

THE STONEHENGE MOVIES

Jenny Randles & Peter Warrington

Investigation of this case has been conducted over a protracted period on behalf of UFOIN and FSR. An acknowledgement is made of the assistance of the Cheshire based UFO society, FUFOR, in the early stages of the investigation. Roslyn Parsons of the Manchester UFO Research Association also assisted in several interviews.

IN Flying Saucer Review Vol. 23, No. 6, brief introductory details were given of the UFO events that, allegedly, had occurred close to ancient Stonehenge in Wiltshire in the Southern England, during October 1977. After studying at great length the detailed testimony of the witnesses, and following through the investigation of the film stated to have been taken during the events, we now feel we can present a considered report.

In our preliminary report it was stated that the case was interesting for several reasons: these included an extended series of observations over a long period of time, alleged electromagnetic effects, and possible psychological effects.

It is pointed out at the outset that investigation has shown that the extent of the incidents and their associated effects may not be as great as first thought. We feel that the details published here are a more accurate reflection of the true situation, and should be regarded as superceding the original published data.

Previously the witnesses had demanded anonymity. However, they have now given us permission to use their names and, because of this we can now refer to the case as the "John Flattley Film." There are six witnesses of the events. Mr. and Mrs. John Flattley and their daughter, and Mr. and Mrs. Terry Hayes and their daughter. Both couples are in early middle age and their daughters in their early teens.

The families are close friends, and both come from Cheshire, where the husbands hold responsible jobs.

In mid October 1977 the six friends travelled south to Stonehenge where John Flattley intended to make a short documentary film about the monument and its mystique. However, this was regarded only as a secondary purpose, their main intention being to have a few days break from the pressures of modern life, and to enjoy the peace of rural surroundings.

The party drove to Wiltshire in a caravanette that they had hired for the purpose. Upon arriving on the afternoon of Sunday, October 16, 1977, they searched around for a suitable camp site. Not finding a suitable place they were advised, ultimately, to try some common ground just off a minor road close to the monument itself. Here they remained for the next few days with a panorama of the giant stones and the wild setting before them.

When we, the authors, first approached the witnesses in March 1978, we were shown the film and told the story by the Flattley family. In the first instance we were told that the events we were about to see had occurred on three separate evenings. Since then the witnesses have reconsidered the available data, and have concluded amongst themselves that the majority (if not all) of the event took place on the evening of Tuesday, October 18, 1977, between 6.20 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. B.S.T. (i.e. G.M.T. + 1 hour). This change of testimony is accepted by John Flattley only because all the other witnesses are sure it is correct, and it is a discrepancy which the authors are at a loss to explain.

It should be noted that, other than this, all the witnesses are adamant about the basic details. Even so, confusion as to whether it was one night or three is very difficult to comprehend. The reader should, we feel, bear this point in mind when studying this report.

The Events

Early on the evening of October 18th the families were going about the various tasks of clearing away after the evening meal, and tending to a camp fire. John noticed an orange light in the sky at some distance from them. Puzzled and thoughtful the party continued for a few minutes when another similar light appeared. Both lights were visible for no more than a few seconds before fading away.

On the appearance of the second light John Flattley turned the camera and filmed the final second or two of the light's existence. Even more puzzled, the six began to look about the sky for more lights. Every few minutes one would appear. In all it is estimated about 15 to 18 were observed over the 3 hour period.

The lights appeared as golden spheres with a slightly diffuse edge. Their angular size was apparently quite small, and when viewed in still frame are even smaller than when moving (see accompanying stills which, of course, lose definition from the original film). No obvious differences in any of the lights were noticed, although Terry Hayes did at one stage view them through a telescope. The only possible feature (noticed only when subsequently the film was viewed by an atmospheric physicist) is that there is a diffusion of colour with yellow always tending to the right hand edge. As can be viewed on the film the

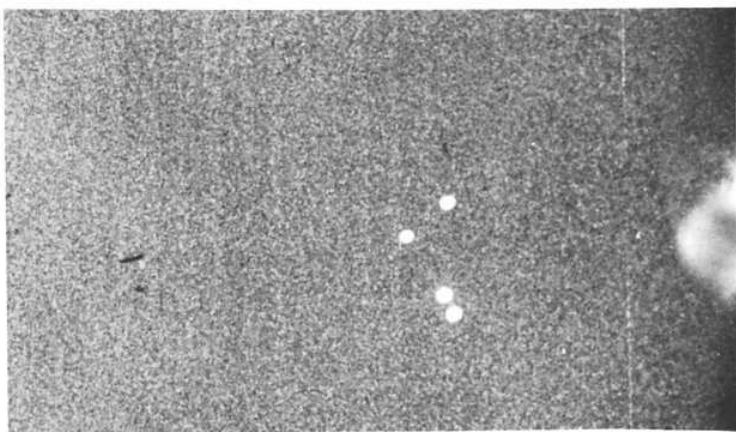


Photo 1: Still from Kodachrome 40 reel

lights flicker or pulsate, but with no apparent pattern at all.

