

COLD CASE REVIEW OF THE 23 AUGUST 1953, PORT MORESBY VISUAL SIGHTING AND COLOUR MOVIE FILM

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April 2017

Introduction:

An event which happened nearly 64 years ago, continues to be cited as a visual observation, of an anomalous object, which is supported by a movie film.

At about noon, on 23 August 1953, a Mr T P Drury, his wife and young son, observed an unusual object in the sky over Port Moresby, New Guinea. Mr Drury used his movie camera to capture images of the object. Claims have been made that the film returned to Mr Drury had some footage of the object missing.

Technical note:

The intention of section 1 of this paper, is to provide a chronological account, of items about the incident, in the form of direct text quotes, or summaries where items are exceedingly long. Although the chronology is lengthy, it does provide a detailed account of what Australian government Departments; civilian UFO researchers, and other interested parties, have documented about the incident.

In any set of documents, there are inevitable errors. In some cases, the main witness is said to be T C Drury; C T Drury or T P Drury. T P Drury is in fact correct. The date of the incident is actually 23 August 1953. However, it is sometimes said to have been 24 August 1953; 23 August 1957; Christmas 1953, or 23 August 1954. The location in at least one document, is said to have been Darwin, although it actually occurred in Port Moresby. The time is generally stated as 12noon, but in at least once instance is shown as 11 am. There are other inconsistencies, which the alert reader will detect.

There are numerous references to the Drury incident, in other UFO magazines; books, and on the internet. However, none of these provide any information, not already provided below, so these have not been cited.

Due to the passage of time, many of the individuals mentioned in this paper are no longer alive. The authors advise the reader, that have not re-interviewed any witnesses to the sighting, given the age of the event. Instead, they feel that there is far more value to utilising the text of sources close to the date of the event. The authors also disclose that they have not been able to view any of the colour film, or any first generation still photographs copied from the film. However, they do cite the opinions of individuals who have done so.

Section 1 – the chronology

23 August 1953

The event happened. For the most detailed accounts, see section 2 of this document.

31 August 1953

Department of Civil Aviation memo.

'At 1200 hours on Sunday, 23 August 1953, I was in the vicinity of the Marine Base Workshops, Port Moresby, when I noticed a cloud building up as though being formed by vapour trails, in roughly a south-westerly direction from Port Moresby, at a very great height.

I watched this cloud, which grew in intensity for several minutes, when suddenly an object appeared from one side of it and climbed very fast in roughly a north-westerly direction. I could give no accurate information as to the shape or possible size of this object, as it appeared slightly bigger than a pin head, but whatever it was, it left a very clearly defined vapour trail behind it until it finally disappeared with a rapid gain of altitude.

I had my movie camera with me and photographed the whole thing on the telephoto lens. I am waiting the results of the photograph in an endeavour to ascertain what the object might have been. It appeared to me to be some type of high speed aircraft.

As far as I know, Air Traffic Control know of no aircraft movements in that area, and in any case, from the extreme altitude of the object, it certainly could not have been a civil aircraft.

Weather conditions at the time were cloudless.'

(Source: Department of Civil Aviation memo, dated 31 August 1953. NAA File series MP1279/1, control symbol 99/1/478 digital page 48. Enclosure 66A.)

2 September 1953

'Guided Missile' over Port Moresby.

'The Deputy Director of Civil Aviation, Mr Tom Drury, last Sunday photographed a probable guided missile over Port Moresby. Mr Drury said he saw the missile flying high over Nappa Nappa at mid-day. He reported it to the police and to the Regional Director of Civil Aviation, Mr John Arthur. 'It could only have been a guided missile, because nothing else would fit the description of what I saw,' he said.

(The British Government last month announced that guided missiles which flew at 2000 miles per hour, and could follow any target at almost any distance were being tested at the Woomera Rocket Range.)

Mr Drury said he was taking pictures at his home at midday on Sunday when he saw the first signs of the missile.

'There were no clouds in the sky and while I was taking photographs a small cloud formed for no apparent reason. I was curious about the cloud so I watched it. I had never seen a cloud form up by itself like that. I watched the cloud for a few minutes. Then a silver object came out of the cloud. I could see the flash of it in the Sun. It flew on a north-west course. I couldn't believe it, so I looked down at the ground, and then back at the object. It left a trail of vapour and I picked it up easily by following the vapour trails.

'I called to my wife and asked her if she could see anything in the sky. She looked up, and then she, too saw it. She pointed excitedly and said 'Oh yes. There it is.' 'The children could also see it. I got the telescopic lens on my camera and took shots of it.

'Then we watched it flying across the sky for a few more minutes. I've never seen anything fly that high before, not fly so fast.

'It kept on course then climbed at about 45 degrees and disappeared.'

Mr Drury said he was waiting for the shots he took of the missile to be developed.

'The only explanation I can give is that the object was a guided missile,' he said.

'It must have flown in circles and the vapour trails formed the cloud I saw.'

'When it left the cloud the trails and the object itself were quite clear. The object must have been very big to have been visible at that height.

'When a Spitfire aircraft left vapour trails during the war you could see the trails but seldom saw the Spitfire.'

(Source: 'South Pacific Post.' 2 September 1953 page 1.)

2 September 1953

The Newcastle Herald (NSW: 1918-1954) Wednesday 2 September 1953 page 2, carried the same basic story as the South Pacific Post.

5 September 1953

Memo from Regional Director, DCA, New Guinea to Director General of DCA, Melbourne.

'Further to this office secret memo of 31.8.53, reference the above subject, herewith undeveloped film in which it is expected will be contained photographs

of the alleged unidentified object which was sighted by the Superintendent of Air Navigation. This film has been exposed on one side only.

2. It is desired your office arrange for its development and its onforwarding to the appropriate authority.' Signed by F Roberts for Regional Director.

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 47. Enclosure 67A)

7 September 1953

The same basic story as the South Pacific Post was published in the Warwick Daily News (Qld: 1919-1954) Monday 7 September 1953 page 2.

10 September 1953

Telex from (redacted) to various addresses including CSAF Washington DC for DINTA.

'Cite AIC 3453. Flyobrpt. Following report of sighting of unidentified flying object by Mr (redacted) (redacted) of Air navigation, New Guinea District at one two zero zero king on two three Aug X Mr Drury observed a cloud building up at a very great height south west of Port Moresby as though being formed by vapour trails X This cloud grew in intensity for several minutes at which time an object appeared from one side of it and climbed very fast in a north west direction until it disappeared X Object appeared slightly larger than pinhead and left clearly defined vapor trail X Sky at time of observation cloudless X Mr (redacted) photographed object with movie camera with telephoto lens X Deputy Director RAAF Intelligence stated rumoured that Mr Drury offered one five zero zero pounds by Sydney press for exclusive rights to film End. Signed (redacted).

(Source: Project Blue Book nine-page file. Telex dated 10/9/53.)

10 September 1953

Memo from John L Sullivan, Col. USAF, Air Attaché to George A Uhrich, Lt Col. USAF. In the nine page Project Blue Book report.

'The attached is a copy of a report made by the (redacted) Department of Civil Aviation, New guinea District, Port Moresby, Papua, New Guinea to the RAAF concerning the sighting of an unidentified flying object over New Guinea.'

15 September 1953

Request for Air Technical Intelligence Information.

'1. Pertinent background information

Flyobrpt (Flying Object Report) received from US Air Attaché, Melbourne, Australia, reporting a sighting of an unidentified flying object in New Guinea. Report states object was photographed.

2. Specific request.

1. Gather all available scientific data on movements of the object.
2. Secure the film and a detailed analysis, if possible.'

(Source: Project Blue Book nine-page file.)

21 September 1953

Joint Messageform 21 1430Z Sep 53 from Cmdr. ATIC to D/I HQ USAF Wash DC.

'Request following transmitted AA/Melbourne via cable. Reference Flyobrpt AFC 3453 dated 8 Sep 53. Message request sighting by Mr Drury of New Guinea, Air Navigation Bureau and states telephoto moving picture taken by him. Request efforts to obtain (1) all available scientific data on maneuvers of object (2) copy of Drury's film and detailed report. Reference reply to TIC-5809.'

(Source: Project Blue Book nine-page file.)

22 September 1953

Memo from C S Wiggins for Director General DCA to Secretary, Department of Air, Melbourne. Encl. 68A.

'Subject: 'Flying Saucer' – New Guinea

Forwarded herewith is a photographic film in which it is said there is a record of an aerial phenomena which occurred at Port Moresby on 23rd August 1953.

2. The report of the incident is as follows:

'At 1200 hours on Sunday, 23 August 1953, I was in the vicinity of the Marine Base Workshops, Port Moresby, when I noticed a cloud building up as though being formed by vapour trails, in roughly a south-westerly direction from Port Moresby, at a very great height.

I watched this cloud, which grew in intensity for several minutes, when suddenly an object appeared from one side of it and climbed very fast in roughly a north-westerly direction. I could give no accurate information as to the shape or possible size of this object, as it appeared slightly bigger than a pin head, but whatever it was, it left a very clearly defined vapour trail behind it until it finally disappeared with a rapid gain of altitude.

I had my movie camera with me and photographed the whole thing on the telephoto lens. I am waiting the results of the photograph in an endeavour to ascertain what the object might have been. It appeared to me to be some type of high speed aircraft.

As far as I know, Air Traffic Control know of no aircraft movements in that area, and in any case, from the extreme altitude of the object, it certainly could not have been a civil aircraft.

Weather conditions at the time were cloudless.'

3. The film has been examined here but without success and is forwarded to you for the information of your Intelligence Officers.

4. Should it happen that the film is the first authentic photograph of a 'flying saucer', it is requested that due recognition be given to the Department and the officer concerned.'

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 46.)

25 September 1953

Copy of letter not found on government files.

Edgar Jarrold of the Australian Flying Saucer Bureau asks for copies of photographs.

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 45.)

End of September 1953

'23 Port Moresby, New Guinea. Drury (PHOTOS) Insufficient data.'

(Source: Project Blue Book USAF list of August 1953 sightings.)

'Brief summary: Source first observed a cloud building up at a high altitude consisting of vapour trails. A small object appeared from behind the cloud and climbed very fast in a NW direction, until it disappeared. Object left a clearly defined vapor trail. Photos taken.

Conclusion: AIRCRAFT. Photographs were taken with a telephoto lens by observer. A message, requesting photos and supporting data sent. Photos not received, however photographer states that object (two words illegible.)'

(Source: Project Blue Book USAF record card.)

12 October 1953

Letter from J E Schofield for DG DCA to Mr Edgar Jarrold, Australian Flying Saucer Bureau. Encl. 69A.

'Dear Sir, I refer to your letter of 25th September, in which you request copies of photographs taken by a member of this Department of an unexplained aerial object over New Guinea. This matter is not being handled by this Department but has been referred to the Department of Air for investigation. We are therefore unable to comply with your request.'

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 45.)

21 October 1953

Letter from AFSB to Department of Air.

'On September 24 1953 we contacted the Civil Aviation Department in Melbourne, requesting copies of the photographs of an unexplained aerial object taken on August 31 by Mr T C Drury (a member of the CA Dept. OVER PORT MORESBY, NEW GUINEA.

Their reply of October 12 stated that the photographs and the incident had been referred to the Department of Air for investigation.

May we respectfully request copies for examination?

The photographs were taken with a movie camera equipped with telephoto lens. We should be very grateful for the opportunity of studying them and comparing the object depicted with other photographs of unidentified aerial objects we have on file.

