

# Lightning strikes flying saucer . . .

SCOTSMAN  
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(ROGER MOSSON)

By DAVID APPLETON

Police and forensic scientists who investigated the account by a forester at Livingston, West Lothian, of his close encounter with flying saucer-like objects — two of which he claimed attacked him — said at the weekend that they had been unable to find any satisfactory explanation for his account, or of the evidence which appeared to support it.

But Mr Stuart Campbell, who investigated the incident for the British UFO Research Association, told their annual conference in Edinburgh that there could be a natural explanation for the incident — it could have been an electromagnetic phenomenon akin to ball lightning.

This could, he said, offer in general terms a reasonable explanation of how the forester, Mr Robert Taylor, apparently saw one large circular object from which two grey balls emanated, attacked his legs and left him lying unconscious.

Mr Campbell said it was possible that these could have been a form of ball lightning; that holes found at the site could have been caused by electrical discharge and tracks in the grass caused by the magnetic field. Mr Taylor's apparent loss of some minutes could have been caused by an epileptic fit triggered by these electro-magnetic phenomena. The incident happened about 10 am, which was the peak time for atmospheric electrical effects, he said.

However, there was some aspects of Mr Taylor's story which the hypothesis did not explain, such as a pair of regular tears in his trousers.

## NAVAL MINES

In November 1979, Mr Taylor was patrolling a forest path on foot after leaving his van when he turned a corner into a clearing and found what he described as a large dull grey hemispherical object with a flange round it. It appeared to be either hovering or resting on the ground, and to have dark patches at regular intervals round it.

Two smaller objects, like naval mines but with longer spikes, and the colour of emery paper, appeared from the direction of the craft, and rolled on their spikes towards Mr Taylor, each spike making sucking noises as it made contact with the ground.

They each attached one of their legs to his trousers beside the pockets, and he was alarmed by what he described as a "choking, horrible, acrid smell." He felt himself being carried towards the main object, but lost consciousness, and when he came to found himself lying on the ground.

He could not speak or walk, but managed to drag himself back to his van. He found he was unable to use his two-way radio, and then struggled home.

When the police went to the scene, they found a pair of parallel tracks, as if a giant caterpillar tractor had landed there and taken off again.

There was also a set of about 40 holes in the ground, angled at about 30 degrees, and formed in two definite patterns which were a rough mirror-image of each other. The holes contained loose earth, and there were no indications to show how they had been formed.

Mr Campbell, an architect who is now studying electromagnetism with the Open University to take his investigations further, said investigators had now reached the stage where they knew something had happened, but did not know the cause.

Sergeant Ian Wark of Lothian and Borders Police, said that they had investigated the incident because, in legal terms, Mr Taylor's statement amounted to an allegation of assault.

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From the marks on the ground, it appeared that something landed there and took off again, but they did not know what it was. No helicopter or aircraft was known to have been operating in the area at that time.

Mr Lester Knibb, a forensic scientist with Lothian and Borders Police, said that Mr Taylor had been wearing heavy police-issue trousers. There was a tear on each side which appeared to have been mechanically made.

There was no evidence of scorching which could show that Mr Taylor had been affected by a fireball, and Mr Knibb said that the felt the marks on the ground had probably not been caused by electromagnetic effects.