

UFOs AND SOLID LIGHT PHENOMENA IN DORSET

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This case was investigated by the author and John Ledner of Bournemouth Unexplained Phenomena Research Group and the journal *Scan*. Report prepared by Mr. Harris for UFOIN and *Flying Saucer Review*.

A NUMBER of witnesses observed an unidentified aerial phenomenon on Saturday May 21, 1977, during the 30 minute period between 10.45 and 11.15pm. Five of these witnesses reported observing a beam of light emitted by a stationary object, and three of these five reported an extending beam, or what is usually termed "solid light" in UFO literature.

The activity seems to have been centred around the Canford Heath area of Poole, Dorset, which is a fairly recent housing development built upon heathland rich in tumuli and power lines. Being somewhat above sea-level, the area commands extensive views of Poole Harbour and the surrounding countryside.

Witness No. 1: Richard Morse is a 26-year-old beach attendant of Esmonde Way, Canford Heath. He was returning home on the night in question at about 10.55, which is early for him, but he intended to have an early night as he was working the following day.

Whilst taking a short cut through woodland near his home, he noticed "dancing discs" in the sky, beaming light upward (see Fig.1). After watching this display for a few seconds, an object suddenly appeared behind cloud at about 45 degrees elevation to the left of, and a little higher than, the previous phenomenon. This object was a silvery-grey, later to become "orangey" in colour. Its size was slightly larger than the full moon, and it was "disc-shaped" with two antenna-like protrusions on the top (see Fig. 2). It is thought that these protrusions could have been short beams of light, as they vanished when, from the centre underside of the object, a whitish beam of light appeared, and extended swiftly to the ground, the end of the beam being plainly visible during its transit.

The witness watched this spectacle with mounting fear. It was a windy night, but during the 45 seconds (approximately) of the observation, the wind seemed to drop and the witness felt himself in "a vacuum" with "no air around." Being behind cloud, the object was not perfectly defined, but clear enough for its general shape to be observed. The beam, however, was clearly defined.

After a few seconds the beam "switched off" (it did not retract, but disappeared instantly like a normal light) and the object performed a "banking" manoeuvre, then sped away to the west and was out of sight almost at once. No sound was heard at any time.

The witness returned home in a state of considerable fear and shock. His disturbed condition was verified by his family who all agreed that he was shaking and sweating when he arrived home.

Richard appears to be an intelligent, well-adjusted young man and he co-operated willingly with us. We were impressed by the fact that he volunteered the description of the extending light beam, as he is unlikely to have knowledge of such phenomena without closely studying UFO literature, which does not appear to be the case. He did, however, allude to a general interest in the subject, and mentioned a previous sighting in 1968 of a "Jupiter-like" object which sped away at high speed.

Witnesses Nos. 2. & 3: A courting couple parked in a lonely lane also experienced weird phenomena on the

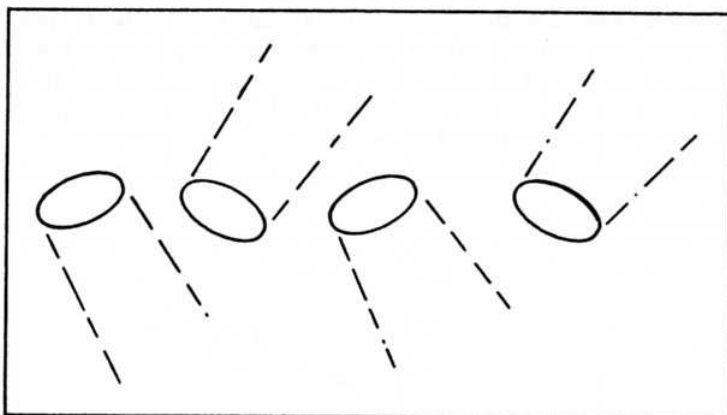
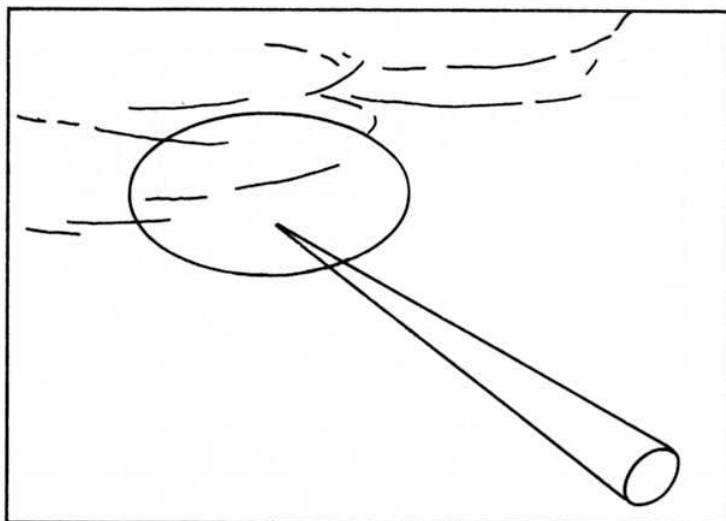