The Bureau does not possess a movie camera, so that actual prints or negatives from which these may be made (at our expense) will be greatly appreciated, we shall be glad to send the cost of the prints immediately we learnt it...'

(Series: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl.1A.)

26 October 1953

Letter from Minister of Air to Jarrold.

'Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of 21st October 1953, requesting copies of photographs of an unexplained aerial object taken on August 31st by Mr T C Drury (a member of the Civil Aviation Department) over Port Moresby, New Guinea.

I will make inquiries to see whether it is practicable to supply you with the material you have asked for and I will write to you again as soon as possible.'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 2A.)

30 October 1953

DOA minute from CAA (CAS) to DAFI.

'Would you please let me have your comments, verbal will do, on the Ministerial enquiry at Encl. 1A?'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 3A.)

12 November 1953

Letter from Minister for Air to E Jarrold.

'I refer again to your letter of 21st October 1953, concerning your request for copies of photographs, taken by a member of the Department of Civil Aviation, of an aerial object over Port Moresby, New Guinea.

Examination of the film, when projected, shows a very small light-coloured object moving across the sky. Still photographs show absolutely nothing detectable by the naked eye, and I feel sure that the production of a print or prints could be of no real value to you.

However, should you wish to obtain copies, I suggest that you contact the Secretary of my Department who will arrange to have prints made for you.'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 4A.)

14 November 1953

Letter from AFSB to the Secretary, Department of Air.

'Recently we contacted the Department of Air requesting copies of photographs of an unexplained aerial object taken by a member of the Civil Aviation Department (MR T C Drury) over Port Moresby, New Guinea, on August 31 last.

A reply received from Mr McMahan (The Australian Minister for Air) dated November 12 advised us to apply to you for prints which it is stated will be supplied for the purpose of examination etc.

Mr McMahan has conveyed that the prints will be made from the original motion picture film recently forwarded to your Department from the CAD for official Department of Air investigation. He has mentioned also that the film when projected shows a very small light coloured object moving across the sky.

Since we will presumably unable to view the film in motion, we would be very grateful for any details or descriptions available concerning the precise actual shape, or apparent nature of the object, i.e. we are interested in learning whether it appears to have been cigar-shaped, disc-shaped, or in the form of a moving light, such information may prove invaluable in assisting as to correctly classify the matters of the flying saucer through a comparison of the visible characteristics with other reports and photographs we have on file.

We thank you for your friendly co-operation in the matter, and hope that you will advise us of the cost involved in supplying the prints, which we shall be happy to forward.'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 5A.)

15 November 1953

Article in UFO magazine. 'Sept 2 PORT MORESBY, NEW GUINEA.

T.C. Drury, Dept. Nat. Director of Civil Aviation grabbed photo of what he believed to be a guided missile. No clear description given. Has a camera with telescopic lenses (movie.) Taking pictures outside, no clouds in sky. Suddenly he saw a cloud form out of nowhere, then a silver object shot out of it. It flashed in the sun, left vapor trails. Drury said it must have been large to be visible from evident great height. Also, said, 'Could only describe it as a flying missile, because nothing else could fit the description.'

(Source: APRO Bulletin Vol 2 No 3. 15 November 1953 page 10.)

2 December 1953

Letter from Secretary, Department of Air to E Jarrold.

'I refer to your letter dated 14 November 1953 concerning the supply of contact prints reproduced from a motion picture, purported to show an optical phenomena in the sky over Port Moresby, taken by Mr T C Drury, Department of Civil Aviation.

The film has been sent to the United States for technical processing, and it is therefore not possible to accede to your request until it returns, which, it is anticipated will be early in the New year.

In the meantime I am forwarding herewith an extract of the report on the sighting by Mr Drury.

The costs of the prints will depend on the number of frames reproduced. You will be advised in this regard upon further re-examination of the film when returned from the United States.

The report of the incident is as follows:

'At 1200 hours on Sunday, 23 August 1953, I was in the vicinity of the Marine Base Workshops, Port Moresby, when I noticed a cloud building up as though being formed by vapour trails, in roughly a south-westerly direction from Port Moresby, at a very great height.

I watched this cloud, which grew in intensity for several minutes, when suddenly an object appeared from one side of it and climbed very fast in roughly a north-westerly direction. I could give no accurate information as to the shape or possible size of this object, as it appeared slightly bigger than a pin head, but whatever it was, it left a very clearly defined vapour trail behind it until it finally disappeared with a rapid gain of altitude.

I had my movie camera with me and photographed the whole thing on the telephoto lens. I am waiting the results of the photograph in an endeavour to ascertain what the object might have been. It appeared to me to be some type of high speed aircraft.

As far as I know, Air Traffic Control know of no aircraft movements in that area, and in any case, from the extreme altitude of the object, it certainly could not have been a civil aircraft.

Weather conditions at the time were cloudless.”

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197 Encl. 9A.)

15 January 1954

‘The Australian Enigma.

Last August 31, an object described as an ‘unexplained aerial object’ by William McMahon, Minister for Air was photographed by Mr C T Drury [sic -KB] of the Civil Aviation Department.

Drury’s attention was attracted to it by its vapour trail when it first hove into sight over Port Moresby, New Guinea. Object appeared as slightly larger than a pinhead to Drury’s naked eye, was travelling at a good clip. Drury had his movie camera equipped with a telephoto lens with him and photographed the whole thing. He submitted it to the Minister for Air for analysis and identification. That it was not a guided missile is in evidence as we will later see in this narrative.

Jarrold upon hearing of this sighting, made various requests to various departments hoping to get copies of the photos. Each succeeding official to whom he wrote, referred him to another until E A Wicks, Secretary for the department of Air wrote that he could not get the pictures as they had been sent to the US for processing and analysis. Meanwhile, the printers were delaying the printing of the Australian Flying Saucer Bureau Bulletin which contained the intent of Jarrold to distribute the pictures, if he got them, to other interested groups in the US and other countries. When proofs finally came back, that place regarding the pictures was marked as if for reference.

Another odd fact of the whole thing is the fact that the object was referred to as an ‘unexplainable aerial object’ by McMahon, and a later note from him said that examination of the film shows a very small, light coloured object moving across the sky, and still photos show absolutely nothing to the naked eye. The latter letter from Hicks calls the object an ‘optical phenomena.’ Now we ask – if it is discernible to Drury’s naked eye, it should have been discernible on film taken with a telephoto lens. Also, no optical phenomena would show up on a film. This information may very well lend credence to the rumour Jarrold was ‘visited.’ We’ll wait for further developments before passing on that one however.’

(Source: APRO Bulletin, Vol. 2 No. 4 page 8.)

23-25 January 1954

A number of Australian newspapers, including:

1. The Mail (Adelaide, SA: 1912-1954) Saturday 23 January 1954 page 1
2. Argus (Melbourne, Vic: 1848-1957) Monday 25 January 1954 page 1
3. Lithgow Mercury (NSW: 1898-1954) Monday 25 January 1954 page 1
4. West Australian (Perth, WA: 1879-1954) Monday 25 January 1954 page 1,

carried articles on the film. The gist of each article was that the Federal Australian government had sent the Port Moresby film to the United States. The Argus added that it was sent for 'special processing;' The Mail said 'American government representatives in Australia have been asked to expedite the return of the film Air Minister Mr McMahon revealed this tonight' adding that 'Mr McMahon said the film had been processed in Melbourne but was not clear. American processing might bring out more detail.' The Lithgow Mercury included the detail that 'McMahon said he had the film flown to the United States to be enlarged.'

3 February 1954

Dept. of Air minute, subject 'Flying saucers' from Group Captain DAFI to CAA (CAS).

'1. I am not convinced of the wisdom of encouraging requests of this sort of people of the AAP Reuters Service type, as I feel that it could lead to difficulty resolving security regulations.

2. However, in this case, if the Minister is keen to answer the request, I can see no objection to telling Reuters that:

(a) The film was sent to the USAF.

(b) It left Australia in the last week of November.

(c) It went by normal USAF service channels.

3. It seems to me that the questions posed by AAP Reuters exceed reasonable news interest. The question which should be of interest to them, and which they have not asked is the likely date of the film's availability for publication in this country.

4. Latest enquiries from the US Air Attaché indicates that the film will be back at Air Force Headquarters on 17th February, and my impression at this stage, are that shortly after that we shall be handing the film back to Mr Drury. I anticipate that there will be no security restrictions placed on the use he makes of it. Equally it seems unlikely that the news service will be interested in publication of the prints once they have seen them.'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 10A.)

18 February 1954

Letter from Cinesound Review Newsreel to Minister for Air.

'Press reports that a narrow-gauge film covering an alleged flying saucer in the vicinity of Darwin, has been sent to America for special treatment and returned to Australia, have attracted the keen interest of American newsreels and Television stations...We have heard that the film is in the hands of RAAF security

and I would be glad to know if it is intended to allow newsreel Editors to see this material with a view to publication if it is suitable.' Signed K E Hall.

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197 Encl. 13A.)

23 February 1954

The National Advocate (Bathurst, NSW: 1889-1954) Tuesday 23 February 1954 page 4, carried an account of another guided missile sighting over Port Moresby.

On the 22 February 1954, the South Pacific Post newspaper reported that a guided missile had passed over the City that morning. The paper quoted A E Stephen and many other Port Moresby residents, who saw what they took to be a guided missile pass from the south-west over the town at 8.35 a.m. This account was also carried by the Argus (Melbourne, Vic: 1848-1957) Tuesday 23 February 1954 page 4. However, this newspaper said that later the 'missile' had been identified as a Lincoln bomber aircraft.

March 1954

'Latest on the Port Moresby photographs: The Australian Minister for Air (Mr William McMahon) on November 12 last year gave an official assurance of the president that prints would be made from the motion picture film itself and despatched to the AFSB in response to our official request for copies for examination. Mr McMahon also revealed that department of Air examination of the film, when projected, showed a 'a very small light coloured object moving across the sky.' The President was advised to contact the Secretary of Mr McMahon's Department in regard to the despatch of the prints. The President did so on November 14.

On December 2, 1953, the following despatch left Melbourne addressed to the President.

'Dear Mr Jarrold,

I refer to your letter dated November 4, 1953, concerning the supply of contact prints reproduced from a motion picture film purporting to show an optical phenomena, taken by Mr T C Drury, Department of Civil Aviation.

The film has been sent to the United States for technical processing, and it is therefore, not possible to accede to your request until its return, which, it is anticipated, will be early in the New Year.

The cost of the film will depend on the number of frames reproduced. You will be advised of this regard upon further re-examination of the film when returned from the United States. Yours faithfully Mr E W Hicks, Secretary, Department of Air.'

(Source: The Australian Flying Saucer Magazine, March 1954 page 3.)

March 1954

'On January 24, a Sydney daily reported that 'films' which are claimed to contain pictures of a flying saucer 'have been sent to America' (not for technical processing but 'to American scientists for investigations.') Mr McMahon was quoted briefly as saying that 'a man who claimed to have seen the saucer had provided the film,' the newspaper added carefully that 'Mr McMahon would not give any more details on the matter.'

A copy of Mr Drury's personal report, currently reposing in official government files in Melbourne, reveals that the object he saw last August CLIMBED the whole time it was being viewed and photographed. 'It left behind,' says the same report (a copy of which is in AFSB files), 'a very clearly defined vapour trail until it finally disappeared with a rapid gain of altitude. It appeared, wrote Mr Drury, 'to be some kind of very high speed aircraft. Weather conditions at the time were cloudless.'

