

# THE CAR THAT DISAPPEARED

*Derek James & Jenny Randles*

Case investigated for UFOIN by Mr. James; report prepared by Miss Randles,  
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FROM time to time we hear stories of incidents that are so amazing they are almost impossible to believe. One is tempted to ignore such events because they do not seem to fit into the customary thought-patterns for the subject. This is particularly true in the field of reported activity of MIB (Men in Black). One hears vague accounts of experiences with such mysterious individuals, although all too often these come by way of rumour (probably as one might expect them to come, if true, since their very nature would make direct relating of them dangerous).

In Britain there have been such rumours from time to time, and people have left the subject in apparently strange circumstances, but usually there is insufficient *prima facie* evidence to allow commitment to the beliefs. It is also quite obviously true that ufology, being the emotive field that it is, must generate incidents which are blown up out of all proportion and probably relate factors which are totally random to create an impression of mystique. These circumstances accepted, we should like to relate an incident about which there appears to us to be little doubt that it did happen, though what it might mean we cannot yet judge.

The incident began quite innocuously with a report from the Midlands of a light in the sky. This was one of many in a series which occurred during August and September of that year (1971). In essence it appeared no different to any other, but one of us, Derek James, followed it up superficially. A telephone call from the witness threw the incident into new perspective.

Apparently this witness had received a call from two men from the Ministry of Defence who, allegedly, told him that what he had seen was the Russian satellite, Cosmos 408. Now this is a rather unusual occurrence in Britain, as the Ministry takes interest in relatively few cases, and in fewer still do they personally visit the witness. It is stranger still when one considers that the original sighting was of nothing more than a white light which need probably have been no more than a satellite or an aircraft on first consideration.

In view of the above Derek checked with the satellite information at Farnborough, and ascertained that the Cosmos 408 satellite was over Newfoundland at the time of the incident and indeed was never visible from England at all!

This was perturbing, and a letter was despatched to the Ministry, but the official reply totally ignored the query as to why false information was given to the witness. No explanation was forthcoming.

At this point the witness contacted Derek once more, and not without trepidation because, for

several nights in succession, two strange men sat in a black *Jaguar* car outside his home. This alarmed him considerably, and prompted Derek to attempt to do something to assist.

Now Derek James has a relative who is a high ranking official on the local police force of the area in question, and he decided to approach him to see if any help could be given. The approach was made on the basis that the witness lived very close to a very large toy manufacturing firm, and the police should therefore be concerned as to whether plans for a robbery were being contemplated. Duly this was acknowledged, and a Panda control car with two policemen in it was instructed to keep a check on the vehicle.

By now events had taken us into October, and the patrol car kept watch on the vehicle on October 19 and 20. They timed it as it parked outside the house and waited for some time, and then drove off. On the third night, October 21, at approximately 21.05 the officers were given instructions from their superiors to detain the two strangers for questioning.

The patrol car was parked on the main road just away from where the *Jaguar* was standing. The police officers got out and walked towards the *Jaguar* and its occupants. They came up to it and were about to knock on the window when the car and its two passengers simply disappeared, as if they had melted away in front of the eyes of the astonished policemen.

The area was examined but there was no way in which the car could have disappeared naturally, and in any event the police officers were close enough to be quite positive as to what had transpired.

Subsequently neither car nor occupants were ever seen again, but the police officers and their superior (the relative of Derek James) had an unenviable task explaining away what had occurred.

For fairly obvious reasons neither names nor addresses of the participants nor the specific location of the event can be published here, although they are available on file with UFOIN.

Naturally one asks oneself many questions about this event, which parallels quite markedly certain close encounter UFO experiences (cf. the Bowles/Pratt affair in FSR Vol. 22, No. 5, where the object simply disappeared). One could explain the incident in almost any manner one wished, to relate it to any accepted theory. Did it become invisible? Did it disappear into another dimension? Or — perhaps we really ought to consider this more carefully — was it ever “really” there at all? To determine this we would have to define “real” and in the UFO phenomenon that is not particularly easy to do.