Figure 1 (above)

Figure 2 (below)



night of May 21st. Clifford Rowe, an 18-year-old electrician, son of the Bournemouth mace-bearer, of Belmont Avenue, Bournemouth, and his attractive girlfriend, 17-year-old Karen Iveson of Guernsey Road, Parkstone, were sitting in Clifford's car at about 11.00 pm. Their location was just off a lane, beside a stream and a hump-backed bridge, not far from Hurn Airport. It should be noted that the airport closes at 9.30pm and a mistaken identification of an aircraft can definitely be ruled out.

Clifford saw the object first and drew Karen's attention to it. It appeared to be some distance away, and was a very pale green cigar-shaped object, somewhat larger than the sun. The couple watched it travel at speed from east to west, passing behind a tree and emerging on the other side. Suddenly it executed a right-angled turn *downwards* and "dropped like a stone" out of sight.

The couple now became rather nervous, and Clifford started the car and drove off. They drove back to the main road which borders Hurn Airport (see Fig. 3), and when they were approaching the last set of traffic lights, almost at the end of the airport, Karen spotted the object again. This time it overtook them from behind and slightly to their right. It stopped some distance ahead of them, then Karen saw a beam of light extend swiftly from the centre of the object towards the ground (see Fig. 4). This beam was of a slightly darker green than the main object, and Karen described it as "patchy."

Clifford, who was concentrating on his driving, saw this phenomenon only briefly and did not observe the beam extending from the object. His description varied slightly from Karen's in that he saw, as well as the main beam, "...two much lighter beams about the same width coming from the object at a slight angle" (see Fig. 5).

Clifford's eyes were back on the road, so Karen

takes up the story again. After a few seconds the beam switched off (did not retract) and the object sped away to the south (in the direction of Canford Heath) and was quickly lost to sight.

After hearing both witnesses' account of their experience, we questioned them more closely on their first sighting, and why they had felt so nervous, to the point of leaving for home, when the UFO had been observed for such a short period and had been such a considerable distance away. This line of enquiry brought out information which may or may not have relevance to the UFO sighting, and which the witnesses had previously felt too unimportant to mention.

Some minutes prior to the sighting, a light flashed in two separate sequences of four flashes per sequence. These flashes illuminated the interior of the car, and when we asked if they could be likened to electronic flash, Clifford agreed that this was a fair comparison. At the time he had dismissed them as car headlights, but bearing in mind that their parking spot was lower than the level of the lane, and the main road was not visible from their location, this seems an unlikely explanation.