A day later the same newspaper reported that the film 'had been flown to the United States to be enlarged.' RAAF experts had examined the film carefully, and had reported that it showed 'something' in the sky.

'While they would not deny it was a vapour trail, they said it could be an air disturbance created by the passage of a meteor,' said the report. We agree that there certainly must have been 'an air disturbance' to create a vapour trail at all, that is if the vapour trail did only consist of disturbed air, but since when have meteors appeared suddenly, and just as suddenly changing their mind. Decided to return to outer space again?

Mr Drury's evidence and that of the movie camera agree on the remarkable point that the object did NOT flash downwards, but 'climbed' until it finally disappeared with a rapid gain of altitude. We have heard of descending meteors, and meteors apparently flashing overhead in level flight, but never before to our knowledge has it ever been claimed that they CLIMB.

The vapour trail recorded by Mr Drury's camera equally rules out fictitious 'optical phenomena,' and a 'drifting balloon' so dear to the hearts of those prepared to accept any 'comfortable' explanation. We would say if the object was at the great height described by Mr Drury, this need not necessarily mean that it was in reality but as 'very small one,' even the largest bomber is almost imperceptible at a comparatively low height. From our analysis, it would appear that the Port Moresby object may have been anything from 20 to 50 miles up, which would make it necessarily of immense proportion to have been visible at all.'

(Source: The Australian Flying Saucer Magazine, March 1954 page 3.)

5 March 1954.

Letter from Air Attaché American Embassy, Melbourne, to Director of Intelligence, RAAF HQ, Melbourne.)

'Returned herewith is the 8mm film belonging to Mr Drury which you were so kind to lend this office.

It would be very much appreciated by my Headquarters if you could obtain for this office a copy of this film for permanent retention in Washington. This office will be happy to reimburse you for any expense in connection with obtaining a copy.' Signed John L Sullivan, Col. USAF, Air Attaché.)

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197 encl. 15A.)

5 March 1954

Letter from Minister for Air, to a Mr Hall.

'I refer to your letter of the 18th February 1954, in which you ask if it is intended to allow Newsreel Editors to see the narrow-gauge film of the alleged Flying Saucer with a view to publication...The film has now been returned to the RAAF and after a copy has been taken for record purposes it will be passed...to the owner Mr T C Drury...From the security aspect, there is no objection to the public release of this film...it would therefore be necessary to obtain any such loan from the department of Civil Aviation or Mr Drury.'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 14A.)

15 March 1954

'Saucer News from Australia and AFSB Director Edgar R Jarrold.

The controversial Port Moresby photographs (APROB. Jan, 15, 1954) are still much on the news. Requests for copies of the films made by newspapers to the Minister for Air were refused. On January 7, AFSB issued a press release stating that they accept the interplanetary theory regarding saucers origin; it stressed the fact of sighting increases and Martian approaches in 1950 and 1952.

Two days later the RAAF (Jan 9) said (to be precise, one of the inevitable spokesmen) that saucers could be interplanetary, that we should be able to fly into outer space within about 40 years, so why shouldn't people on other planets who have already reached this stage? The unusual factor worthy of noting is that on January 5, the Department of Civil Aviation in Melbourne and a research group known as the Australian Flying Saucer Investigation Committee (14) members simultaneously (!) discounted the interplanetary theory of origin of the saucers. No one in Jarrold's vicinity, nor the government, has denied the Martian link.

Also on the agenda of Australian news is the good work Mr Jarrold is doing. We rather believe it is the clear-headed approach he uses which makes him a formidable adversary when it comes to dealing with a doubtful press and government secrecy. Let's all give him a good, old fashioned round of loud applause!'

(Source: APRO Bulletin Vol 2 No 5. pp4&10.)

24 March 1954

Letter from D A Charlton, Group Captain, for Chief of the Air Staff, to Air Attaché, American Embassy, Melbourne. (Letter is date stamped 24 February 1954 but is a reply to a letter dated 5 March 1954, so I suggest it should be dated 24 March 1954-KB.)

'Request for copy of 8mm film owned by Mr Drury.

Your AM-70-54 dated 5th March 1954.

1. Extensive enquiries in Melbourne reveal that possibly the only country in the world which is capable of making a copy of this film is the United Kingdom, and therefore some difficulty would be experienced in getting a copy for your HQ. This would explain the apparent oversight by your people in not making a copy of the film when they had the film available.
2. It is possible to make any number of stills that is desired and this Directorate hopes to have some made for the president of the Australian Flying Saucer Bureau. If your Headquarters would like some stills, please contact this Directorate and every effort will be made to procure these stills.' (Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 16A.)

12 June 1954

Letter from AFSB to Minister for Air.

'In reference to your last communication, dated December 2, concerning prints of T C Drury's Port Moresby motion picture film...It was conveyed that the return of the film from America was expected early in the New Year, since which advice we have received no further communication from you.

In view of the considerable period which has elapsed beyond that mention, may we enquire concerning the film's present location and stage of investigation plus any fresh indication of when its return to Australia is anticipated?

It has been suggested that 'because of what the film records,' despite your personal promise of prints being made available to me for objective examination, a decision has been made by your Dept. NOT to fulfil that promise, after all, a point on which we should appreciate further reassurance.'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197 encl. 53A.)

6 July 1954

Letter from William McMahon to E R Jarrold. Part details:

'Further to my letter of the 17th June 1954, I have pleasure in enclosing herewith 94 prints taken from the film of the unidentified flying object observed over Port Moresby during August 1953.

As we informed you at an earlier date the prints are of very little value in establishing any details of the object and as the cost per print is 4/9, I think that you might like to return the prints to us after you have studied them...'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197. Encl. 55A.)

6 July 1954

Letter from The Argus and Australasian Ltd. To the Minister for Air.

'The Editor of the Australasian Post has asked me to obtain from you the following information:

- (a) Was a film of a 'flying saucer' taken by a Mr Drury at Port Moresby about Christmas, submitted to your Department for examination?
- (b) What did the examination show?
- (c) Was the film then sent to the United States of America for further processing and examination?
- (d) If so, what did this show?
- (e) What has happened to the film?
- (f) Has there been any official report?
- (g) Is it possible to obtain a copy of the official report, or learn of its contents?' (Source: NAA file series 114/1/197 encl. 62A.)

12 July 1954

Memo from E W Hicks, Secretary, Department of Air to C S Wiggins, Assistant Director General, DCA.

'Dear Mr Wiggins,

The 'flying saucer' film taken by Mr T C Drury at Port Moresby in August 1953, and forwarded by you on the 22nd September is returned herewith.

We have subjected the film to detailed study and processing, but have been unable to establish anything more than the fact that a blur of light appears to move across the film. In spite of this disappointment we would like to thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Mr E R Jarrold, the President of the Flying Saucer Bureau has requested copies of the black and white enlargements which we have been able to make from the film and we propose to forward him a number of copies for return after study.

We have explained to him that should he desire to copy these enlargements it will be necessary for us to obtain permission from you or from Mr Drury. In view of the cost of the enlargements and the absence of useful information on them,

we expect that he will be happy to return them to us. Once again many thanks for your cooperation.'

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 38. Encl. 74A. Also on NAA file series 114/1/197 at encl. 52A.)

14 July 1954

File note C S Wiggins to ADG (P&E).

'Please see Encl. 73A being a reply from the RAAF to Encl. 68A. The final para of 68A is of course my humour.

2. I suggest the terms of 73A might be conveyed to Drury.
3. The film is to be returned to Drury.

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 15.)

16 July 1954

Memo from K B Adam for DG DCA to RD DCA PNG. Encl. 74A.

'Subject: Unidentified aircraft, Port Moresby, 24.8.53

Reference: Your memorandum DSNG 1392 of 31.8.53 and 5.9.53

The photographic film taken by Mr Drury in August last was forwarded to the Department of Air for information.

2. The Department, in returning the film to this office, has advised as follows:

'We have subjected the film to detailed study and processing, but have been unable to establish anything more than the fact that a blur of light appears to move across the film. In spite of this disappointment we would like to thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Mr E R Jarrold, the President of the Flying Saucer Bureau has requested copies of the black and white enlargements which we have been able to make from the film and we propose to forward him a number of copies for return after study.

We have explained to him that should he desire to copy these enlargements it will be necessary for us to obtain permission from you or from Mr Drury. In view of the cost of the enlargements and the absence of useful information on them, we expect that he will be happy to return them to us. Once again many thanks for your cooperation.'

3. The contents of the report from the Department of Air might please be conveyed to Mr Drury. Mr Drury's film is returned herewith.'

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 37.)

20 July 1954

'July, 20, 1954. In a letter from Edgar Jarrold, we have confirmation of the fact that he has been summoned to Melbourne by the Minister of Air, for a meeting with RAAF Intelligence. ALSO...the films of the Port Moresby UFO have been released to Mr Jarrold by the Dep. Of the Navy and are being studied minutely. These are the same films which were sent to Wright-Patterson in the United States for analysis.'

(Source: APROB Vol 3 No 1 July 1954 page 15.)

10 August 1954

Letter from AFSB to Minister for Air.

'Dear Mr McMahon, many thanks for your welcome letter of July 6, and prints enclosed of the Port Moresby object. The latter have been studied closely upon which it has been found that, as you stated, but little actual details can be learnt of the object's composition...For these reasons, we should very much like to retain in our files for future reference certain of the prints forwarded which are considered to contain the most detail. With the consent of your department therefore we have selected five particular prints, which are being kept separate from the others pending hearing from you whether we may retain them for this purpose...The remaining 89 prints are herewith returned with gratitude.'

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197 digital image 148.)

8 September 1954

Letter from the Secretary, Department of Air to E R Jarrold.

'Your letter of 16th August addressed to the Minister for Air requesting retention of five of the ninety-four prints previously forwarded to you for perusal, has been received in this Department. However, although you mention returning eighty-nine prints with your letter, these have not been received.

It would be appreciated therefore, if you would return all ninety-four prints addressed to the Secretary, Department of Air, referring to this letter and suitably marking those prints which you would like copied.

As you have been previously informed, it will be necessary to obtain the consent of Mr Drury, the owner of the copyright, to the prints of those prints before we can forward you copies for your retention.

The cost of printing five prints is 1 Pound 3.9 and if you forward this sum to the Receiver of Public Monies, in this department, again referring to this letter, action will be taken to have the necessary copies forwarded to you as soon as possible, subject, of course to Mr Drury's approval.'

(Source: NAA files series 114/1/197. Encl. 75A.)

September 14 1954

Thank you for your letter of 8 September in response to the PORT MORESBY prints. The prints – despatched here on Aug 10 – to my surprise were RETURNED to me on August 31 without explanation, but with fresh postage affixed, since being in doubt as to whether this was done by your Department, they have been held awaiting word from you.

I am despatching them in the exact condition in which they were returned that you may note they WERE returned to your department – in good faith as mentioned.

The five prints from which copies can be made following receipt of Mr Drury's permission have been enclosed separately as suggested and have also been marked to distinguish them from the remainder.

I must convey great appreciation for this privilege as well as the valuable cooperation revealed by your Department concerning the matter.

The cost of the prints of which we should like permanent records will be forwarded separately to the Receiver of Public monies in your Department – as outlined, referring to your missive of Sept 8.' Signed E R Jarrold.

(Source: NAA file series 114/1/197 folio 83A.)

February 1955.

'The Port Moresby Photos.

