

ENCOUNTER AT BURRINGHAM

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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

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