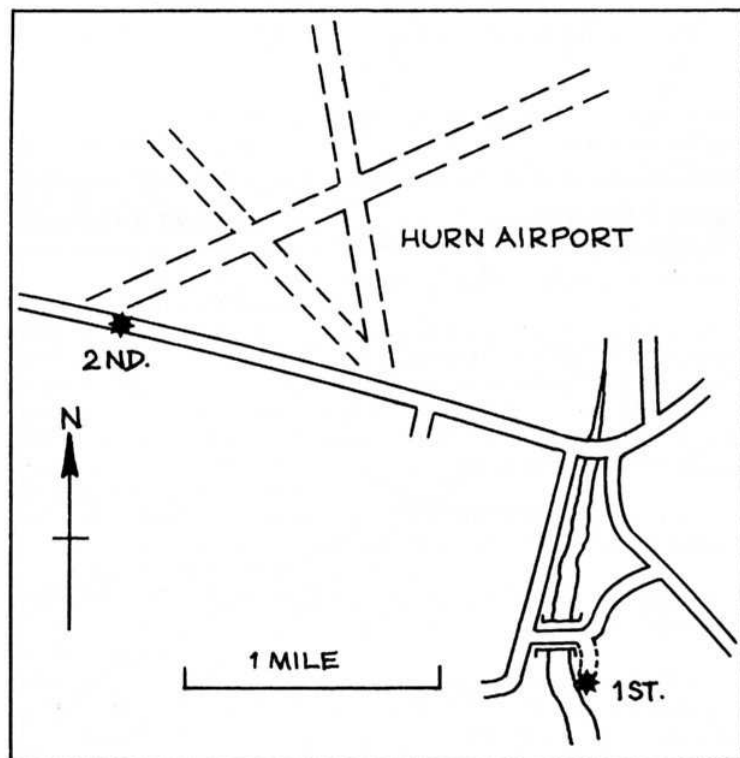
Following these flashes, and still prior to their initial sighting, the witnesses were somewhat alarmed by a "loud, prolonged bang" like someone dragging a heavy board across the road. The lane was deserted at the time, and witnesses could not account for this strange sound, so their state was already one of alarm when the UFO appeared and finally precipitated their departure.

It was established that neither witness had any previous interest or belief in UFOs. Both appeared stable, and thoroughly believable in their testimony.

Witnesses Nos. 4 & 5: Mrs Pauline Fall, a 30-year-old housewife of Heron Drive, Colehill, Wimborne, and Mrs Joan Burden of Swallow Way, Wimborne, had been into Bournemouth to see a show and were returning home in a cheerful frame of mind at about 11.10pm on May 21st, discussing the show and chatting generally. They were in Mrs Fall's car with Mrs Fall driving.

As they proceeded along Millhams Lane, Kinson, in roughly a northerly direction, a beam of intense silvery-white light struck the bonnet of the car. Mrs Burden saw this light a moment or two before Mrs

Below: Figure 3

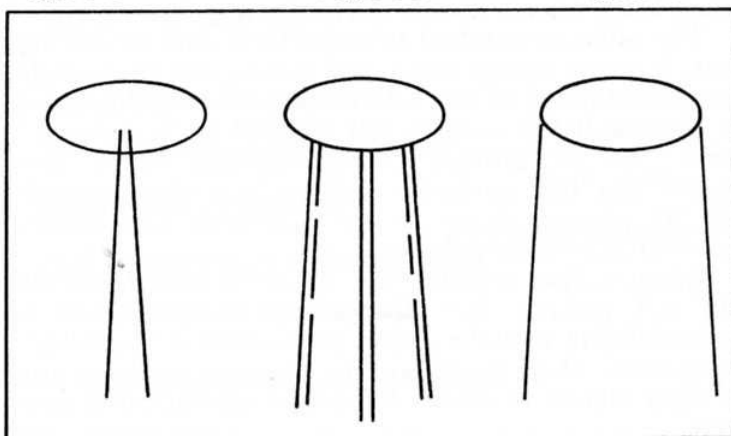


Below:

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6



Fall and witnesses' testimony at this point is of very high strangeness, indeed quite difficult to comprehend. Our close questioning regarding the following events in no way lessened their conviction of the reality of them, although they conceded that their story sounds incredible.

