



Nick Redfern is a freelance author and journalist. Having cut his journalistic teeth after leaving school with the music magazine *Zero*, he moved on to write for many mainstream newspapers and magazines. Alongside his mainstream writing, Nick also combined his journalistic background with his longtime Fortean interests, an effort that culminated in many published books in the areas of cryptozoology and UFOs. His most recent books include *Final Events* and *The Real Men In Black*.

Always a respected researcher and author with years of experience in the field, Nick's views may at times seem controversial to mainstream Fortean thinking and theories, but they are always interesting.

OWNE both welcomes and thanks Nick Redfern

OWNE: Hi Nick. First, thanks for taking the time to talk to us. I'd like to start with a Trans-Atlantic perspective on your Fortean and anomalous research.

You were born and raised in the UK but are also a long time resident in the US, and have written and investigated in both. Have you noticed any differences in either the type of phenomena or how it manifests, between the UK & US? Superficially at least, I get the impression there are more conspiratorial and UFO/alien (inc. Abduction, cattle mutilation etc) reports and phenomenon Stateside for example.

Nick: The nature of the phenomena that I investigate over here in the US (I have lived here about 11 years, just outside Dallas, Texas) doesn't radically differ from that which I used to investigate in England. By that, I mean my two main areas of interest in terms of writing are Cryptozoology and Ufology. So, in the same way that in the UK there are sightings of lake-monsters, big-cats etc, in the US there are similar things, plus creatures like Bigfoot. And it's the same with Ufology - there are cases here to investigate just like in the UK. But where I would say there is a very big difference is in the interpretation of the phenomena. I see a lot of more open-minded debate on the nature of the phenomena in the UK. In other words, in the UK I see more of an alternative approach and a willingness to follow alternative ideas and theories, such as themes concerning Tulpas, thought-forms, the ultra-terrestrial idea, rather than extraterrestrial etc. I would say in the US a lot of people view it from a far more black and white perspective - UFOs are nuts and bolts craft and Bigfoot is a giant ape. Don't get me wrong, there are people here who - like me - address these things from different angles. But, the "conventional" theories definitely hold more sway here. Maybe because they are popular, sell books, and get people to the conferences. That's probably why my books sell in such small quantities - precisely because I *don't* say what people want to hear. I say what I think is going on, and that's not always popular or what people want to know LOL. But I don't care. I'll say it as I see it, not whether it's popular or not.

OWNE: From listening to and reading your interviews, it seems fair to say that philosophically you have an affinity with John Keel and Jacques Vallee, at least in terms of their willingness, if not insistence, to look beyond the “nuts and bolts” theories on UFOs and the “flesh and blood” theories in cryptozoology. You yourself have an interesting thought regarding tulpas in relation to anomalous phenomena. Could you expand on the influence of these two investigators/authors and also the tulpa theory?

Nick: Yeah, that's true re having an affinity with Keel and Vallee, and more so Keel of the two. I first got into all this as a kid, when it was all black and white - UFOs were alien, cryptid creatures were all flesh and blood etc. But the more I dug into all this, the more I came to realise that these things weren't just odd. Rather, they were *too* odd. Every Fortean phenomenon has one thing in common - they are all elusive. Bigfoot never gets hit by a car, never dies in the woods and is stumbled on etc. I don't have a problem with Bigfoot being either fairly elusive or even overwhelmingly elusive. But I do have a problem when - in terms of capture etc - Bigfoot is elusive *all the time*, successfully on 100 percent of all occasions. The same goes for UFOs. So, over time, certainly from around my late 20s, my ideas changed and I came far more around to the ideas of Keel and Co that we are dealing with a very real phenomenon, but one that masquerades as this or that and that can alter the way we perceive it. As for Tulpas, yes, I have a big interest in this area. Basically the idea is that the human mind can externalise powerful imagery which can then take on some semblance of existence independent of the mind of its "creator." The idea is that as a "mind-monster" the Tulpa survives and thrives on high states of human emotion. In other words, maybe all these different phenomena need to be seen by us, because they then "feed" on the high-state of emotion that the encounter provokes. Is it controversial? Yep! Do I care that many might disagree with me? No, I don't give a s***. None of us truly know what's going on with UFOs, Cryptozoology, ghost-hunting etc. And the idea that they are this, or that, is really our own interpretation and belief. We know the phenomena are real, but we have placed a belief-driven theory on what they are. I try and focus on theories and not get bogged down with beliefs until we have hard evidence. Plus, I hate the emotion-driven need to believe this or that. To me, that's a sign of weakness where a person needs to believe this, or wants to believe that. It's like a support. Why not admit that while we know these "things" exist, we really don't have much in the way of answers regarding their actual origins?

