

MULTI-WITNESS SIGHTINGS OVER THE FIRTH OF FORTH

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THE East Central area of Scotland is renowned for its agriculture and one cannot fail to miss this point if ever in the area. The land is generally flat with fields stretching before the eye. With the agriculture comes livestock, mainly cows, sheep and poultry. It is also an area of coal-mining, dating back to the 18th century; In fact the land is strung by the still evident pathways of the old mining railways. To the East Lothian region Edinburgh is regarded as "the Toon" (town), although Haddington is the principal town of the country.

Most of the incidents that make up this very complex case were not reported in the local media, and thanks are due to Dr. A. J. Rostron, science teacher at Tranent Secondary School, who was a great help in collating and investigating some of the reports. Personally, I have interviewed 19 of the 27 witnesses. Dr Rostron has interviewed most of the others.

The date we are talking about is May 17, 1977; at the start of ten days of intensive UFO activity over the whole of Britain that was to be the central point of the 1977 wave. The next day saw the landing and entity report from New Elgin, Morayshire (1).

On May 17th the weather was very clear and sunny with very little cloud cover and practically no wind. All ages given in this report relate to May 1977, and owing to the number and variety of the incidents the reader is advised to study the sketch map of the area at this point and familiarise

Our contributor is a newcomer to the UFOIN team, and his investigation of what was an exceedingly complicated affair has produced this, his first report. He lives at Tranent, East Lothian, in the middle of the flap area. As he says; "I can visually trace the paths of the UFOs as I sit and write now, but what I was doing that evening I simply cannot remember!".

J. RANGLES (SECRETARY UFOIN)

himself with the locality.

It will be useful to examine the data in six stages:—

1) At a time *before* 21.20 Mrs J. E. Foley, wife of a teacher, and living in Joppa, observed two objects in the NW sky over Granton. They hovered at about 1000 feet and were both roughly round in shape, although one was slightly larger than the other. Both were coloured pink and seemingly joined together by a horizontal "cable". After watching the objects for a minute or so she ran to fetch binoculars. When she returned one of the objects had vanished, and as she watched, the other faded away.

2) 13-year-old Stewart McKenzie was watching a group of boys playing football behind his home at about 21.05. From Tranent he could look out NNW over the Firth of Forth and, at an estimated 2000 feet., about 10 miles away he could see an object, smaller than a civil aircraft, moving west at aircraft-like speed. It looked like a sombrero hat, discoid with a dome on top. There was a belt of white 'kitchen lights' on the base and a flashing light on top. After a minute he became

disinterested in the UFO and went back to watching the football.

3) At about the same time as in the previous stage, 13-year-old Frankie Kraviec, also in Tranent, was looking south from his garden when he was distracted by an object hovering over West Windygoul Farm. It was saucer-shaped with a dome on top, coloured white, but reflecting the setting sun. For at least two minutes stayed in the same position and he too got fed up with it, turning his attention elsewhere.