The beam of light that struck Mrs Fall's car emanated from a brilliant hemi-spherical source visible to her through the bottom left-hand corner of her windscreen. This silvery-orange light source, she is convinced, was some considerable distance away in spite of the fact that, at the section of road where this incident occurred, the view to the left is completely blocked by the remains of a council rubbish tip, which is now filled in and consists of large, grass-covered mounds.

Mrs Burden, who was interviewed separately, gave an almost identical account. She spoke of the unique nature of the beam, which appeared to be about 2 feet in width with very clear cut edges. It seemed to "cut through" the terrain, obliterating everything in its path yet illuminating nothing. The end of the beam was clearly visible and this was circular.

So we have a situation where two witnesses observe a beam of light directed towards their car from a brilliant source at ground level some distance away (in the exact direction of Canford Heath, incidentally) and which appears to be penetrating solid matter in the shape of the grassy mounds of the old rubbish tip.

This beam of light was not stationary, however. It swung back and forth (through 90 degrees according to Mrs Fall, 180 degrees according to Mrs Burden) striking the bonnet of Mrs Fall's car each time. As the car was moving at about 20 - 25 mph, this would suggest that the beam was following the movement of the vehicle. This was repeated several times, and appeared to change the colour of the paintwork from blue to its own silvery-white at each contact. There were no physical effects on Mrs Fall or her companion during this episode. Mrs Fall, however, was scared, and rejected her friend's suggestion that they should stop. When they reached the end of Millhams Lane, at the point where it joins the A.348, Mrs Burden looked to the left but the light had now disappeared and there was nothing to be seen.

Somewhat shaken by the experience, Mrs. Fall drove on, intent on getting home without delay. She passed through Longham, then turned left on to the B.3073 (Ham Lane) towards Wimborne. Her friend was keeping watch but could see nothing.

When just past the left-hand turning to Hampreston, Mrs Fall suddenly saw a circular object hanging motionless in the sky to their left (in the direction of Canford Heath). The object was about the size of the full moon and silvery-white in colour. From the centre of it was a cone of light beaming towards the ground (see Fig. 4: configuration identical to that of the Karen Iveson sighting). There was no movement, no detail on the object and no sound. Mrs Fall began to feel very scared and went "cold inside." Her hands, from just above the wrists downwards, went icy cold, although the rest of her body remained at normal temperature.

Mrs Burden described a slightly different phenomenon. To her it was as if a "hole" had appeared in the sky from which a beam of light "fell" to the ground. She likened this to the appearance of a carpet or rope ladder rapidly extending downward. The beam was identical to that of the earlier experience and appeared to emanate from a flat disc "like the bottom of a metal cup" (see Fig. 6).

Mrs Burden did not describe Mrs Fall's circular object, nor did she think the beam was conical, but almost parallel in shape.

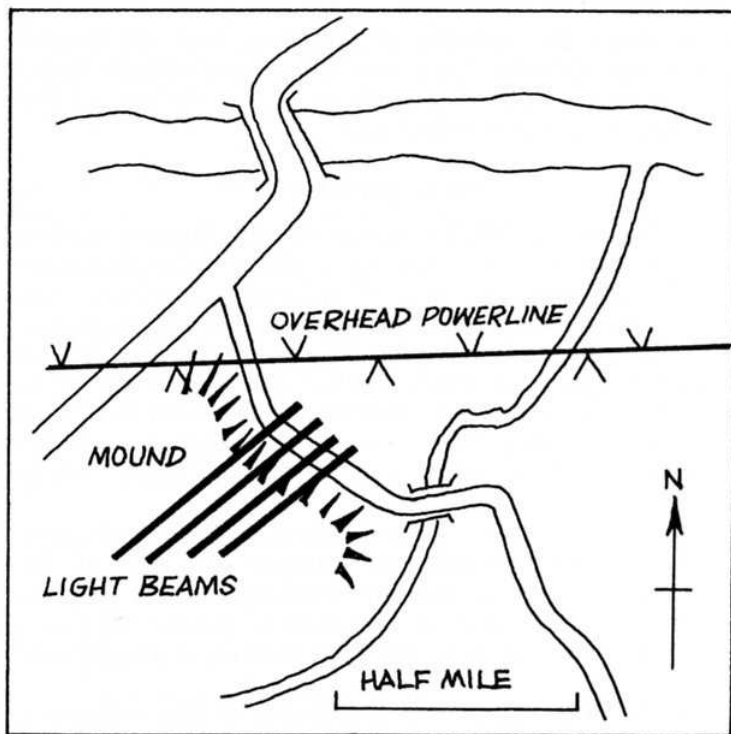
Being of an inquisitive nature, Mrs. Burden again wanted to stop, but Mrs Fall would not hear of it. After a few seconds (no more than a total of twenty) Mrs Fall described how the object suddenly "fell like a stone" to the ground and vanished. To Mrs Burden this appeared almost the same, except that she saw only the beam "falling" to the ground, the top being clearly visible. Mrs Fall drove home as quickly as possible.