OWNE: Otherworld North East members have a wide variety of interests regarding anomalous phenomena, but as a collective our main area of focus is in regards to alleged haunting and ghost sightings. This is an area you don't seem to have delved into in any depth. Is this simply because you are more interested in researching and writing about other areas or is there an aspect of more the ghostly phenomena that turns you off it?

Nick: Yeah, it simply is the fact that I'm far more interested in Cryptozoology and Ufology than I am ghost-hunting. I don't have any hard and fast beliefs when it comes to what ghosts are or aren't. And, I don't hold any hard views on life after death. Maybe there's something after death, maybe there's nothing. I don't dwell on it though. I have done very little in the way of research in this area. But, what I would say is that my view is this: what would be the point of me blundering into the ghost field when I have no background or experience in it, and when there are people far more experienced and qualified than me who have been in this field for years? It would be pointless on my part to do that. No, there's nothing that particularly turns me off about it. I just get more enthused by the other topics that's all.

OWNE: Jacques Vallee said “I learned more from witnesses than I did from ufologists”. When he says something it is usually informative and/or important! Do you think that the emphasis of “science” in regards to investigating and researching (which I feel is vital) can sometimes overshadow the importance, or at least the consideration of, the testimony of individuals who actually witness anomalous phenomena?

Nick: Yeah, definitely. I have always said that the most important people in the Fortean field are the witnesses. After all, without witnesses who relate their experiences to us, we have nothing to investigate, no data, no reports, no testimony, nothing! So, in other words, yes we should be aware that everyone in these fields - the researchers, the writers, the magazine editors, the book publishers, the radio hosts etc - plays a role in spreading the data and trying to determine what's going on, but it's the people who have

the experiences that are the chief figures in this field.

OWNE: There seems to be a never ending stream of para-reality shows on subject like ghosts, psychics, Bigfoot, and UFOs. There is always much discussion accompanying these shows as to their merit and what they contribute to their respective subjects. What is your take on them?

Nick: They're ok in the sense they help get the word out. But, the biggest problem is they have all become so predictable. Jerky camera movements in the forests, someone whispering "What's that?!" in a haunted house. Reality TV - which is what most of the shows are today - can actually work well when it's done right. But, for the most part, it's all become one big formula, very sterile and very safe. Plus, TV companies are in the business of selling shows and making money, and that's it. For them (not us), the search for the truth - whatever that might be - is secondary to the fact that this is a TV production. And that's all it is. I just wish someone would make a show that was really ground-breaking instead of taking the cowardly, easy way out of following tired old Reality TV trends.

OWNE: In all your time researching and investigating, have you ever been spooked, unnerved or just plain scared? Considering some of the people that inhabit the "paranormal" world, I imagine your spookiest encounters have been with humans rather than anomalous phenomena!

Nick: No. I do get that adrenalin rush that I think anyone probably gets when they are out in the woods, or in a haunted house. But, I try and channel that adrenalin into the "fight" rather than the "flight" angle. If someone is out looking for something, don't run away at the last minute like a chicken. Stand up and confront it, look for it, challenge it, etc. I can't understand that idea of getting all freaked out at the last minute. Yeah, I have met a few weird people, and some of them probably are far more dangerous than the things I look for LOL.

OWNE: When researching a case or specific phenomena, has the path led in a completely unexpected direction or turned up a piece of information which completely changed the focus of the investigation? For example, have you started researching a book and turned up something that made you scrap the original idea and follow a new one?

Nick: It's a bit of both. Sometimes, the investigation will go exactly as you assume it will. But, there are other times when it will go down a totally different path to that which you were prepared for. But, that can be a good thing. What I always look for is the truth - whatever that might be. And if the truth is different to what I initially thought it was, well that's just how it goes. I suppose, again, this doesn't bother me because I don't feel the need to uphold any particular theory in advance. I just go where the evidence goes and then share it with people. I wouldn't say I've ever had to scrap a book. But, there have been times when a case in a book definitely turned out different to where I thought it would go. For example, when I was writing my 2006 book, *On the Trail of the Saucer Spies*, I found it surprising (although maybe I shouldn't have!) how many people in Ufology were being watched by government agencies not because of their UFO research, but because of certain extremist political affiliations. So, that book did have a bit of a re-write, where I focused less on the UFO angle of the Government watching us, and more on the alternative reasons why we were under observation.