'Made especially for the A.F.S.B. from the original motion-picture film recorded through telescopic lens, and showing an object in flight over Port Moresby, New Guinea, on August 23, 1953, the photographs being taken by a Government official (Mr T.C. Drury, Deputy Director of the Civil Aviation Dept. in New Guinea), 94 prints examined reveal conclusively the existence of a shiny, disc-like object whose behaviour could by no wildest stretching of the imagination be attributed to bird, balloon, orthodox aircraft, hallucinations, piece of windblown paper, natural phenomena, or a meteor.

The cloud from which the silvery object described by Mr Drury emerged is distinctly visible. On emerging from it at a right angle with no other clouds apparent in a clear sky (the photos were taken at midday) still pictures reveal vivid confirmation of Mr Drury's report that an object looking at first like a tiny brilliant sun, dashed rapidly from the cloud, heading north-west.

The object flashed brightly in the sun as it made an abrupt right angle turn soon after emerging from the dark cloud, zooming straight up with no reduction in speed. Upon reaching a greater altitude, it levelled off again, with another abrupt right angle turn, resuming its north-west flight thereafter until out of camera range altogether.

The flashing turns executed at very high speed and with no preliminary pauses, were far sharper than any of which terrestrial jets or even rockets are capable, the former attaining increased height comparatively slowly in comparison, and the latter being incapable of effecting almost right angle turns despite their high speed.

On effecting such turns, a greater expanse of the object's upper surface becomes visible, causing it to present a featureless, disc-like appearance, which is in sharp contrast to first glimpses showing an object somewhat blurred in focus, and shaped like a theoretically fast moving, very bright star.

Despite Mr Drury's use of a telescopic lens, most photos still appear distant, this factor reducing the value of many of the pictures considerably regarding details of the object. However, they are of immense importance through revealing a fantastic speed and unconventional flight characteristics regarding unforgettably and forever on motion picture film.

Officially still 'unexplained' (in accordance with the apparent current Government policy of evading the responsibility of publicly admitting the possibility of extra-terrestrial visitors) it is doubtful whether that meaningless 'conclusion' has promoted much comfort in Government circles, since it does nothing more than raise the inevitable query. If the object cannot be described under any orthodox heading as a terrestrial object, then what conceivable possibility remains other than an 'unknown' object of extra-terrestrial origin'?

The only civilian in the world ever granted an opportunity of examining the famous photographs to his knowledge, the director brushes aside official prevarication and total absence of any reasonable explanation offered for the object's presence and unusual behaviour with these pertinent questions directed to the Australian authorities.

1. If Government investigators have found it utterly impossible to fit the object's presence and unorthodox behaviour in with any orthodox explanation rejecting, like the Director, such theories as the ones above, can they honestly and truthfully rule out the possibility of the object being of extra-terrestrial origin?
2. If so, upon what specific grounds?
3. If the extra-terrestrial theory is the only possible alternative capable of explaining the object recorded, what else could it be but as yet unidentified visitor from outer space?

With the Director's considered opinion to assist it, possibly the Government will cast aside unproductive vacillation confronted by such photographic evidence and decide to face the facts regarding U.F.O.s squarely.

Prolonged prevarication breeds equivalent mainly hostility on the part of those on which excuse the Government apparently believes it is 'protecting' – there seems, for instance, no valid reason why even press requests for copies of the same prints were refused.

With these remarks, we leave the subject for the time being.'

(Source: The Australian Flying Saucer Magazine, February 1955, pp 2-3.)

11 February 1958

A letter from a Max B Miller, NICAP member, Los Angeles, USA to DCA asking if the film might be available for analytical study, by himself and R M L Baker, Jr., Astronomy Department, UCLA.

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 31. Encl. 78A.)

19 February 1958

A letter on DCA letterhead from T P Drury to Max Miller. Encl. 81A.

'I am in receipt of your letter of the 11th February, 1958, concerning your request for information about an unidentified object which was sighted and photographed by me on 23rd August, 1953, at Port Moresby.

2. Immediately after taking this film it was handed over to the Commonwealth Security branch for processing and investigation, and it has not been sighted by me since. I am therefore unable to comply with your request.

3. The comments of your paragraph 2 are quite correct insofar as the sighting of this object was concerned and I feel that I cannot enlarge on your statement in any way that would assist you.

4. Your interest in this matter is appreciated and I express my disappointment at being unable to help you further.'

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 28.)

December 1959

'The Port Moresby film...Does it support Rev. Father Gill's case?

A strip of motion picture film containing ninety-four frames corroborates the New Guinea sighting of Reverend W. B. Gill. This is the so-called Port Moresby film taken by T.C. Drury, Deputy Director of the Civil Aviation Department in New Guinea on August 23rd 1953.

The illustration drawn from the actual frames of the film, shows a disk-shaped object in flight.

Mr W McMahan, Minister for Air, stated at the time that experts of the R.A.A.F. had examined the film. The object did not decrease speed in ascent and made ninety degree manoeuvres.

According to Mr Drury the motion picture was taken at midday. First a cloud appeared in a clear sky. Out of the cloud a silvery object emerged, flashing brightly in the sun. It made an abrupt right angle turn, zooming straight up,

with no reduction in speed. Upon reaching a greater altitude it levelled off again with another abrupt right angle turn. The Port Moresby film is at present in the hands of the Intelligence of the R.A.A.F.

According to the former Minister of Air, the man who took the motion picture is 'a reliable, credible person.' The film has been seen by the United States Air Force experts. It is still officially unexplained. Was the disk similar to the craft observed by Re. Father Gill and the thirty-eight native witnesses?'

(Source: The Australian Flying Saucer Review Vol 1 No 1 page 5.)

July 1961

Article by Rev N Cruttwell, 'The New Guinea Sightings' which includes the following section on the Drury film.

'The story opens with Mr Drury's sighting. Mr. T. P. Drury of the Department of Civil Aviation at Melbourne gave this information personally to me. At the time of the sighting he was Director of Civil Aviation in the Territory of Papua, New Guinea, stationed at Port Moresby. He is a man of very high qualifications and has flown 32 types of aircraft himself. He has also made a speciality of meteorological phenomena. This sighting was also witnessed by his wife and children. This is his story.'

'I was standing on the Coast Road overlooking the Flying Boat base at Port Moresby with my wife and children. It was about 11.00 a.m. on August 23, 1953. The weather was perfectly clear and cloudless. Even the summits of the Owen Stanley Range were clear, which is unusual. My wife and children were with me. I was engaged in taking a movie photo of a native boy spearing a fish. I was not looking at the sky. My wife noticed a wisp of cloud suddenly appear in the blue sky from nowhere and start to build up rapidly into a white puff. She called out to draw my attention to it. I watched it rapidly build up into a thick white mass of cumulus. There were no other clouds in the sky and there seemed nothing to account for it. Being very interested in meteorological phenomena I decided to take a film of it. So I rotated the turret of my French-made movie camera to bring the telephoto lens into position and started to film the cloud.

'The cloud was at an elevation of about 50 degrees above the horizon, in a roughly south-west direction, towards Napanapa. It was impossible to estimate the altitude, as there was nothing with which to compare it.

'Suddenly an object like a silver dart shot out of the cloud. It was elongated in shape like a bullet. It subtended about one inch at arm's length. It was metallic and flashed in the Sun. It was very clear-cut, sharp in front but apparently truncated behind, though the tail may have been hidden by the vapour trail. No wings or fins were visible. It shot out of the cloud upwards at an angle of about 45 degrees. It was travelling at an immense speed, at least five times as fast as a jet plane travelling at the speed of sound. (Note that Mr Drury is an expert airman and accustomed to estimating the speed of planes.)

'It never slackened speed or changed direction, but simply faded upwards into the blue and its vapour faded after it. It was gone in a few seconds. The vapour trail was very clear-cut, dense, white and billowing. It is visible in the remaining portion of the film still in my possession.

'In spite of the supersonic speed and the comparative nearness of the object, there was no sound whatever.

'I was greatly concerned about the appearance of such an extraordinary aircraft in the sky, without telling anyone. I drove straight to Jackson's airport, and checked with the Air Traffic Control. There were no unusual aircraft out, only a DC3 and the usual DC4 expected from Australia, and possibly a small aircraft or two.

'I then reported the sighting to the RAAF, but they were quite unable to account for it. Later, I sent them the film, which was sent off round the world, but no one could explain the object and it was pronounced 'unknown.'

'I am absolutely certain of its reality. It was photographed. My wife and children saw it. If anyone in the territory had the qualifications to identify an unknown aircraft, I had. It is my business to know what is in the air. I know all types of aircraft, and have flown 32 of them myself.'

(Source: APRO Bulletin, July 1961 pp5-6.)

January 1962

'Artist's sketch of the flight path of an unknown disk – from a 94-frame motion picture taken by T C Drury, Deputy Director of the Civil Aviation Department in Port Moresby, New Guinea, August 23rd 1953. The film is still in government files.'

(Source: The Australian Flying Saucer Review, January 1962, page 3.)

30 June 1965

Letter from W Howard Sloane, Ballarat Astronomical Society to DCA. Encl. 92A.

'Dear Sir, The Ballarat Astronomical Society is anxious to locate a motion picture film of 94 exposures of an Unidentified Flying Object, taken by Mr T C Drury on 23rd August, 1953 in New Guinea, when he was deputy Director of Civil Aviation there.

The Department of Air, Canberra, has referred us to you as they have no record of the whereabouts of the pictures. They were shown to civilian researchers by Air Force Intelligence in Melbourne, on July 19, 1954 during a conference with Squadron Leader A H Birch.

We are making a study of Aerial Phenomena and this film is of considerable scientific interest as it shows the flight path of an unknown object. If you can help us obtain these pictures for study we would be very grateful.'

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 24.)

5 July 1965

Internal DCA Minute form – minute 93. Reference enclosure 92A.

2. This is the first I have heard of such a film and perhaps you could throw some light on it. If you have no knowledge of the matter I shall refer the letter to the Queensland region for advice if you would return the file to me.’ Senior ADG(F.O.)

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 19.)

7 July 1965

‘Note of action. Referring to minute 93 [Above -KB] the previous history of this film is contained on this file at enclosures 66A, 67A, 68A, 73A, 74A AND 81a.

2. There is already a confliction in the stories on the file in that the information on Enclosure 81A is not consistent with earlier correspondence such as that at Encl 74A. Further enquiry to Mr Drury established that he still has at least part of the film and it is therefore considered appropriate that he should correspond directly with the Ballarat Astronomical Society.’ D S Graham.

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 19.)

7 July 1965

Letter to Howard Sloane from D S Graham, DCA. Encl. 94A.

‘Dear Sir, Your letter of 30th June has been referred to Mr T C Drury, who is now in Brisbane, and he will communicate with you directly on the present whereabouts of the subject film.’

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 23.)

7 July 1965

Letter to Drury from D S Graham DCA. Encl. 95A.

‘Dear Tom, as discussed by telephone, I enclose herewith a copy of the letter received from the Ballarat Astronomical Society together with a copy of our interim reply. You will note that I have indicated that they can expect to receive further advice from you in the near future.’

(Source: NAA file series MP1279/1 control symbol 99/1/478 DCA file digital page 22.)

18 March 1966

Letter from Peter Norris, CAPIO, Australia to the Department of Air.

'I am writing to request further information concerning a film of a UFO which was taken at Port Moresby on 23rd August 1953 by Mr T Drury, then Director of Civil Aviation at Port Moresby.