When her husband saw her, he asked her if she had seen a ghost, for she looked pale and frightened (he confirmed this to us). Since the incident, Mrs Fall has been extremely nervous if out driving alone at night, and remembering the incident causes her hands still to shake. (Whilst talking to us she frequently apologised for this.)

Although Mrs. Fall did not observe any "extending" beams of light, Mrs Burden did, and the extraordinary nature of their first experience must, we feel, place it in the "solid-light" category. Both witnesses were co-operative and gave every impression of being truthful and reliable.

Other Sightings

The remaining witnesses did not see any beams of



Sketch map illustrating the location and action in Millhams Lane

light but their reports lend support to the testimony of the other witnesses.

Brian Haylett of Tatnum Road, Poole (about 2 miles from Canford Heath) was in his back garden at 11.05pm on May 21st, when a circular object appeared behind the clouds, about the size of the full moon but much brighter than that body. This object was circling the area in a tight ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile) circle at high speed (about 800 mph was Mr Haylett's estimate). Light from this object was reflecting on the cloud cover beneath it.

Mr. Haylett went indoors to fetch his son who also watched the object as it swept around a couple more times, then made off in a south-westerly direction.

Iain McNab of Tangmere Place, Gibson Road, Poole, described, in a letter to the local paper, a phenomenon identical to that reported by Mr Haylett, and at approximately the same time.

D. F. Borrett of Rowland Avenue, Poole, also reported his sighting to the local paper, but this occurred at an earlier time, and totally varied from the other reports. The following is an extract from his letter.

"Looking to the north-west at 9.00 pm we saw what appeared to be a long, narrow filament of red light with something more solid at its eastern end. It was moving slowly and steadily eastward and appeared to be rising slightly. It took half an hour to move through 30 degrees of arc, and at that time (9.30pm) it disappeared beyond the heavy bank of cloud which stretched right across the sky."

Mrs Rainback of Lake Road, Hamworthy, Poole, phoned me (L.H.) with a further report from the busy night of May 21st.

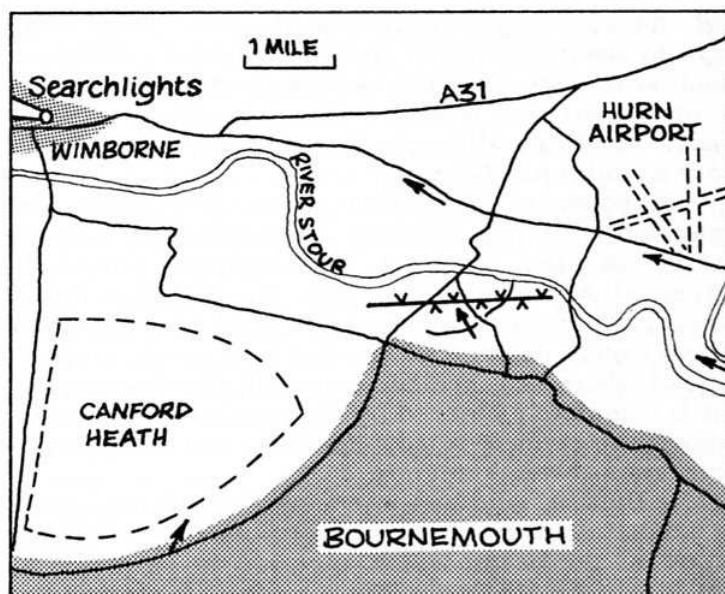
From her home, she and her family watched a formation of four whitish lights over the Purbeck Hills. Three of these lights remained quite stationary throughout the ten minute sighting, but the fourth did move slightly from the alignment. These lights were half the size of the moon, and at the end of the sighting they just blacked out.