In general, the motions of the objects were of two kinds. Either they moved into the vicinity of the witnesses — from what is thought to be some distance away — and then meandered about gently before disappearing by “melting away,” or they were said to have appeared “out of thin air” and remained almost stationary before “extinguishing” in a similar manner. It was said that one or two of the lights actually rose vertically into the sky before disappearing. This comment was made by John Flattley, in our presence, on a television programme, and was subsequently confirmed. However, the filmed sequences (of about 3 minutes) show only limited motions. While it is true that they do appear to show one sequence where the object clearly rises, on detailed analysis of the film it would appear that this is in all probability due to the camera being “zoomed in” to the object, creating an artificial effect quite unintentionally.

We shall return in more detail to the film, and what it shows, in a moment.

The majority of the lights were seen in groups, sometimes of only two, but on others as many as seven or eight in the sky at one time. Occasionally single lights were also seen. It is said that one group was in a ‘V’ formation. This was filmed but the film reel ran out before the formation was completed. The film does not, therefore, show apparent lining up of a partial ‘V’ formation (see photograph).

The duration of the phenomena has proved difficult to estimate. This is unfortunate because in many ways it is the most important piece of information connected with this case. There is little doubt in our minds that we are talking about no more than seconds in the majority of instances, although one or two lights may have been around for a minute or more. When the film was originally shown to us, the Flattley family stated that one object hovered for an estimated 40 minutes. This was extensively broadcast in the press and on television and radio, and was never refuted by the witnesses. However, as before, they have now reconsidered the facts and say that this was probably an exaggeration. Of course it is well known that witnesses do tend to overestimate durations, and in this case it has been practically impossible to pin down a meaningful estimate and

although we consider the duration could have been about ten minutes, but we feel it is safe to assume “several” minutes.

The Effects

Shortly before the first light was observed the party had switched on a battery-powered television set. After a while the picture went off totally, as if the batteries had run down. The adults attempted to get it to function again, but without success. Then the first of the lights materialised. The witnesses were obviously distracted and did in fact switch off the set mid-way during the events. So far as we can ascertain the set was not used again during their stay, but on their return home it was switched on and found to work quite normally. It was allowed to run itself out of power and the batteries lasted as if fully powered.

Later in the evening, while the objects were being viewed, the two girls were playing with battery-operated radio sets that had a small compass in the base. There was no effect on the transmission or reception, but the children say that when the lights were in view the compass needles deflected in alternate directions, swinging quite wildly.

The implications of these reports are that the



Photo 2: A second still from Kodachrome 40 reel

phenomenon had an electromagnetic field associated with it.

At one stage, apparently, Terry Hayes tried to approach the objects more closely (although it is not clear how close he got, it still appears to have been some way). The other witnesses remained where they were watching an object which they described as being the apparent size of a beachball.

During the return journey Terry complained of feeling unwell. Even so it was a couple of weeks after the return home before it was decided by his doctor that he needed hospital investigation. He was admitted to hospital for several days suffering from a severe body rash which, subsequently, cleared away totally.

There has been much comment about this rash, and we do indeed know more about it than we can write herein. Terry Hayes has almost wished that the subject be avoided, and ensured that all reference to it was deleted from the television programme. All he will permit us to report at this stage is a quote from himself “... enquiries are still being made about

the nature of the rash which, at present, remains a mystery.”

John Flattley testifies that one morning (after seeing the objects the evening before — hence we are to assume it was the morning of Wednesday, October 19th) he had been suffering from a bad headache following a rainstorm. At 2.00 a.m., unable to sleep, he went out of the tent in which he and Terry were sleeping, and walked in the crisp air that often follows rainfall.

As he was walking along the lane adjacent to the tent and caravanette his flashlight beam illuminated a dark lump the size of a cow's torso. This was in a field directly in front of the stones of the henge. It was, he says like a lump covered with a tarpaulin. He recalled nothing in the field during daylight and no animals were allowed to graze there. He was puzzled, but went back to the camp.

