a large number of independent reports for a period of 24 hours on either side of the encounter which indicate that UFO activity was prominent during this period (whatever *that* might mean).

### Conclusions

It is the opinion of the investigators that Ken Edwards had a genuine experience which relates closely to other similar incidents in the past where there is undoubted correlation with the UFO phenomenon. Once more this case exemplifies the overlap between UFOs and other paranormal phenomena, with the intensely subjective overtones, the repeatability, and the similarities between the behaviour of the entity and that of a ghost.

The possibility exists that something else transpired — possibly a contact experience — during the time lapse period. It may be that such an

unremembered experience took place after the entity had gone (in other words, normal shock amnesia) or it may have been induced amnesia during the period when the beams of light were shone at the witness. Either way the possibility of using regression hypnosis to uncover this missing period is being explored. However, much evidence (were it to be forthcoming) would be on a different level of objectivity, and may indeed not be relevant or even valid. Consequently. It has been decided to present the objective evidence *per se* and provide any further testimony, if indeed it ever materialises, in a subsequent article.

We believe that whatever the stimulus for this incident, and it may be entirely psychological, it provides us with interesting insights into the nature of the UFO experience. All efforts to find a rational explanation have failed. It had been ascertained that it was definitely NOT someone from the Risley plant on any mysterious mission. The police are baffled. Indeed there is an amusing little postscript.

On the Monday following the encounter the police called to see Mr Edwards and asked him to accompany them in a patrol car. They took him to the site and then went on to the fire station. Without warning, as they turned the corner, a fireman in a special protective suit stepped out from behind a building. The suit was like a silver apron.

"Is that what you saw?" said the policeman turning to Ken Edwards.

"No chance. Nothing like it." said the witness unperturbed.

The policemen scratched their heads at his obvious conviction and went back to the drawing board. They have still not come up with a satisfactory answer and have now written it off as "just one of those odd incidents that happen from time to time."

From our point of view, of course, it is more interesting. Ken Edwards shows typical symptoms of an early stage contactee, and if necessary the investigation will continue.

## LOOKING FORWARD . . .

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEXT ISSUE OF FSR

ARE THERE UFOs THAT MIMIC? *Ann Druffel*

A YUGOSLAVIAN LANDING *Milos Krmelj*

MAUREEN PUDDY'S THIRD ENCOUNTER  
*Judith Magee*

UFO WAVE OVER RUSSIA  
*from our Correspondent*

THE KETTERING, TASMANIA, LANDING  
*K. Roberts & Dr. G. Stevens*

A CASE OF RABBIT SNATCHING  
*Janet & Colin Bord*

OBSERVATIONS ON THE RAINFORD  
ENCOUNTER *Dr. Robert Morrell*