OWNE: Of all the cases and phenomena that you've researched and written about, or even others that you haven't, which would you choose to solve or unravel if you had the choice of only one and why?

Nick: It may sound predictable, but I would definitely say Roswell. Not just because it's without doubt the most famous case of all time within Ufology. But, also because Ufology has made Roswell the "make or break" story in Ufology, to the point where much of the scene, the beliefs etc could come crashing down if Roswell collapsed, in terms of it being an ET event. On the other hand, if Roswell were 100 percent proved to be alien, this would be Ufology's greatest success and the field would be viewed in a whole new light. So, that's why I would like to get the undeniable truth of Roswell - because the stakes are so high for

what it would mean for the UFO field - and for everyone else too.

OWNE You obviously come into contact with a lot of other writers, bloggers, commentators, researchers and investigators. Are there any in particular you would recommend to people as being informed and informative and making interesting or important contributions?

Nick: Yeah definitely. People like Andy Colvin, Regan Lee, Mike Clelland, Chris Knowles, Greg Bishop, Paul Kimball, Jacques Vallee, Brad Steiger, and quite a few others who have offered intriguing, alternative theories and ideas in relation to Fortean phenomena. To me, they all think outside of the conventional box, and challenge us to look at new ideas, themes and thoughts - which has to be a good thing, because at the end of the day we're stuck with a lot of data and no hard answers. So we have to, by default, look further and wider. And all these people are doing exactly that.

OWNE: Being heavily involved in the UFO, fortean and cryptozoological fields and having an awareness of other paranormal areas you're not directly involved with, in the last 5 – 10 years what has disappointed you the most and what has given you the most hope in terms of advancement of knowledge and research in these areas?

Nick: Disappointment is probably too emotional a word to use. I would say because of the elusive nature of the various phenomena, I anticipate we will have problems proving things. So, from the beginning I'm prepared for the possibility that we will have outcomes that don't prove anything solid. That's no being negative. Rather, it's being realistic. The fact is we have not solved anything definitively in relation to Fortean. So, that's why I keep my feet on the ground - because what some view as disappointment dominates this field. For me, there's no point being disappointed. Just move on to the next thing or keep digging until we do get there. As for advancement: I don't see any advancement in Ufology at all. It's still full (as it was decades ago) with self-important, ego-driven characters who see themselves as being as significant as the phenomena - which is ridiculous and hilarious at the same time. We might have more reports than existed 60 years ago. But so what? All those reports have not proved anything. They have just clogged up people's filing cabinets and memory-space on their laptop. That's all. So, I see no advances at all in terms of answers. The one positive thing is that more and more people are looking into alternative areas for answers - which has to be a good thing, because the extraterrestrial theory - in my view - is flawed and redundant.

OWNE: Again, thanks for your time Nick. To finish off, what have you got in the pipeline and if anyone fancies having themselves a little online Nick Redfern-fest, where can people follow you on the internet to get news on your books and articles?

Nick: No problem, I was pleased to take part! People can find out more about me at nickredfernsbooks.blogspot.com I have a new book out at the end of this year - called *Keep Out* - which is a chapter-by-chapter study of secret places with links to UFOs: Area 51, Hangar 18, the Russian Area 51 etc etc. I'll also have a couple more books out next year - two Cryptozoology books and one more, maybe two, on UFOs. After that, I may actually not do anymore. I haven't fully decided, but it's looking that way. But personally, even though I can't prove it, I think some of the areas I have dug into - such as Tulpas - do provide the answers. And if I have personal satisfaction that I have made some advances in the field - and maybe found the answers that satisfy me, even if they don't satisfy others, then I would much rather get out while ahead, leave a (hopefully good!) legacy behind, and walk away and not come back. There's nothing worse than Fortean writers hanging on, and hanging on, and hanging on, when they have lost their spark and are tired and have nothing new to say. I wouldn't want people to think I think I'm at that point - I certainly do not think that at all! But, the very important thing is, I don't ever want to get to that point. I'd rather go out on a high - and that may very well be before the end of next year. I've done so much in this field in the past 25 or so years that I don't feel the need to keep on doing it another 25. I'm personally pleased (mostly!) at what I have published, and so that's the main thing. And I don't want to just keep repeating stuff - like writing about another Bigfoot hunt, and another lake-monster hunt. It can get very stale. So, I'd rather get out and do something else than end up like some band playing its greatest hits over and over again, when they should have already got out of it.