However, it kept worrying him and he could not help wondering, “Did I really see that thing like a slug?” He took a few steps back towards the field and projected his torch beam where the thing had been but it was gone. The next morning there was no sign of it, and no indication that anything had been there with, for example, no dry areas on the otherwise wet grass. He remains puzzled, but certain that he saw something. Nevertheless, he prefers us only to relate this account in passing.

One final event that we have to relate may in fact be quite significant. When the formation of lights was visible a searchlight beam of considerable intensity was shone on to them. The origin was unknown, and some distance away beyond the horizon. The beam did not scan the sky but “locked” directly on to the group of objects. When the beam struck the formation the witnesses say that the seven or eight objects reacted by breaking formation and disappearing abruptly.

The Film

As has been mentioned already, part of the testimony is confirmed by some 3 minutes of 8 mm colour movie film. The film was made using a CANON AZ10.14 E camera with a 7 mm -70 mm f 1.4 zoom lens. It is quite an advanced type of camera and the witness has had several hours experience with it.

Two types of film stock were used. Kodachrome

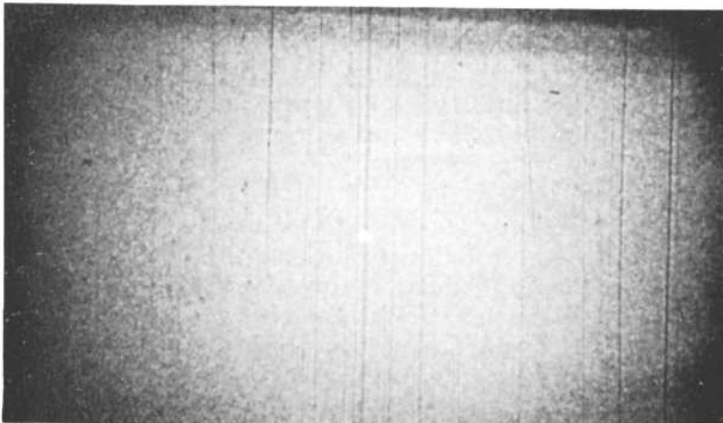


Photo 3: Still from Kodachrome 160 film

40 is normal daylight film, and formed the majority of the stock. Some Ektachrome 160 film for use in low light conditions were also used. Only a small amount of this was taken by John Flattley as an experiment in the first use of this newly introduced film stock. In total only a few minutes stock was taken on the outing because, as he stated, the film about Stonehenge was only an incidental factor in their visit.

The sequences on the Kodachrome 40 film show one, two three and four lights in various combinations and movements. They move through the frame gently and disappear sometimes whilst the film is still running. Several are seen to appear suddenly and

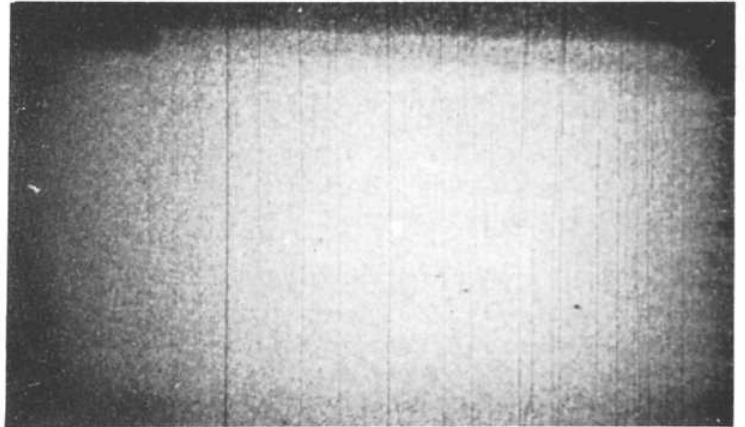


Photo 4: Another still from Kodachrome 160 film

and one or two give the impression of spiralling downwards rotating around one another. Several are already in existence when the shot commences and presumably continue after the shot concludes. This enables a *minimum* lifetime of about 30 seconds to be inferred for at least one object.

The objects on this film stock are seen only as silhouettes against a completely darkened background. This is because the dusk and night conditions provide insufficient light to record other than the bright objects.

The Ektachrome 160 film is, however, more useful because landscape detail is visible in some shots. John Flattley apparently realised, whilst filming, the need to include foreground for perspective, and thus we have much more evidential sequences on record. This film was used up in early evening shots only.