Mr Drury has advised my association that the film was handed to the Commonwealth Security Branch whence it was referred to your Department for further action.

Shortly afterwards, Mr McMahon, the then Minister for Air, in answer to a question in the House, stated that the film had been sent to the United States for further evaluation.

Mr Drury further advises us that the film was returned to him some twelve months after the sighting, but that the frames showing the UFO had been excised.

I would be obliged to receive your advice as to your Department's evaluation of Mr Drury's sighting and as to whether you are aware of the whereabouts of the parts of the film Mr Drury claims were excised.'

(Source: NAA file series A703, control symbol 580/1/1 Part 5.)

23 March 1966

Handwritten file note.

'At folio 21A of 554/1/30 Part 1 there is proof that Norris belonged to the 'Aust. Flying Saucer Research Society (Melbourne branch); the same society to which Fred Stone of Adelaide belonged and it is the latter (see folios 2A and 3A and 20A) to whom DAFI arranged the sale (at 4/9 a pop) of some stills taken from the celebrated Port Moresby film.'

(Source: NAA file series A703, control symbol 580/1/1 Part 5.)

25 March 1966

Four page, handwritten 'Summary of efforts made to rediscover present whereabouts of the allegedly 'excised' frames of Mr T Drury's famous 1953 movie film of the Port Moresby 'UFO sightings.' Partial text:

1. 'Registry records also show that the original 114/1/197 was opened on 30 Oct 53, when it was entitled 'Photographs of unexplained Aerial Object over New Guinea forwarded by Mr R C Drury.' The file's title became 'Report on Flying saucers and Other Aerial Objects.' And renumbered.
2. 'Correspondence between 1953 (when 114/1/197 was opened) and 1955 (when the predecessor of 580/1/1/ Part 1 was opened) is missing.'

3. 'Ten years ago CPE would have provided the sort of service DAFI could offer to members of the public (i.e. sale of prints at a cost). CO CPE states that there are several RAAF and ex RAAF photographers who remember handling negatives of the 1953 Port Moresby film but that, at CPE there is no record of the negatives having been absorbed into the CPE system. Ergo DAFI must have passed the negatives over to CPE for reproduction as required.'
4. 'Ex DAFI members who could possibly (or do) remember having seen this picture are Wing Commander D F Gilson, DFC (now in the UK); Wing Commander T B Paget (now in the USA/Honolulu) and Squadron Leader B W Feacon (Correct spelling? -KB), PR2, who saw enlarged versions of the frames, but had nothing to do with their subsequent handling...JIB Photo Section was also asked to search its records, but to no avail...The upshot is that the 'excised' frames either still exist in DAFI archives; have been destroyed, or (perish the thought) have been lost. 'Signed B W Feacon. PR2. (Source: NAA file series A703 control symbol 580/1/1 Part 5.)

31 March 1966

Letter from Department of Air to Peter Norris.

- '1. The results of an exhaustive search through old records for mention of Mr T M (Sic-KB) Drury's Port Moresby film has not been entirely fruitful.
2. There are indications in a 1953 file pointing to the Department of Air having been, at an earlier time, in possession of copies of photographs taken at Port Moresby, which were alleged to be of an unidentified aerial sighting. However, neither the earlier (1953) file particularly concerned with the subject nor the copies of the film (which were held within that file) now exist; they were destroyed together some time ago in accordance with the due processes of the Department's archival activities.
3. The 1955 file referred to above contains copies of correspondence with a person who may have been an acquaintance of yours; Mr Fred Stone, 22 Northcote Street, Kilburn, SA.
4. This Department apparently provided Mr Stone with some five prints of the Port Moresby photographs so, if you wish to acquire copies for yourself, may we suggest you write to Mr Stone.
5. As to the department's evaluation of the Port Moresby 'sighting,' it can only be said that all information extant reflecting the movement, thirteen years ago, of folios on this subject indicates that the record of the evaluation was destroyed with the Department's copies of the photographs.
6. We feel, therefore, that we can be of no further help to you on this particular subject.'

(Source: NAA file series A703, control symbol 580/1/1 Part 5.)

July 1967

'T P Drury

Dept. Dir for Civil Aviation Brisbane

Ph Brisbane 680-101 to (?-indicates missing word KB)

Home phone of Mrs Marjorie Drury is 293-2655

Tried several times to get Drury. Latest was Monday 7/10/67 at 0845

Mrs Marjorie Drury – 26 Nail Street, Brighton, Brisbane

Called her from Roy Russell's, 7/9 PM. She didn't want to discuss. Said saw only very beginning.

When failed get Drury Monday AM, 7/10, called her again (from Sydney-no tape). Pressed her for details.

She was emphatic re the point that she never saw a 'cloud.' When she first saw it, she perceived a silver bullet streaking upwards, at very high speed, leaving a vapour trail behind it. 'I can still see it.' She was emphatic in saying that she saw it from start as a bullet – not in a cloud. No cloud in sky at all, bullet was at all times (as she watched) ahead of the trail. 'It was going hell for leather.' Climbing upwards. No wings, no other appendages. I asked could it possibly be an a/c. She was empathic in negating this. Said she'd been around a/c all her life and knew this was no a/c. 'I can still see it today.'

She asserts that after calling it to her husband's attention she went to car (& thinks the camera) and was 'busy with other things after that.' (I did not press her on this she evidently wishes to leave all or most of the account to him. She stated to me (as yesterday Stan Seers) that Mr Drury was not (?) here anymore...

0900 7/10 I phoned again, got an asst. Mrs Smith & p.o. (?) (?) arranged that I talk to TPD between 0900-0930 prior to his departure. Smith did not know just who he'd be in, but felt since did check in before departure Brisbane DCA (?) Will try to have him call me.'

(Source: Hard to read hand written notes of James E McDonald while in Australia)

May/June 1969

'The Tully UFO photographs (presuming something was on the film) are by no means the first UFO shots to disappear from the Australian scene. A recapitulation made at the CAPIO Convention (Canberra, July 1968) presented the following:

11.00am, August 23, 1953, of nine photographs taken at Port Moresby by T P Drury, Deputy Minister of Civil Aviation, the five best shots were 'lost' by the CAD, who had loaned them to the United States Air force, Washington.'

(Source: Seers, S & Lasich, W. 'North Queensland UFO Saga.' Flying Saucer Review, Vol 5 No 3, page 5.)

August 1971

'The story opens with Mr Drury's sighting. Mr. T. P. Drury of the Department of Civil Aviation at Melbourne gave this information personally to me. At the time of the sighting he was Director of Civil Aviation in the Territory of Papua, New Guinea, stationed at Port Moresby. He is a man of very high qualifications and has flown 32 types of aircraft himself. He has also made a speciality of meteorological phenomena. This sighting was also witnessed by his wife and children. This is his story.'

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'The cloud was at an elevation of about 50 degrees above the horizon, in a roughly south-west direction, towards Napanapa. It was impossible to estimate the altitude, as there was nothing with which to compare it.

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'In spite of the supersonic speed and the comparative nearness of the object, there was no sound whatever.

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checked with the Air Traffic Control. There were no unusual aircraft out, only a DC3 and the usual DC4 expected from Australia, and possibly a small aircraft or two.

'I then reported the sighting to the RAAF, but they were quite unable to account for it. Later, I sent them the film, which was sent off round the world, but no one could explain the object and it was pronounced 'unknown.'

'I am absolutely certain of its reality. It was photographed. My wife and children saw it. If anyone in the territory had the qualifications to identify an unknown aircraft, I had. It is my business to know what is in the air. I know all types of aircraft, and have flown 32 of them myself.'

(Source: Statement by Tom Drury which appears in 'Flying Saucers over Papua' by the Reverend Norman E.G. Cruttwell, Flying Saucer Review, Special Issue No.4, August 1971, pp 3-4.)

15 January 1973

Memo from ASIO to DAFI.

'DAFI

Photographs of UFO

Further to telephone conversation Grp. Capt. Janson/Mr C H B (redacted) on 11th January, 1973, it is desired to confirm the information passed verbally to Grp Capt. Janson last December.

2. It is understood that film shots of a UFO were taken by Mr Thomas Drury of the Department of Civil Aviation in TPNG in 1954 [sic-KB, should be 1953]. Mr Drury is at present overseas and it has been impossible to obtain some details.
3. In 1954, Mr Drury, accompanied by his wife was preparing to take some movie shots of natives spearing fish in the Port Moresby area when Mrs Drury observed the UFO. Mr Drury took some footage of film which he passed to the Regional Director of DCA in TPNG, Mr John Arthur, together with a report. At the present time Mr Arthur is believed to be the proprietor of the (redacted) hardware store, (redacted.)
4. It is understood that the film was passed to DCA head Office and thence to the HQ RAAF (Directorate of Air Force Intelligence) where it was processed. Copies of the film were passed to the United States Air Force and the RAF. Drury is said to have received back a part of the film but without any UFO shots.
5. It is believed that the episode was fully recorded in the TPNG newspaper, 'Pacific Post' at the time including letters for and against the sighting. It is also understood that the Mainland Press published reports simultaneously.
6. Regional Director, ASIO, Queensland, has advised the Regional Director of DCA there would arrange for Mr Drury to be available for further elaboration if required, on his return from overseas, probably early in February, 1973.

Signed (C H B(Redacted) Regional Director, ACT.)'

(Source: 'The Drury UFO Film Affair: A Study of a Celebrated Australian Case: Part 1.' By Bill Chalker. The Australasian UFOlogist Magazine, Vol 5 No 1, pp22-29.)

1982

'Australian A. F. UFO Report Files,' by Bill Chalker, includes:

- The text of the South Pacific Post 2 September 1953 article
- 'RAAF files, examined by Bill Chalker, specifically rule out a missile firing from Woomera as an explanation.'
- Details of the 1966 RAAF search
- 'I was therefore considerably surprised to find in a 1973 RAAF file a small envelope identified as 'Drury film prints and negatives' contained within were five negatives of photographs of individual frames from the original frames from the original film. I subsequently received copies of these and while the image quality is disappointingly poor, the circumstances which led to the negatives being present in the 1973 file were quite illustrating.

A civilian enquiry had prompted yet another file search. File holdings including those in 1966 (already mentioned) and 1965 were further scrutinised and it was determined that DAFI had in 1955 sold prints of the 1953 UFO pictures 'at 4/9 a pop.' One recipient of this offer was one Fred Stone (a pioneer Australian civilian UFO researcher). The RAAF in 1973 managed to persuade Mr Stone to loan them the five prints they had originally supplied him, so that copies could be made. This explains the negatives found in the 1973 file – third generation copies of individual frames of the original, which apparently had 94 frames in total.

- I was able to confirm in 1982 with Mr Tom Drury, that he had still not seen his 'UFO film' and had only received a part of the film but without any UFO shots...' (Source: APROB Vol 30 No 11. 1982.)

1983

Bill Chalker.

In reviewing four files belonging to the Department of Civil Aviation's Bureau of Air Safety Investigation, on 19 November 1982:

'Four files were examined and their contents included:

- (1) Previously 'secret' papers related to the famous Drury film.'

'The Drury film affair:

Most of the original documentation is now secured. Frames from the film are in my possession, however, they are of poor quality. Mr Drury has been contacted

and was most helpful with my enquiries. A report on my investigation will be made available when completed.'

(Source: Chalker, Bill. 'A Study of Official Australian Government Involvement in the UFO Controversy – A Progress Report.' The Journal of the Australian Centre for UFO Studies Vol 4 No 6, Nov/Dec 1983, pp 11 & 13.