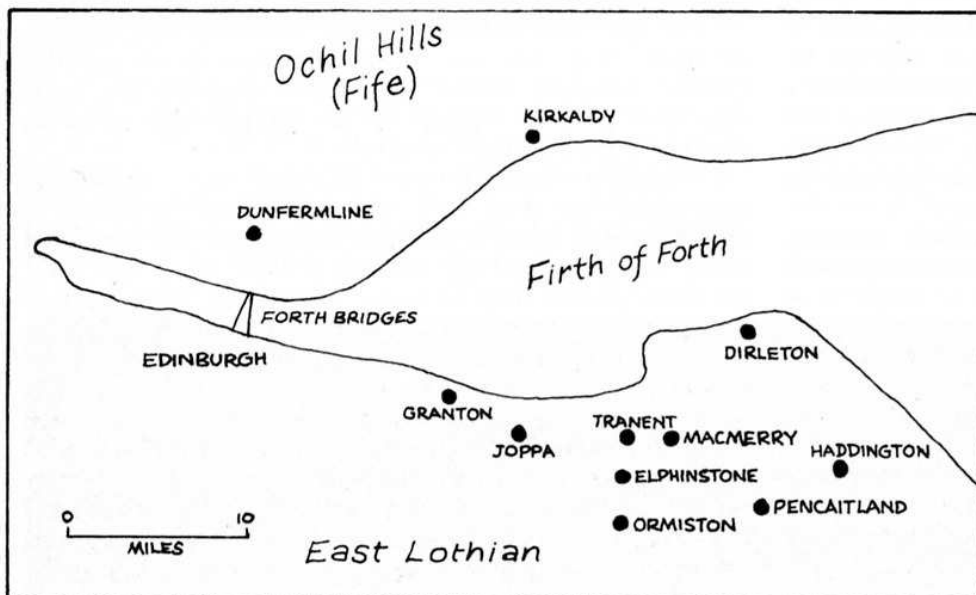
Meanwhile, Frank McLoughlan, also aged 13, from another part of Tranent saw an object moving slowly (estimated at about 20 mph) from south to north, heading for the coast. It appeared as half the size of the sun in the sky, was silvery coloured with a round flat base and a flashing red light on top. It hovered over the top of Tranent for about fifteen seconds.

The two objects in Stage 3 are obviously not the same, but there is remarkable similarity between the observations of Messrs. McLoughlan and McKenzie.

4) This relates to the only phase of the activity reported in the media, and involves at least 11 witnesses. It spanned a broad time range, indicating a slow moving phenomenon.

At MacMerry, Stuart Logan, aged 13, and five others (including adult showpeople) were standing by some stalls at a travelling fair. It was just *after* 21.20 and the sun had now set. They saw in the WNW towards Granton a dull yellow flattish oval with white smoke or vapour trailing from the rear. The size was estimated to be that of a 'wee lorry'. After being still for some minutes it began to move slowly northwards and descended out of view over the County of Fife to the north. It was in view until 21.50.

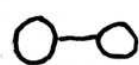
D. Rutherford from Edinburgh reported what seems to have been the same thing (2) He describes a pinkish oval over Granton moving northwards towards the Ochil Hills in Fife. It



hovered for about 20 minutes, from 21.30, at an estimated height of 1000 feet before moving. Attempts are being made to trace a man in Edinburgh who claims to have photographed this phenomenon.

Mr and Mrs McCulloch of Dirleton reported an object to the west at 21.40 (3) It was in the distance over the Forth Bridge area, and was observed through binoculars. It looked like a silver cigar which moved quite rapidly over towards Dunfermline where it pulsed six times and headed to the north and the Ochil Hills. By now it was glowing bright red and was finally lost to sight about 22.30.

Meanwhile in Dunfermline at



Stage 1: Mrs. Folley, Joppa



Stage 2: Stewart McKenzie, Tranent



Stage 3: Frankie Kraviec, Tranent



Stage 4: Frank McLoughlan, Tranent



Stage 5: Stuart Logan, MacMerry



Stage 6: Sandy Cunningham, Pencaitland



Stage 7: William Ritchie, Ormiston

The objects claimed to have been seen

21.45 Mrs A. Hutton saw a reddish saucer that was ablaze with light moving towards the Ochil Hills, and at 22.00 17-year-old John Quinn of Tranent saw an object over the Firth moving slowly and looking like a golden-yellow, flattened oval. It was about one third of the apparent size of the moon.

5) These reports are between similar times, but are quite different in character to those in stage 4 related above. They do not seem to be explainable just as poor observation of the phenomena previously reported.

13-year-old John Anderson of Tranent observed a flat object looking like a "gramophone disc" moving from MacMerry towards Tranent on a very slow course. It followed several tight spirals over Tranent and then moved away to the SW. It was observed for 15 minutes sometime between 21.30 and 22.00.