# ENCOUNTER AT BURRINGHAM

*Nigel Watson*

This account has been prepared from an 18-page report submitted by the author via NUFON to the UFO Investigators' Network (UFOIN)

BURRINGHAM is a small village a few miles west of Scunthorpe in South Humberside. It nestles by the side of the River Trent in its quiet and picturesque surroundings.

On the night of May 26, 1977, Mr. Roy Thompson was awakened from sleep in his caravan by a tremendous noise. He described it as similar to a whirlwind and something like "pressure building up" as if an object were on the ground, about to take off. It lasted for several seconds and then began to fade. It was so intense that it made him get out of bed and go over to the window from which he saw an unusual sight. More of that in a moment.

The noise itself faded, but a series of more distant droning sounds persisted for about an hour afterwards, apparently markedly different to the noise which awakened him. It has also been ascertained that people adjacent to the caravan site heard a strange noise at around the same time, 3.35 a.m., and one woman described it as being like the rumble of heavy lorries.

From his window Mr. Thompson did indeed see a puzzling object at an elevation of about seventy degrees. He described this at the first interview as looking like an "inflated eclipse" although at a later interview he altered the latter word to "ellipse." It is apparent from his description that he did in fact mean a roughly oval shape.

His subjective estimates of size are twenty feet wide and fifteen feet high, at a height of 3000 or 4000 feet. It did not appear to have lights on it but simply glowed a silvery white or grey. It was spinning slowly ("like a globe of the world") but moved at a tremendous pace across the sky until vanishing suddenly and completely after about 4 or 5 seconds.

Seconds later the witness glanced to his right and saw a very similar object over a row of houses, apparently further away in the direction of Keadby Bridge. This was also spinning in a similar manner and was surrounded by a greyish black cloud of amorphous shape. He glanced momentarily towards where the first object had disappeared. It was not to be seen. On looking back to where the second object had been this had disappeared also.

The witness was puzzled by what he had seen but he is not a believer in UFOs. He found himself arguing with himself as to whether he had been asleep, but the fact that he had got out of bed to observe the phenomenon negated this. In any event the noise was loud enough to have awakened him. Eventually he contacted the police next morning and they released the story to the press because of its connection with another local sighting (seen the evening before) at Bransholme, Hull — on the other side of the Humber Estuary.\*

I investigated the report for UFOIN, along with Roger Hebb and Keith Beacroft, members of the Scunthorpe UFO Research Society (an associate member of NUFON).

One of the first facts to emerge was that a major air force exercise took place between 2.00 a.m. and 4.45 a.m. on the night in question. This involved aircraft from all over the Humberside and Lincolnshire area, and must certainly have been the cause of the droning noises heard by Mr. Thompson and, quite conceivably, the very loud noise which woke him up. Whether or not he in fact saw any of the aircraft involved in the exercise is difficult to assess with any certainty, although his description does not appear to indicate this, and he is personally satisfied that this was not so (although he has gone to some lengths to avoid accepting what he saw as a UFO).

In the interviews he commented:

"It was not a jet. Jets do not spin horizontally, and a jet needs at least a mile before it can turn over and come back."

"A jet does not go at that speed at that height. You can see a jet for a long while... It is only when they are low that they appear to be going fast, but at that height (this) was just woosh and gone ... It disappeared inside of, I would say, twenty yards."

The exercise itself was not publicised in advance, and the noise did alarm a number of people. However, most of the activity took place over the sea and we have no further reports of anyone seeing anything unusual in connection with the noise — even though many must have gone to their windows to find out what was happening. This again tends to argue against the theory that the witness had seen the afterburners of a jet aircraft, as does the fact that with so many military bases in the area he is well acquainted with such aircraft passing over.

Weather records indicate a fine, warm night with a high cloud ceiling (the cause of the reflection of the noise) and it is possible, therefore, that some peculiar atmospheric light reflection took place — but this has not been possible to establish.

## Comment by Jenny Randles for UFOIN:

The investigators cannot identify this particular sighting, and it is perhaps of more interest when two factors are taken into account. First, the month of May was hyper-active, in the United Kingdom for anomalous UFO activity, and the centre of the wave appears to have been from around May 19 to 26. Secondly the time of observation is noteworthy

*(Continued on page 30)*

\* See "World Round-up" column in this issue.