1990

Gross presented a summary of the case drawn from the source referenced below, which included the following points:

1. An incorrect time of 11.00am is stated as the time of observation. It was 12.00noon local.
2. It identifies that Drury was at the time filming a Papuan native spearing a fish in the surf.
3. It was his wife who initially saw the 'cloud' in the clear sky.
4. The object was elongated, silver in colour and shot upward at on 45 degree slant.
5. 'Eventually the film was returned to him but the best frames, those that showed the 'rocket' has been snipped out leaving only the scenes of the cloud and billowing vapor trail.'
Reference 56- Good, Timothy. 'Above Top Secret.' P. 157.
6. 94 frames sent to William McMahon.
7. Bill Chalker 'came across negatives of some of the individual frames of the missing portion of the film.'
8. 'It was also determined that the US Naval Photographic Interpretation Center, Anacosta, Maryland had studied the film, an installation under CIA control.'
Reference 57 – Chalker, B. 'UFOs and the RAAF – The Inside Story Part I.' MUFON Journal No 175. September 1982.
9. 'That the US Air Force requested the film is proven by a document in BLUE BOOK files. A joint message form dated 21 September 53 states: Request following transmitted AA/Melbourne via cable. Reference Flyobrpt message AFC 3453 dated 8 Sep 53. Message reports sighting by Mr Drury of New Guinea, Air Navigation Bureau and states telephoto moving pictures taken by him. Request effort to obtain (1) all available scientific data on maneuvers of object, (2) copy of Drury film and detailed report. Reference reply to TIC-5209.
Reference 58- May be located in AF Blue Book files by the date 24 August 53.'
10. 'A sketch of the best frame of the Drury film was made by a Andrew Tomas, a member of the Sydney, Australia, UFO Investigation Center. The sketch was reproduced in the UIC's March 1958 publication UFO Bulletin.' (Source: Gross, L E. 1990. 'UFOs: A History 1953: August-December, pp13-14.)

1990

'Further news from Australia

The civilian UFO group in Australia 'Australian Flying Saucer Bureau' received a boost when its director, E R Jarrold was asked by the Minister of Air to confer with the nation's Air Force Intelligence at Melbourne Headquarters.

The Port Moresby UFO film had been lent to Jarrold's organization, perhaps that was the reason for the consultation, otherwise sources available to us give no other clue, although Jarrold did make a point to deny that the meeting could be construed as having some relationship with the unease sweeping the Australian public concerning the prolonged UFO flap taking place there.

Only partially processed by Australian experts, the Port Moresby film showed a small, lightly-colored object. Hoping the American experts could learn more from the frames, the film was sent to the United States for special analysis.'

(Source: Gross, L E. 1990. 'UFOs: A History 1954 January-May.' Page 63.)

1996

'While civilian interest was growing, extensive official interest focused on daylight movie footage of an unidentified 'missile' over Port Moresby, taken by Tom Drury, the Deputy Director of the department of civil Aviation in Papua New Guinea, then an Australian Territory.

The case is important because of the expertise, the presence of other witnesses, the capture of the image on film, and the subsequent disappearance of that section of the film while it was in the hands of Australian and American security organisations.

On 23 August 1953 Tom Drury was using his movie camera at about midday. Wife his wife and children he was standing on the coast road overlooking the Flying Boat Base, filming a native boy spearing fish. The sky was clear, when a small cloud began to form. Drury did not see it at first, and his wife drew his attention to it. 'I watched it rapidly build up into a thick white mass of cumulus,' Drury later said. 'There were no other clouds in the sky and there seemed nothing to account for it...I had never seen a cloud form up by itself like that. Being very interested in meteorological phenomena. I decided to take a film of it.' The cloud decided to grow in size until, after a few minutes, a silver object came out of it. Drury continued filming. 'It was elongated in shape like a bullet,' he recalled. 'It was metallic and flashed in the sun.' The object climbed very fast, with a vapour trail behind it marking its trajectory. It was gone in a few seconds.' According to Drury, 'It was travelling at an immense speed, at least five times as fast as a jet plane travelling at the speed of sound...In spite of the supersonic speed and the comparative nearness of the object, there was no sound whatsoever.'

Greatly perplexed, Drury drove straight to the airport and checked with air traffic control, who told him they had no knowledge of any aircraft in that area. A

handwritten note in Directorate of Air Force Intelligence files specifically states that the object was not a secret missile fired from the Woomera rocket range in South Australia.

The film was developed in Australia and Drury claims that it showed the silver object. It was then handed over to the Australian government, from where it was sent to America for examination. On its return, the segment showed the silver object had been cut from the film.

It is important to remember that government UFO investigations of the 1950's were usually influenced by the climate of the Cold War, with the first objective being to ascertain whether there might be any Russian source for the phenomena being investigated. Late in 1982 when I was given permission to examine the Department of Aviation files. I specifically requested to see any holdings on the Drury affair. What I saw was one file classified SECRET and another titled 'Photographs of Unexplained Aerial Object over New Guinea forwarded by T C Drury.' It was also originally classified SECRET and had been 'lost' over the years.

It seems clear that the Australian military were looking at the Drury film in the light of the 'red peril.' Tom Drury himself indicated to me he felt that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), which is responsible for internal security in Australia, including counter-espionage, was involved. I interviewed the two ASIO operatives who were in Papua New Guinea at that time. Predictably, neither was terribly informative, with one of them stating that if they had involvement it was only as a courier for the film's passage to Melbourne, then headquarters of the RAAF's Directorate of Air Force Intelligence, and also the headquarters for DCA and ASIO. An ASIO document dated 15 January 1973 states that 'copies of the film were passed to the USAF and RAF. Drury is said to have received back a print of the film but without any UFO shots.'

Tom Drury feels that the processing and analysis required to study this film while it was in the hands of the intelligence agencies might have destroyed it. It is known that the film did go to the United States for study. There it appeared to have come under the scrutiny of the CIA's photographic analysis group.

A 1955 RAAF file indicates that DAFI had sold prints of the 1953 UFO pictures 'at 4/9 a pop' to civilian researchers. Edgar Jarrold and Fred Stone were among those who secured copies of these prints. Jarrold's publication, the *Australian Flying Saucer Magazine*, stated that 'ninety-four prints examined reveal conclusively the existence of a shiny, disc-like object whose behaviour could by no wildest stretching of the imagination be attributed to a bird, balloon, orthodox aircraft, hallucination, piece of windblown paper, natural phenomena, or a meteor. The cloud from which the silvery object...emerged is distinctly visible. On emerging from it at a right angle with no other clouds apparent in a clear sky, still pictures reveal vivid confirmation of Mr Drury's report that an object, looking at first like a tiny brilliant sun, dashed rapidly from the cloud heading north-west. The object flashed brightly in the sun as it made an abrupt right angle turn soon after emerging from the dark cloud, moving straight up with no

reduction in speed. Upon reaching a greater altitude, it levelled off again, with another abrupt right angle turn, resuming its flight until out of camera range altogether...On effecting such turns, a greater expanse of the object's upper surface becomes visible, causing it to present a featureless, disk-like appearance, which is in sharp contrast to first glimpses showing an object somewhat blurred in focus, and shaped like a theoretically fast moving, very bright star.

Jarrold wrote years later, 'I was able to view blown-up still pictures made from this film before it left Australia due to the American request and am still, I think, the only civilian ever to have seen them.' (Documentation I examined in the DCA and DAFI files contradict Jarrold's claims to have been the only one to have seen the prints and to have seen them before the original footage was sent to the United States. A letter to Jarrold from Mr E W Wicks, Secretary of the Department of Air, dated 2 December 1953, states that 'the film has been sent to the United States for technical processing, and it is therefore not possible to accede to your request [for contact prints] until its return, which, it is anticipated, will be early in the New year'.) 'The pictures,' Jarrold wrote, 'show what can only be accepted as an extra-terrestrial object, the flight path and behaviour of which rule out any man-made object or meteor. The film was made about midday against a cloudless sky and unfortunately the object was filmed from a distance, thus proving little real knowledge of the object's shape and composition, main importance being attached to its most unusual actions and behaviours.'

It should be noted that Drury himself observed no discontinuity in the UFOs flight path. Whether 90 degree turns were really recorded on the film, or were due to camera movement, processing, analysis or just plain extravagant interpretations based on poor data, we may never know. The references to 90 degree turns all stem from Jarrold. No one else, who either saw the film or prints, made such claims.

William McMahon was quoted in the press in late January 1954 as saying he had 'had the film flown to the US to be enlarged.' He further stated that the object shown in the film 'was so small that a detailed study of the film was not possible until technicians had enlarged it.' The official files also record a letter from DAFI to Mr Wiggins of the DCA which states, 'The 'Flying Saucer' film taken by Drury, at Port Moresby in 1953 and forwarded by you on 22 Sept. is returned herewith. We have subjected the film to detailed study and processing but have been unable to establish anything other than the blur of light (which) appears to move across the film. In spite of this disappointment we would like to thank you for your co-operation in this matter.'

The original Drury film, which allegedly held the UFO image, became something of a holy grail for Australian ufology. A number of efforts were made over the years to secure the film and further information about the affair. All met with failure. A previously confidential RAAF document handwritten in 1966 and entitled 'Summary of the effort made to rediscover present whereabouts of the allegedly 'excised' frames of Mr T Drury's Famous 1953 movie film of the Port Moresby 'UFO sighting'', concluded: 'The upshot is that the 'excised' frames [are]

either still in DAFI archives, have been destroyed or (perish the thought) have been lost.'

(Source: 1996. 'The Oz Files.' B. Chalker. Duffy & Snellgrove. Potts Point, pp 51-55.)

2001

Summary points:

- Thomas Peel Drury
- Provides a partial biography of Drury
- Chalker spoke to ASIO Major Laurie Sheedy. 'He shed little on this area...He felt it hadn't been passed onto him, and that it had gone to the RAAF...I spoke to Sheedy's ASIO Papua replacement, who took over in 1953, but he too felt he hadn't handled the film...The ASIO representative remembered the incident quite well, but was sure he never got to see the processed film.'
- Chalker describes the incident from three original sources, two in 1953 and one in 1971
- Chalker interviewed Tom Drury on 3 March 1982
- Drury told him 'I handed that [the film-KB] over to ASIO the very next morning...Tom confirmed to me that he got back a print of the film with a substantial amount of it missing...There was no way then of processing a colour movie film in New Guinea...'
- In 2000, Chalker interviewed Tom Drury's son - Paul Drury
- In 1982 Tom Drury told Chalker, 'I still think today that it was a missile of some sort...'
- In 1982 Chalker saw DOA file 128/1/208 Part 2 'was created in 1982 to enable me to examine Drury documents extracted from a separate DCA file 99/1/478...'
- Chalker cites an ASIO document dated 15 January 1973, which he found on an official file, which discusses the film
- Chalker discusses claims that the object made ninety degree turns in flight. 'It should be noted that Drury himself observed no discontinuity in the UFOs flight path. Whether the claims of 90 degree turns were legitimately recorded on the film, or were due to camera movement, or were artefacts of processing, analyses or just plain extravagant interpretation based on limited or poor data, we may never know. The reference to 90 degree turns all stem from Jarrold.'
- 'Thus the evidence suggests that Jarrold would not have got his prints until July, 1954...'

(Source: 'The Drury UFO Film Affair: A Study of a Celebrated Australian Case: Part 1.' By Bill Chalker. The Australasian UFOlogist Magazine, Vol 5 No 1, pp22-29.)