On this low light film only single objects are visible in each shot, but a clear impression is given of the orange ball standing out in the misty gloom. During the sequence the lights give the impression that they move horizontally relative to the camera, and also appear to slow down and stop for a period of several seconds. However, it must be emphasised that these are only impressions (although the witnesses claim that their visual observation supports this viewpoint). It should be noted that the effect of the camera zooming-in did, in one shot, produce the effect that the object was rising and moving fast towards the camera. Consequently, there can be no confirmation of what the objects on the film actually do, without extensive analysis of the film of a very specialist type.

It should be added that at all times on the film the behaviour of the lights is gentle, and in the main they

are very slow moving – consistent, it would appear, with something windbourne. Several stills from both types of film stock, showing single objects and formations, are here included.

The film has been examined at length by analysts for the Kodak Company at their Hemel Hempstead laboratories. We owe them a great debt for the amount of work they have been prepared to put into this. They have excluded chemical faults and processing defects of any kind. They are also confident that the images preclude trickery of any type. They considered several possibilities of this but found no evidence whatsoever.

Additionally, they looked at several possible explanations, such as laser beam images, and car headlights reflecting off low clouds, but were able confidently to reject these. Their final considered opinion was that the film is genuine, the colouration is very close to what it really was, and it shows a sequence of lighted objects that were actually present in the sky at the time when the film was taken – the nature unknown but probably natural.

CONCLUSIONS

The film only really came to the attention of investigators following the *Daily Express* UFO series when John Flattley telephoned the *Express* simply to say that he had some evidence in which they might be interested. They did not follow this up at all, but the authors did after an allocation of the *Daily Express* reports had been handed to *Flying Saucer Review* and subsequently passed to UFOIN for investigation.

At first, the importance of the case was not recognised as we knew no details. By coincidence the authors were working at the time with Granada TV as consultants on a documentary about UFOs. The researcher with whom we were involved asked if she could come with us to the initial interview with the Flattleys “to see how a UFO investigation is conducted.” When the film was viewed it was immediately requested for screening and, while the witnesses agreed, there was some concern over the attendant publicity (which the witnesses did not want). The TV programme was scheduled to go out two days later but was postponed. This allowed vital time for the authors to commence investigation and for the film to be analysed to check its authenticity.

While all this was going on one of the participants provided by Granada TV for the programme chose to “leak” the story to the rival BBC Radio and *Daily Express* newspaper, without it seems consulting the witnesses, or ourselves. Because of this Granada TV decided to show the film on the ITN networked news programmes (for having heard the BBC broadcast the other ITV companies were by then anxious to know what another of their stations had acquired). The finished programme was then screened next day in other parts of the country, as well as in the Granada area, and several further radio and newspaper features on the case followed.

The publicity was self perpetuating, and was not due to the desires of the witnesses or the investigators, who in most instances were the last to know

that a particular feature was forthcoming! The intention had never been to publicise the film in any major way at all.

There were one or two plausible explanations which surfaced early in the investigation. One school of thought (championed by science writer Ian Ridpath) was that the film showed an atmospheric phenomenon known as “ball lightning.” This was rejected by most people early on because the reported parameters of the objects (such as size, duration and repeatability) fell well outside the known limits of the ball lightning phenomenon.

Another idea was that the objects were in fact flares. People who have seen these said that the film showed objects which were very similar. The witness testimony was by them considered to be grossly erroneous, because otherwise sizes and durations in particular did not fit this explanation.

Naturally enough we had considered this explanation at the start, but had almost discounted it for several reasons. The film does not appear to show flares. The colouration (orange), we were reliably informed, is not used for military flares, and the objects’ behaviour, at first sight, was not consistent with a slowly falling flare of brief duration. Also the low light film shows no trace whatsoever of smoke trails, or of any substance behind the lights, such as a parachute. Furthermore the purpose of a flare (to illuminate) was not fulfilled by any of the objects. Yet again, military sources in the Stonehenge area (of which there are many) had viewed the film and advised us “off the record” that they did not consider flares a likely explanation. This was all in addition to the then witness testimony which argued strongly against the flares hypothesis.

Our thoughts, in these early stages, were quite clearly that the phenomenon filmed was not yet identified but was probably some natural event. In a deliberate attempt to prevent unwarranted assumptions that the objects filmed were solid, physical craft like UFOs (which, it should be stressed, at no time have the witnesses tried to claim) we had continually played on the theme that the film showed an “unknown natural phenomenon.” This was our approach both in the press and on radio and television.