At the same time 13-year-old Colin Scott of Tranent observed a domed disc to the SW. It performed 3 or 4 tight spirals over the town at a fast speed and then moved off SW at some speed. The dome particularly was glowing very brightly and seemed to be quite small. The time was the same as that for John Anderson.

14-year-old Heather Smith of MacMerry was looking west at the same time and she saw an object in the distance performing tight spirals.

At 22.00 it was "lights out" at Tyneholm House, a Dr Barnardo's home for orphaned children at Pencaitland, 13-year-old Sandy Cunningham was reading a book and looking south over a clear and open view when he spotted an object moving SE. He called out, and a total of seven people were able to observe the object, including two staff members, Mr Thomas Kemperer and Miss Jane Player. The object was oval and yellow/white in colour, surrounded by an aura of some kind. It moved slowly and was viewed until about 22.10 when it stopped for a few seconds and went on to disappear from view behind trees.

6) The last stage has several contradictions within it, but relates to specific area, to the south of Tranent.

13-year-old Adam Young of Ormiston is a keen bird watcher. Upon hearing a partridge in the fields outside his home he looked out as dusk fell (about 21.40) and saw to the west a small thin silver/white oval. On the underside was a small red light and the whole object sparkled. It was over a disused 'coal bing' (tip) and moved to the north at the height of an electricity pylon. It did not seem large and was about half a mile away. He called his parents and they watched the object also, partly from outside the house (to eliminate window reflections). The object was in view about ten minutes.

Meanwhile 16-year-old William Ritchie was standing with other youths to the SW of Ormiston and had the 'bing' in clear view. Time was about 22.00 when they saw a stationary object close to the summit (about 200 feet). It hovered for ten seconds and then moved off quickly towards Elphinstone (to the north). The object was described as 30-40 feet long, and oval-shaped with a dome on top. On top of this was a red light and there were white lights on the base.

Meanwhile, at about this time, 13-year-old Brian Young of Elphinstone observed an object like a domed disc, but it has not proved possible to trace this witness for more detailed questioning.

Investigations

Investigation of these incidents has led to a plethora of theories but no solutions.

Some of the reports may relate to aircraft description distorted due to distance, but no corroborating aircraft have been found to have been in the area. The RAF advised; "We did not have anything in the air in that area." Other reports are obviously not aircraft unless the descriptions are wildly exaggerated.

Mr D. Allan Pickup from the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh said that he had received a number of calls but had disregarded them as relating to "fluorescent clouds of Barium vapour released from rockets to study airflow and the Earth's magnetic field in the upper atmosphere." However, the Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston knew of no such experiments on that day, and the Rocket Range on the Isle of Benbecula (Outer Hebrides) confirmed that there were no rocket launches that day.

Consequently, the investigation has reached a dead end. It does seem feasible that some logical explanation will be uncovered, particularly for stage 4 of this report. The behaviour of the phenomenon is certainly like that of a high flying weather balloon reflecting the setting sun. In the circumstances this seems worth bearing in mind.

However, it does not seem probable that any one object can account for all the reports, and indeed we seem to be dealing with a least four different phenomena (ie stages 1 & 4, 2 & 3,5 and 6). There are several points to note a) The descriptions of a domed like object in many of the sightings are consistent, and perhaps significantly relate very closely to the object sighted by the witnesses at New Elgin the next day (1) although this event was not publicised before appeared in *Flying Saucer Review*.

b) The objects are reported to have travelled in several different directions, therefore ruling out any suggestions that all were moving with the wind.

c) From what we know of past activities of the UFO phenomenon it is not inconceivable that the existence of an event liable to lead to many misidentifications (such as a weather balloon or a barium cloud release) is used as a blind for more genuinely UFO-orientated activities. After that, even genuine sightings will be branded as false together with the misidentifications — even if, as in this case, careful investigation proves the impossibility of this.

References

1. Randles, J. *UFO and Entity reported in Morayshire FSR* Vol. 23, No.4 of 1978.
2. See *Scottish Daily Record* of May 31, 1977.
3. See *East Lothian Courier* of May 20, 1977.