Summary points:

- 'During my January 1982 inspection of DAFI UFO files, I came across an envelope in part 3 of the 574/3/88 enquiry file series, amongst 1973 material. The envelope was stamped 'photo Section Base Sqn. RAAF

Base Fairbairn, ACT. The envelope had written on it 'DRURY FILM, PRINTS AND NEGATIVES.' There were no prints in the envelope.'

- 'The Bluebook file (case 2689) on the Drury case is scant and the cover form contradictory...'
- One of the RAAF photographers who recalled the film was a B W Fearon [My reading is B W Fercon – KB]
- 'On September 27th 2000, Tom Drury's nephew, Bill Drury, made available to me a copy of the print of the film Tom received back from authorities during 1954. The colour film shows the native spear fisherman, a speedboat on the harbour and then immediately cuts to about 5.8 seconds of footage apparently, the end of the filming of the UFO/contrail. This section resembles, or is, a thin contrail-like image that is continuously moving up at about a 45 degree angle, just as described by Tom Drury.'
- 'It seems clear that this remaining footage is a composite from the original'
- 'Paul made available the original camera for inspection – a French EMEL C.93 8mm movie camera made by Berthiot, Paris... while 24 frames/second would be expected, the windup mechanism could mean variable speeds...'

(Source: 'The Drury UFO Film Affair: A Study of a Celebrated Australian Case: Part 2.' By Bill Chalker. The Australasian UFOlogist Magazine, Vol 5 No 1, pp 4-13.)

2003

'Another Australian photo case was the Drury movie film, which had been investigated by a Queensland team. One of the main things which intrigued him about this film was the fact that most of the frames had reportedly been confiscated by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF.) Film confiscation cases were of special interest to him because NICAP researchers whom McDonald respected thought they confirmed the 'cover-up' hypothesis.

The Drury film was taken in Port Moresby, New Guinea, on August 23, 1957 [Sic-KB, should be 1953], by Thomas C. Drury, Deputy Director of the Australian Department of civil aviation. His wife Marjorie and son Paul were also witnesses. Drury, who was interested in meteorology, had noticed a cloud which was forming rapidly in an otherwise cloudless sky. Fascinated, he filmed it intermittently for several minutes with color film in his French 8-mm movie camera. Suddenly, a bullet shaped object emerged from the cloud, traveling at very high speed, trailing a thick vapor behind it as it disappeared into the distance. In spite of the comparative nearness of the object, no sound was heard. Marjorie Drury and her son Paul saw the bullet-shaped object but do not recall seeing the cloud from which it emerged. (Note 37.)

[Note 37 says 'Other incidents of unidentified objects emerging from unusual small clouds have been reported by reliable witnesses. Mrs Idabel Epperson, who was chairman of LANS from 1968 to 1973, reported seeing a silvery object emerge from a small cloud and dash west across the daytime sky. The small cloud instantly vanished. Possibly something of this nature occurred in the

Drury case, explain why Mrs Drury and son Paul did not see the cloud their father photographed.']

The Drury film was examined first by the Australian Air force and then sent to project Blue Book. Blue Book sent it back after a period of time, without comment. The part of the film which showed the developing cloud, the emerging object and the clearest frames of the object were missing. In spite of repeated attempts by Drury and Australian researchers to recover the missing portions, they were never recovered.

In his re-investigation of this intriguing case, McDonald tried several times to reach Drury at his work. Even though his path had been paved by Melbourne researchers, Drury did not return his calls. Finally, McDonald reached Marjorie Drury on July 9. She told McDonald she didn't wish to discuss the sighting, because she had seen only the 'very beginning.' She referred him back to her husband. McDonald persisted, but was still unable to reach him; apparently Drury travelled widely in his job and remained unavailable. Finally, through the persistence of Stan Seers, President of the Queensland Flying Saucer research Bureau, McDonald succeeded in getting a longer phone interview with Mrs Drury. His journal relates:

When failed to get Drury Monday A.M. 7/10/67, called her again (from Sydney-no tape.) Pressed her for details. When she first saw it come she perceived a 'silver bullet,' streaking upwards, at very high speed, leaving a vapor trail behind it. (Note 38.)

[Note 38 says 'McDonald's third journal 'NZ' section.'

'I can still see it,' emphasized Marjorie Drury, warming up a bit to James McDonald. 'I saw it from the start as a bullet, not in a cloud. In fact, I didn't see any clouds in the sky at all.'

'What about the vapor trail associated with the object?'

'It wasn't a cloud,' she replied. 'The 'bullet' at all times was ahead of the trail. And it was going fast! It was going hell bent for leather, climbing upwards. There were no wings or other appendages,' she stressed. 'It was just like a bullet.'

McDonald tentatively asked her if the object could have been an unfamiliar type of aircraft. Mrs Drury was emphatic. 'I've been around aircraft all my life, and I know it was no aircraft!'

She asserted that she...was 'busy with other things after that.' (I did not press her on that.) She evidently wished to leave all the rest of the account to him. She had stated to me (as yesterday to Stan Seers) that Mr Drury 'does not live here anymore,' and it was awkward to press on details concerning him. (Source 39.)

[Source 39 - 'Ibid.]

McDonald was a tenacious, expert interviewer but he realized that Mrs Drury's privacy was being violated. He phoned Drury's office again, pointing out to his

assistant, a Mr Smith, that researcher Stan Seers of the Physics Department of the University of Brisbane had arranged with Drury to talk with him by phone between 9.00 and 9.30 – in other words, now! Smith said Drury wasn't there but he would see what he could do when he returned.

A meeting was finally set up. When the two men met face to face, Drury was deeply upset, because all attempts to force the RAAF to return the pilfered frames had failed. Paul Norman described the meeting, as he heard about it from another Australian researcher.

'Drury was blowing his top when he was telling McDonald how the film came back to Australia with several of the frames missing,' relates Paul Norman. (Note 40.)

[Note 40 – 'Computer image analysis of one Drury movie film frame obtained with Paul Norman's help concluded that it was too indistinct to yield any reliable or interesting information.']

[Authors' note: The statement about McDonald meeting T P Drury is contradicted by the part contents of two letters:

1. In a letter, dated 31 July 1967 from James McDonald to Peter E Norris, McDonald writes 'The sole exception was that I never did contact T P Drury, despite several efforts both in Brisbane and after I got back to Sydney on July 10.'
2. In a letter, dated 22 August 1967 from Peter Norris to James McDonald, Norris writes 'I am glad your trip to Queensland was worthwhile, even though Tom Drury was unavailable.'

Norman kindly sent information about the Drury film for purposes of this book, as did Roy Russell, who interviewed Drury's son Paul. Paul Drury was only eight years old at the time of the sighting and does not remember the cloud from which the object emerged, only a trail near and behind it. The object's apparent length was about ¼' at arm's length, and the thickness at arm's length was that of 'a dressmaker's pin near the point.' Although the object was small, it was clearly seen; it glinted in the sun ahead of its vaporous trail. As the family drove away in their car a half hour after the incident, Paul could still see the trail in the cloudless sky.

The Drury movie film, as it exists today, is only 11' long [sic – should be 11" inches not 11' feet – KB] – about four seconds' viewing time. Yet Marjorie Drury, who was also re-interviewed by Roy Russell, estimates that her husband filmed the object on and off for about 10 minutes. Paul Drury concurs that his father filmed the event 'for quite some time.' When the Drury film was sent to the RAAF, and later to Blue Book, it was part of a roll 50 feet in length, with one join in the center at the 25 foot mark. (Note 41.)

[Note 41 – Letter and 'Drury report' from Roy Russell to author, 20 October 1994.]

When the film was tracked down in the Drury family home in 1994, it had been connected onto other family film and was in a collection of family movies that hadn't been disturbed for years. Russell describes how the 'New Guinea' reel starts with a join, where it's joined onto other family film. Shot (1) of the reel is of Tom Drury on a beach with children. Other segments follow, but the day of the sighting starts with shot (2) of a young Papuan spearing fish. Shot (3) is of a similar nature.

Shot (4) of the (about) 4-second segment of the UFO. Shot (5) is a close up of some foliage. After this...the next join in the film occurs. The point is, no join occurs anywhere near the UFO segment, suggesting that Drury filmed the UFO for only the four seconds, since there are no joins to suggest that anything was ever cut out. But Paul and his mother say he filmed it for quite some time...(note 42.)

[Note 42 – Ibid.]

Russell, an experienced and canny researcher suggests a possible answer to the puzzle, pointing to the fact that, on the day of the sighting, at least two other subjects, including a Papuan man spearing fish, were also on the 50-foot roll which included the UFO incident:

[I]t seems to me that...Drury sent the whole roll of film to the authorities (50 feet), that they cut out all the good shots, joined the film together again and then made a copy of the entire patched up roll, and sent it back to Drury. This way, Drury could never seriously claim that his film had been cut, since there are no join marks to be seen. This theory seems the only way to explain the shooting time observed by the witnesses, and the short 'no joins' UFO segment on the film. (Note 43.)

[Note 43 – Ibid.]

The four-second segment which Blue Book returned to only a streak of light moving across the sky, no unusual cloud, no bullet-shaped UFO emerging, no close up frames of the UFO. Russell's report continues:

Paul says his father, when the film was returned, was very angry. Then, when a Port Moresby newspaper printed something about Tom Drury seeing something through the bottom of an upturned rum bottle, his father clammed up for good. (Note 44.)

[Note 44 – Letter from Russell to author, op. cit.]

(Source: Druffel, A. 'Firestorm.' Wild Flower Press. Columbus. Pp174-178.)

Section 2: The observation

There are three original written sources of information on the actual incident. These are:

1. A statement on a Department of Civil Aviation file, dated 31 August 1953.

2. An article in the 2 September 1953 issue of the newspaper 'South Pacific Post.'
3. The Statement by Tom Drury which appears in the APRO Bulletin, July 1961 pp5-6, in an article by the Rev. N Cruttwell, titled 'The New Guinea Sightings.'

1. *Statement in DCA file 1953.*

'At 1200 hours on Sunday, 23 August 1953, I was in the vicinity of the Marine Base Workshops, Port Moresby, when I noticed a cloud building up as though being formed by vapour trails, in roughly a south-westerly direction from Port Moresby, at a very great height.

I watched this cloud, which grew in intensity for several minutes, when suddenly an object appeared from one side of it and climbed very fast in roughly a north-westerly direction. I could give no accurate information as to the shape or possible size of this object, as it appeared slightly bigger than a pin head, but whatever it was, it left a very clearly defined vapour trail behind it until it finally disappeared with a rapid gain of altitude.

I had my movie camera with me and photographed the whole thing on the telephoto lens. I am waiting the results of the photograph in an endeavour to ascertain what the object might have been. It appeared to me to be some type of high speed aircraft.

As far as I know, Air Traffic Control know of no aircraft movements in that area, and in any case, from the extreme altitude of the object, it certainly could not have been a civil aircraft.

Weather conditions at the time were cloudless.'

(Source: Department of Civil Aviation memo dated 31 August 1953. NAA File series MP1279/1, control symbol 99/1/478 digital page 48.)

2. *'South Pacific Post' 1953.*

'Guided Missile' over Port Moresby.

The Deputy Director of Civil Aviation, Mr Tom Drury, last Sunday photographed a probable guided missile over Port Moresby. Mr Drury said he saw the missile flying high over Nappa Nappa at mid-day. He reported it to the police and to the Regional Director of Civil Aviation, Mr John Arthur. 'It could only have been a guided missile, because nothing else would fit the description of what I saw,' he said.