It is remarkable how we, as investigators, have had our reputations challenged over this case. Richard Colborne of BUFORA, writing in *Bufora Journal*, accused us of making a significant case out of a film which “obviously” showed flares. Alan West of the BUCD, wrote in BUCD Bulletin that we had made fools of ourselves and our colleagues by taking an interest in “unintelligible and unimportant squiggles of light”.

In our defence we would like to say that the film never has been “obviously” identifiable, and that we considered it our duty as investigators to pursue a case of this nature to its bitter end because of its “potential” importance. To publish, as both these writers have, an explanation based on no more evidence than a passing sight of the film on television, is premature to say the least. It would serve no purpose to ufology to have left the case half-baked as

"probably flares" when all the data contradicted this, and the only evidence we had for this was the opinion of people who had seen a flare once before.

What we wanted to do was to publish a complete investigation and present not just opinion, but the facts as they stand. There is no doubt that the media will use the film in the future to perpetuate the belief that the objects are UFOs. It is our intention here to publish full information to enable the reader to decide about the phenomena for himself. In view of the productiveness of the six months intensive investigation we believe this approach adequately justified itself and we stand by it.

So, what does the film show? Significant development did take place on September 1, 1978, and this we must consider;

On that day we presented the film, and the evidence, to a group of eight or nine scientists. This was arranged by journalist Ian Ridpath at Kodak London offices. (Kodak must again be thanked for their very kind assistance.) Present were leading atmospheric physicists and specialists in ball lightning and plasma studies from Harwell and leading universities. They were not perturbed at having been invited to see a UFO film (although they were not told this before they came!). After quickly rejecting any possibility that the film did show ball lightning a typical comment was: "Why be afraid of calling these UFOs? In my opinion they fit that description better than anything else."

Staff Sergeant Ron Stafford from the Ministry of Defence, an army munitions expert, considered the film, and his opinion that the images were flares, was accepted by most scientists present. Ian Ridpath subsequently wrote up this conclusion in the *Observer* on September 10th under the heading "Inconclusive case for the UFO." In fact 'inconclusive' is the most appropriate word because Ron Stafford was not positive in his evaluation. His quotations to us for publication seems to sum up the results of the meeting rather well: "The filmed objects do not look like flares, but the phenomena behave like flares. On balance I think they are."

So the situation remains at an impasse. The witnesses adamantly refuse to accept that the objects they saw were flares. The supporters of the flares explanation likewise reject the witness testimony, which inevitably they must do because it does not fit this theory at all. As for ourselves we are certain of one thing. The film cannot be considered as important or highly significant evidence for an un-

known phenomenon, regardless of whether or not it does in truth show one.

We feel that this case does, however, highlight some very important factors about UFO investigation. Here we have a set of data that can be looked at in two entirely different ways. Either it can be interpreted to mean that the witness testimony is totally unreliable with the objective evidence of the film being used to provide a completely mundane explanation for an apparently bizarre event, or the testimony, or parts of it, can be accepted with the result that we have an important close encounter with objective evidence. The archetypal "classic case" in fact.

We wonder how many "classic cases" would in fact present this two-sided situation if they were subjected to inadequate long term investigation. Whatever the answer, we feel that this case has amply justified the need for intensive investigation of selected high strangeness cases, even to the detriment of newer and fresher low strangeness incidents. This is the cornerstone of the UFO Investigators Network system, and we believe it is the correct approach to lead us towards a better understanding of the UFO enigma.

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NB The authors would like to request any comments which readers of FSR may wish to make on any aspect of this case. Write to: 23 Sunningdale Drive, Irlam, Salford. M30 6NJ

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GIGANTIC UFO OVER REFINERY

Jenny Randles & Ron Sargeant

A report for UFOIN and *Flying Saucer Review*

MOST readers will have seen the feature film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* by the time they read this article. No doubt, like us, they thrilled to the spectacle of the gigantic "mothership" gliding silently over the mountains while the awestruck witnesses looked on. Whilst Stephen Spielberg's epic film was true to life in many of its insights into the UFO phenomenon, this seemed to be one where it had missed out. Who has ever reported an object that size before?