An Explanation

Following publicity given to the beam-emitting objects, the local newspaper received an explanation of the sightings from a Wimborne gentleman, Les Scott, who was the organiser of the 22nd annual reunion of the 2nd Searchlight Regiment, Royal Artillery. Mr Scott claimed that the two searchlights used for the reunion at Wimborne between 8.30 and 11.00pm on May 21st were responsible for all the sightings, and remarked that he "had to laugh" when he read people's reactions.

A further letter was published in the local paper from a gentleman who sweepingly disposed of the sightings by describing the wartime use of searchlights, the odd effects sometimes produced, and concluded by assuring Mrs Fall that she had no cause for concern!

After listening to the testimony of the witnesses, we had grave doubts about the searchlight explanation, but nevertheless we called on Mr Scott and laid the evidence before him. At first he main-



The Canford Heath area and the searchlight location

tained that searchlights can produce some very odd phenomena, but when enlightened as to the exact nature of the sightings, he conceded that "his" searchlights could not have been responsible.

We learned from Mr Scott that the searchlights which had been used in the car park outside the British Legion Hall, Wimborne, were directed NNW on to trees in the immediate vicinity. Permission could not be obtained to beam them upward as this could interfere with air traffic, and their maximum elevation was 45 degrees. Some movements of the lights were performed, but always near ground level.

In most instances the objects did not appear in the direction of Wimborne, and the searchlights were, in fact, pointing in the *opposite direction* to the sighting locations. Our visit to the car park of the British Legion Hall in Wimborne confirmed our opinion that searchlights were not responsible for the observations. The trees at which the lights had been directed were very close at hand, and the area is hemmed-in on all sides by buildings.

Last Thoughts

Without wish to draw any erroneous conclusions, some consistencies in the reports are, we feel, worth remarking upon.

- (1) Three witnesses described the light beam extending or "falling" to the ground. This, together with the extraordinary incident of the beam apparently penetrating solid matter, would indicate a "solid-light" phenomenon of some importance.
- (2) In two instances the beam "switched off" like a normal light. No retraction reported by any witness.
- (3) The words "dropped like a stone" used in two separate incidents, that of the courting couple and Pauline Fall.
- (4) In most cases directions relate to the Canford Heath area, and the witness located in this vicinity during his sighting appeared to have the object overhead.

(5) Two witnesses reported feelings of great fear, with sweating and shaking predominant.

* * * * *

The foregoing collection of data would appear to indicate that *something* extraordinary was observed by a number of independent witnesses during the evening of May 21st, 1977. The phenomenon observed by some of these witnesses can be paralleled

at other times in other parts of the world, and is the phenomenon usually termed "solid light." That such phenomena should be observed at exactly the same time as a unique demonstration of searchlights is taking place not far away, must say something about the UFO "intelligence." What better time could there be to operate light beams, when the more mundane "light beams" will obviously be held responsible? A cunning ploy? Or are games being played with us yet again?

