

# Rendlesham Forest: Britain's Roswell

*Three nights. A nuclear weapons base. A craft that left radiation readings in the soil.*

## Date

December 26-28, 1980

## Location

Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, England

## Key Witnesses

Lt. Col. Charles Halt, USAF; multiple RAF Bentwaters personnel

## Official Response

Lighthouse reflection – the most comprehensively refuted official explanation on record

## Physical Evidence

Radiation readings, landing traces, audio recording

// OBSERVER'S PREAMBLE

*The Rendlesham Forest incident is the most extensively documented military UFO encounter in European history. It involved multiple senior United States Air Force officers, occurred over three consecutive nights, left measurable radiation in the soil, produced a contemporaneous audio recording that still exists, and was officially minimised with an explanation — lighthouse reflection — so comprehensively inadequate that the officer who made it later effectively withdrew it.*

*The significance of the location cannot be overstated. RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge were NATO bases housing American nuclear weapons. This was not a chance flyover of open countryside. This was, again, a deliberate visit to a nuclear facility — consistent with the Malmstrom pattern, the Minot pattern, and the broader policy of demonstrating that these facilities were not beyond reach.*

## The Events: December 26–28, 1980

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On the night of December 26, USAF security personnel observed unusual lights descending into Rendlesham Forest adjacent to RAF Woodbridge. A patrol investigated and encountered a triangular metallic craft with coloured lights, moving through the trees. One witness, Staff Sergeant Jim Penniston, approached close enough to touch the craft and observe symbols on its surface. He sketched them in his notebook — a notebook that still exists.

The following nights brought further activity. On December 28, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt — the Deputy Base Commander, a career officer with no interest in UFOs — led a patrol into the forest with recording equipment. His contemporaneous audio recording of the experience, made on a small dictation recorder while the events were occurring, is one of the most significant pieces of evidence in the entire UFO record. It captures a senior military officer in real-time shock.

**Dec 26–  
28, 1980**

THREE CONSECUTIVE  
NIGHTS

**2**

AIR FORCE BASES  
INVOLVED

**Lt. Col.  
Halt**

SENIOR OFFICER –  
PERSONALLY WITNESSED  
NIGHT 3

**0.1  
mR/hr**

RADIATION READING AT  
LANDING SITE

**3**

DISTINCT LANDING  
INDENTATION POINTS

**1981**

HALT MEMO TO UK  
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE –  
NOW DECLASSIFIED

## The Halt Recording

Halt's audio recording runs approximately 18 minutes. It was made on a standard dictation recorder during the December 28 patrol. It captures: Halt describing unusual lights in the trees, his radiation readings at the landing site, his observation of the craft moving away and returning, and his dictation of the object projecting beams of light toward the ground — including toward the Bentwaters Weapons Storage Area.

*"I'll tell you, it's as bright as the sun... it's definitely mechanical in nature... the object to the north is... it's exploded into five separate white objects and they're moving rapidly... I'm still getting three good clicks on the radiation detector..."*

– Lt. Col. Charles Halt – contemporaneous audio recording, Rendlesham Forest, December 28, 1980

EVIDENCE TYPE	DETAIL	ASSESSMENT
Landing indentations	Three triangular depressions in the soil — measured and photographed	Consistent with tripod landing gear
Radiation readings	0.1 milliroentgens/hour at landing site — elevated above background	Documented on Halt's recording and in subsequent Geiger counter readings

EVIDENCE TYPE	DETAIL	ASSESSMENT
Halt's memo	Official USAF memo to UK Ministry of Defence — January 13, 1981	Declassified — confirms the events in official government documentation
Penniston's notebook	Sketches of craft symbols made immediately after contact	Physical document — verified as contemporaneous
Multiple senior witnesses	Halt, Penniston, Burroughs, and others — all career military	Career military personnel with significant stake in not fabricating reports
Broken tree branches	Physical damage to trees along the craft's reported flight path	Documented — consistent with low-altitude large object passage

## The Official Response

The UK Ministry of Defence received Halt's memo in January 1981. Their official position, maintained for decades, was that the incident had no defence significance. When the memo was declassified in 1983 under a Freedom of Information request, the public could see for the first time that a senior USAF officer had reported a structured craft projecting light beams onto a nuclear weapons storage area — and that the official response was to file the memo and move on.

The lighthouse explanation — that the lights were reflections from the Orford Ness lighthouse — was proposed by the base commander and later effectively abandoned as geographically impossible given the described positions and directions of movement. Halt himself later stated publicly that he was certain what he saw was not the lighthouse and was not of earthly origin.

Staff Sergeant John Burroughs, who was present on the first night and had close contact with the craft, subsequently developed significant cardiac problems. After years of advocacy, his medical records were eventually classified by the USAF — an unusual step for a non-combat injury. His treatment was eventually funded through the US military's own medical system, in what researchers consider an implicit acknowledgment of service-connected injury from the Rendlesham incident.

The classification of a veteran's medical records is a rare and significant act. It indicates the records contain information the government considers sensitive — not simply that they show ordinary illness.

Rendlesham is the third documented major incident at a nuclear facility. The craft's specific attention to the Bentwaters Weapons Storage Area — Halt describes beams directed at it — is consistent with the Malmstrom pattern. The message is the same. The address this time was European. Read: [Chapter 11 — JAL Flight 1628: The Pilots Who Wouldn't Stay Quiet](#) →