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A space invader they all want



DAVID BROWN and the meteorite — sadly it's only a replica

Story by BRAD WILLIAMS

A MYSTERIOUS object came flying down from outer space startling three Cleveland railwaymen.

They heard a brief roaring sound overhead. Then a dull thud in the ground at the siding they were working in just outside Middlesbrough.

They rushed to investigate thinking that the noise sounded like an alien body that had fallen to earth.

They ran past a signal box and came across a hole, the width of a saucer and a few feet deep. One of the men put his hand in it but quickly snatched it back when he discovered it was hot.

A few minutes later he tried again and this time managed to unearth a beautiful meteorite. Measuring five inches by six and weighing one and a half pounds, it was clearly an astonishing find.

Soon after the historic discovery in March 1881 experts realised that

they were dealing with one of Britain's best specimens from outer space.

Today boffins at the British Museum would love to get their hands on the shell-like stone.

And dozens of local extra-terrestrial enthusiasts would like to catch a glance of Middlesbrough's extraordinary treasure.

As far as railway technician David Brown of Granville Road, Linthorpe, is concerned the whereabouts of Middlesbrough's missing meteorite was almost more of a mystery than its origins.

The 24-year-old space researcher first discovered that Middlesbrough had made a name for itself as a meteorite landing site when he visited the Natural History Museum in London.

"There is a large display map, and on it were the words MIDDLESBROUGH in big white letters. But they only have a plaster cast of the meteorite. So I went to my local library and they knew very little about it," explains David.

His tireless trail of discovery led to the Yorkshire Museum in York where the meteorite finally came to rest. They have a fully documented account of the strange incident 102 years ago.

It was confirmed that the meteorite is exceptionally well preserved because it did not spin as it came through the earth's atmosphere.

But David Brown firmly believes that the specimen should be back in the town it landed. Instead there is an unsatisfactory replica.

There is a plaster cast of it in a cupboard at the Dorman Museum,

but it should be put on display. I'm sure there is a great deal of interest in it, so why should it be 50 miles away?"

Now he wants to start a public appeal to establish who owns the space object, and to find out how a space in Cleveland could be made for it.

But Dr. Robert Hutchinson, curator of meteorites at the British Natural History Museum, says he'd like the specimen to be on display in London.

"The configuration of the Middlesbrough meteorite is very good and we would very much like to add it to our collection. Only 20 meteorites have dropped and been found in this country in the last 200 years," says Dr. Hutchinson.

A spokesman for the Yorkshire Museum stressed that there were no plans to allow the meteorite to fly out of its glass case. Not now, or at any time in the future.