The UFO phenomenon seems to have several basic ground rules. Whatever it is, and whoever is controlling it (and that could include us) it seems to play a game of cat and mouse with us. You chase the answer, think you have found it, and then realise that it has run away from you again. In a similar vein the phenomenon seems to tantalise us. It appears to play little jokes, or provide infuriating and ridiculous little asides, maybe to distract us from reaching the truth. Whatever that truth, it is quite in keeping with the phenomenon, as we know it, to present us with a sighting such as the one described below, seemingly comprehending the reaction it would provoke.

Partington is a Manchester overspill area, about ten miles from the city itself. It is in the district of Trafford and is most famed for the nearby Carrington Oil Refinery, which is operated by the Shell Company, and which is the biggest of its kind in the country. This vast complex dominates the mostly flat landscape on one bank of the Manchester Ship Canal, opposite to Irlam (the scene of the solid light encounter from July 1977 described by Ron Sargeant in *FSR* Vol 23, No. 5). The immediate area also contains a power station and a large number of electricity grid supply lines.

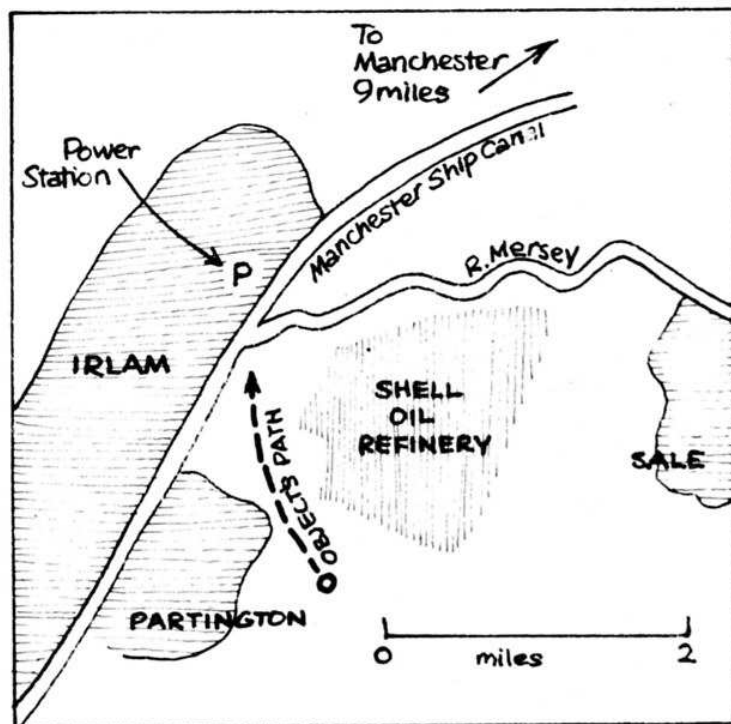
Being on the fringes of rural Cheshire, the area is not highly urbanised and is regarded as a not unpleasant residential spot.

This was the scene on the evening of Monday, November 14, 1977, which was cool with just a slight breeze and a clear sky. At about 5.45 p.m. four people got off a bus bringing them home from work nearer the city. These were June, a 32-year-old office worker, a female neighbour aged in her forties, and two male acquaintances whom she knows because they travel regularly by the same bus.

Darkness had fallen as they began their walk home from the bus stop. When reaching the end of Conifer Walk they all noticed some strange lights in the sky, and automatically assumed that they were connected with the Shell plant. Talk centred on these for a moment, as they realised that the light must have been put up very recently, until one of the men pointed out that these lights were in the SSE, whereas the Shell plant was further north. It was then, as

they began to walk towards them, and as they came visibly closer, that the four people realised they were witnessing something very near, very low and very peculiar.

The lights had been in view for up to two minutes at this point and are described in detail by the witnesses: "Like floodlights at a sports game... sort of panelled in appearance like two TV screens with a slight gap between them... there was no glare or dazzle and no beam coming from them... although they were very bright."



The two lights remained in one position and were very large indeed. The witnesses, although using different methods of gauging the size, all say that a half page of a tabloid newspaper at arms length would have been necessary to cover them. They estimated them to be no more than 100 ft. in the air (another reason they had connected them with Shell) and within half a mile across open fields.

It was at this point that they realised that they began to think about UFOs, and they began to speculate excitedly about what this object was doing in the area. There was little fear at this point. However, when the lights suddenly went out the tension increased a little. Most of them feel that this was caused by the object bearing the lights turning sideways on, thus hiding the beams which were on the adjacent side. One of the men, however, is sure that the lights were in fact turned off. Whatever the cause,