(The British Government last month announced that guided missiles which flew at 2000 miles per hour, and could follow any target at almost any distance were being tested at the Woomera Rocket Range.)

Mr Drury said he was taking pictures at his home at midday on Sunday when he saw the first signs of the missile.

'There were no clouds in the sky and while I was taking photographs a small cloud formed for no apparent reason. I was curious about the cloud so I watched it. I had never seen a cloud form up by itself like that. I watched the cloud for a few minutes. Then a silver object came out of the cloud. I could see the flash of it in the Sun. It flew on a north-west course. I couldn't believe it, so I looked down at the ground, and then back at the object. It left a trail of vapour and I picked it up easily by following the vapour trails.

'I called to my wife and asked her if she could see anything in the sky. She looked up, and then she, too saw it. She pointed excitedly and said 'Oh yes. There it is.' 'The children could also see it. I got the telescopic lens on my camera and took shots of it.

'Then we watched it flying across the sky for a few more minutes. I've never seen anything fly that high before, not fly so fast.

'It kept on course then climbed at about 45 degrees and disappeared.'

Mr Drury said he was waiting for the shots he took of the missile to be developed.

'The only explanation I can give is that the object was a guided missile,' he said.

'It must have flown in circles and the vapour trails formed the cloud I saw.'

'When it left the cloud the trails and the object itself were quite clear. The object must have been very big to have been visible at that height.

'When a Spitfire aircraft left vapour trails during the war you could see the trails but seldom saw the Spitfire.'

(Source: 'South Pacific Post.' 2 September 1953 page 1.)

3. APRO Bulletin, July 1961.

'The story opens with Mr Drury's sighting. Mr. T. P. Drury of the Department of Civil Aviation at Melbourne gave this information personally to me. At the time of the sighting he was Director of Civil Aviation in the Territory of Papua, New Guinea, stationed at Port Moresby. He is a man of very high qualifications and has flown 32 types of aircraft himself. He has also made a speciality of meteorological phenomena. This sighting was also witnessed by his wife and children. This is his story.'

'I was standing on the Coast Road overlooking the Flying Boat base at Port Moresby with my wife and children. It was about 11.00 a.m. on August 23, 1953. The weather was perfectly clear and cloudless. Even the summits of the Owen Stanley Range were clear, which is unusual. My wife and children were with me. I was engaged in taking a movie photo of a native boy spearing a fish. I was not looking at the sky. My wife noticed a wisp of cloud suddenly appear in the blue sky from nowhere and start to build up rapidly into a white puff. She called out to draw my attention to it. I watched it rapidly build up into a thick white mass of cumulus. There were no other clouds in the sky and there

seemed nothing to account for it. Being very interested in meteorological phenomena I decided to take a film of it. So I rotated the turret of my French-made movie camera to bring the telephoto lens into position and started to film the cloud.

'The cloud was at an elevation of about 50 degrees above the horizon, in a roughly south-west direction, towards Napanapa. It was impossible to estimate the altitude, as there was nothing with which to compare it.

'Suddenly an object like a silver dart shot out of the cloud. It was elongated in shape like a bullet. It subtended about one inch at arm's length. It was metallic and flashed in the Sun. It was very clear-cut, sharp in front but apparently truncated behind, though the tail may have been hidden by the vapour trail. No wings or fins were visible. It shot out of the cloud upwards at an angle of about 45 degrees. It was travelling at an immense speed, at least five times as fast as a jet plane travelling at the speed of sound. (Note that Mr Drury is an expert airman and accustomed to estimating the speed of planes.)

'It never slackened speed or changed direction, but simply faded upwards into the blue and its vapour faded after it. It was gone in a few seconds. The vapour trail was very clear-cut, dense, white and billowing. It is visible in the remaining portion of the film still in my possession.

'In spite of the supersonic speed and the comparative nearness of the object, there was no sound whatever.

'I was greatly concerned about the appearance of such an extraordinary aircraft in the sky, without telling anyone. I drove straight to Jackson's airport, and checked with the Air Traffic Control. There were no unusual aircraft out, only a DC3 and the usual DC4 expected from Australia, and possibly a small aircraft or two.

'I then reported the sighting to the RAAF, but they were quite unable to account for it. Later, I sent them the film, which was sent off round the world, but no one could explain the object and it was pronounced 'unknown.'

'I am absolutely certain of its reality. It was photographed. My wife and children saw it. If anyone in the territory had the qualifications to identify an unknown aircraft, I had. It is my business to know what is in the air. I know all types of aircraft, and have flown 32 of them myself.'

(Source: Statement by Tom Drury which appears in The APRO Bulletin, July 1961, page 6 as part of an article 'The New Guinea sightings' by Rev. N. Crutwell.)

Summary of the facts.

Date: Sunday 23 August 1953.

Time: 1200hrs local.

Location: Port Moresby, Papua, New Guinea. Latitude 9.478 degrees South; longitude 147.15 degrees East.)

Observers: Tom P Drury; Mrs Marjorie Drury; and son Paul.

Initially seen at: 50 degrees' elevation, south-west azimuth.

Course: Travelling north-west.

Duration:

- (1) The cloud: A few minutes.' (South Pacific Post, 2 Sep 1953.)
- (2) The object: 'Then we watched it flying across the sky for a few more minutes.' (South Pacific Post 2 Sep 1953.) 'It was gone in a few seconds.' (July 1961 APRO Bulletin from Drury himself; Chalker 1996.)
- (3) Travelling at Mach 5, suggestive of a brief duration. (July 1961 APRO Bulletin.)

Angular size: About 1 inch at arm's length (1971 source.) 'Pinhead.' (1953 DCA.)

Last seen: 'Faded upwards into the blue.' (1971 source.)

Description: Silver in colour. Reflecting the Sun. 'Silver dart.' (1971). Bullet shape. (1971.) Vapour trail. No wings or fins. Soundless.

Movement: Didn't change speed or direction. (1971.)

The Sun: At the time of the sighting, the Sun was at an elevation of 69 degrees; azimuth 8 degrees (almost due north.)

The planet Venus, which might have been visible despite the daylight, was at an elevation of 44 degrees; azimuth 311 degrees; (roughly north-west), at magnitude -4.

The Moon was below the horizon.

Comments by the authors:

A. Length of film taken of the object:

1. A reviewer of an initial draft of this paper, commented '...The French camera used a bizarre 16mm film, 25 ft long that was exposed alternatively on left and right sides, then split after development and then spliced to make one 25 +25 = 50 foot long strip.'" This makes sense of a previously puzzling comment in a memo from Regional Director, DCA to New Guinea, to Director General, DCA Melbourne dated 5 September 1953. In the memo was the following. 'This film has been exposed on one side only.' This suggests that the total length of exposed and developed film was 25 feet long.
2. Edgar Jarrold and the Department of Air both, in 1954, speak of an exchange of 94 photographs of 94 frames of film. (This is after the film came back from the US.) This represents 4 seconds of film at 24 frames per second.

3. Bill Chalker in the year 2000, says he measured the length of the film as regards the object, at 5.8 seconds.
4. How long did they observe the object? If it was only a few (3-5?) seconds, then the length of the film of the actual object, as opposed to the cloud and object, at 24 frames a second, would result in say 72-120 frames of film.
5. Our first question is, was there in fact, ever any 'excised' film of the object? Did Drury only take, say 4-5 seconds of film of the object? Remember he said it was travelling at Mach 5. Drury certainly feels there was 'missing' film. However, neither the Department of Civil Aviation, nor the Department of Air, make any mention in their documents that the film returned from the USA was shorter in terms of the section showing the object, than when it went to the USA. The RAAF in 1966, despite a thorough search, did not discover any 'excised' film.

B. The identity of the object:

1. Taking the data that is available, our second questions is, could the object have been a day time meteor?
2. Unlike the assumption of almost all who have looked at this sighting, suppose the 'cloud' (seen by Drury but not his wife or son, according to James E McDonald's 1967 interview with Marjorie Drury) was not related to the object? Could the cloud simply have been, just that, a cloud?
3. The observation by Drury himself, and researchers such as UFOlogist Edgar R Jarrold, that the object 'climbed' (implying gaining height) in the sky, could simply be a matter of the object gaining angular elevation in the sky, not 'climbing.' A descending meteor, on a north-easterly course could fit the account.
4. In addition, bright meteors can leave long lived trails. There are reports by Drury's son, that the object's trail was visible for 30 minutes after the object disappeared. In addition, like Drury's object, bright, daylight meteors can be silent as they pass across the sky.
5. No one else, apart from UFO researcher, Edgar Jarrold ever claimed that the object made abrupt right hand turns. Drury himself, maintained the object did not change in either speed or direction. The basis on which Jarrold drew his conclusion about right hand turns is unknown.
6. Drury himself seems to have stuck by his initial 1953 impressions that the object was a 'guided missile.' 'RAAF files, examined by Bill Chalker, specifically rule out a missile firing from Woomera as an explanation.' (APROB 1982.) One of the authors (KB) lives in South Australia, which

contains the Woomera range, and is familiar with the history of the range. He agrees that the history of weapons tested at Woomera, rules out this hypothesis. The other author (PD) utilised the RecordSearch database at the National Archives of Australia, and the TROVE digitised newspaper collection of the National Library of Australia, to search for possible, more localised missile tests, perhaps from Australian ships, as New Guinea was an Australian Territory in 1953. No evidence was found to support this notion. There were no other land based missile test ranges in Australia in 1953.

7. Drury himself, given the nature of his occupation, established to his satisfaction that the object could not have been an aircraft.
8. Thus, the question is again posed, could it have been a day time meteor, travelling on such a course that, while descending through the atmosphere; appeared to be climbing into the sky from Drury's perspective?

C. The nature and quality of the images on the film:

1. '...blur of light appears to move across the film.' (Department of Air to Department of Civil Aviation, 1 July 1954.)
2. '...little actual details can be learnt...' (Edgar Jarrold, 10 August 1954.)
3. '...the image quality is disappointingly poor...' (Bill Chalker, 1982.)
4. 'Frames of the film are in my possession. However, they are of poor quality.' (Bill Chalker, 1983.)
5. Speaking of a copy of the colour film he obtained, 'Thin contrail-like image continuously moving.' (Bill Chalker, 2001.)
6. 'Computer image analysis of one Drury film frame obtained with Paul Norman's help concluded it was too indistinct to yield any reliable or interesting information.' (Druffel, 2003.)

D. Conclusions:

1. In our opinion, having reviewed the information contained above, there is reasonable cause to believe that the object seen by Drury may well have been a bright, daylight meteor.
2. There is doubt in our minds as to whether there ever was, in fact, any 'excised' film of the object.
3. Those who have seen the film and photographs taken from the film, all state that the images were of poor quality. Jarrold's description of a 'disc-like object' (AFSB magazine 1955) appear unfounded.

4. In summary, in our opinion, a mythology has grown up around this sighting and movie, which is not supported by the evidence reviewed. In short, the incident may simply have been, a bright, daylight meteor.

Acknowledgements:

The authors wish to thank Barry Greenwood (USA); Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos (Spain), Mary Castner, from CUFOS (USA); Jan Aldrich (USA), and other unnamed individuals for supplying copies of documentation we did not have. Thanks to Fran Ridge (NICAP) (USA) for stimulating us to review the case material. Thanks also to Australian researcher Bill Chalker for all his excellent work on this incident.