UFO AND ENTITY REPORTED FROM MORAYSHIRE

Jenny Randles

A special UFOIN report by the Network's Secretary. UFOIN address: 23 Sunningdale Drive, Irlam, Greater Manchester M30 6NJ. Telephone: 061 775 4749

NORTHERN SCOTLAND is a remote and largely wild region. There seems little doubt that UFO activity takes place there which is never uncovered by investigators. Partly this is because the population density is low and partly it is because there are relatively few "ufologists" in these less accessible areas. For this reason UFOIN has been keeping a check on the more prominent newspapers covering the region and occasionally advertise appeals for information in these. Such an appeal was carried in the *Sunday Post* and brought an immediate response. Bryan Hartley, the investigator who placed the appeal, received a letter from a young mother, Mrs Caroline McLennan from New Elgin in Morayshire, and this in fact turned out to refer to a landing with an entity associated.

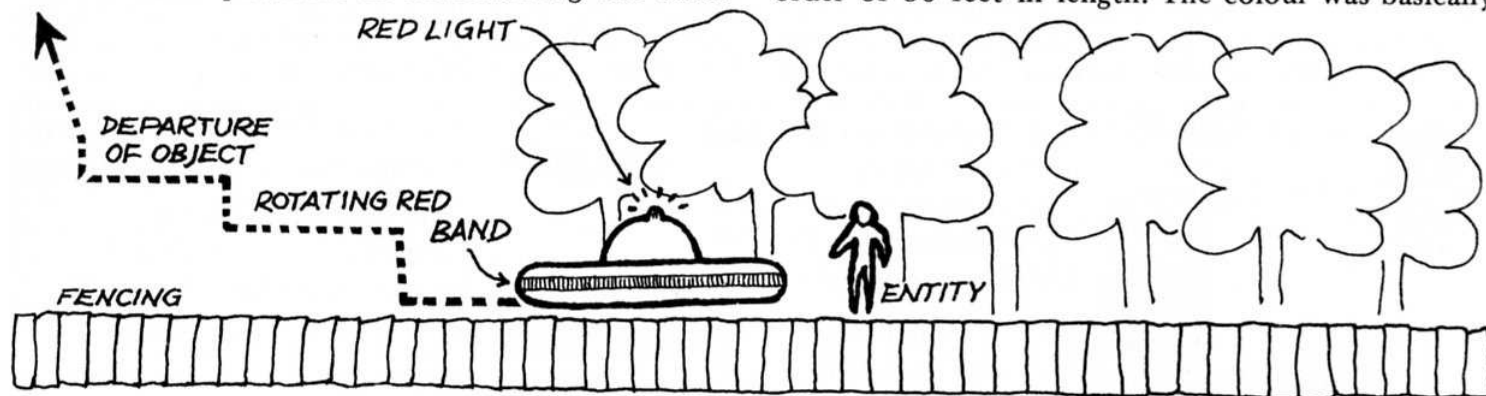
New Elgin is situated somewhat remotely in the north eastern part of the country, and on-the-spot investigation was not possible. However, interviews with the witnesses have taken place by telephone at some length, and written statements have also been obtained. The local police, and the media, have been consulted, and soil samples from the location are at present being analysed, although as these were obtained some three months after the events, it seems unlikely that anything of significance will show up.

There were problems in remembering the exact

date of the events: it was almost two months after the incidents when Mrs McLennan contacted Bryan. However, with the aid of the police this has been narrowed down to May 18, 1977 - a date which is of some interest because it places it central to a considerable flap which occurred throughout Britain during that month (and particularly during the month's second and third weeks). Since there was relatively little publicity for these events the temporal concentration on such a wide scale is of great importance.

At 6.30pm on May 18 two young girls, Karen McLennan and Fiona Morrison (both aged 10) were playing in some fields near their home. The area consists of a new housing estate with adjacent woods surrounded by fencing. The first thing that attracted their attention to anything unusual was a strange humming noise. This sound they describe as something like a helicopter when it hovers, but more of a hum, and softer. When they heard the noise they were round a corner from the woods, but the noise appeared to come from there, so they moved towards this spot to see what was causing it. It was at this point that they saw the object.

The object was made up of a long cylindrical shape with rounded ends and a small dome on top. The size was difficult to judge but they feel it was of the order of 30 feet in length. The colour was basically



Morayshire incident: the object is as drawn independently by the two young witnesses.