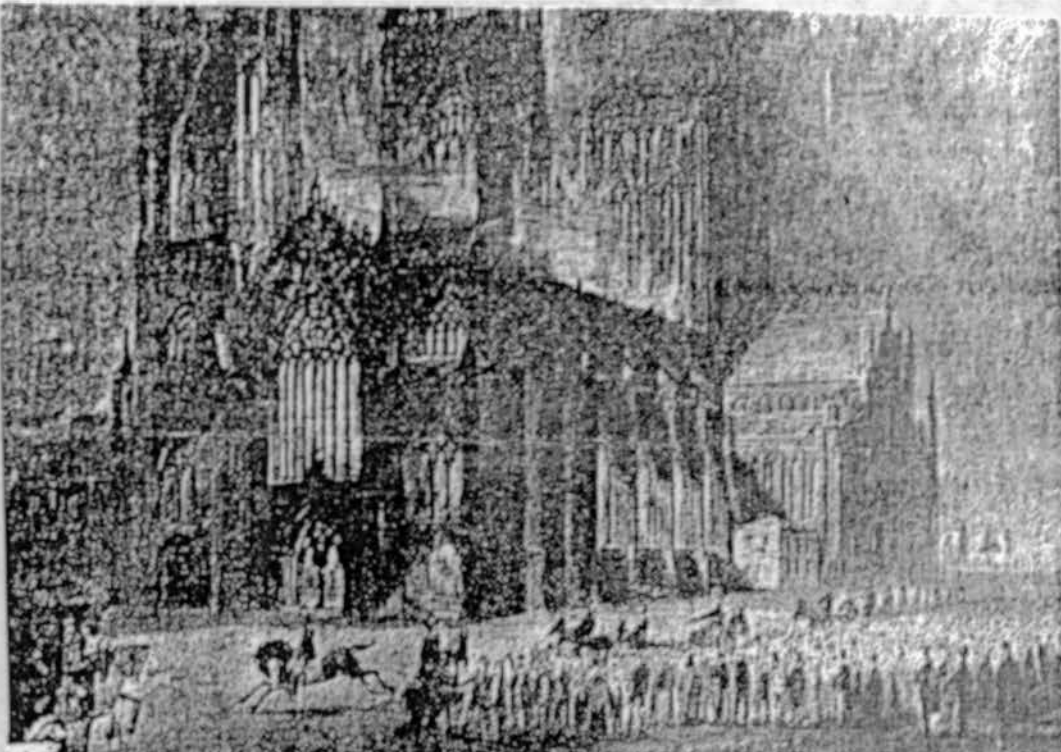


2430



● The Minster blaze in 1840: Horseguards hold back the crowds. The picture was sent in by an Acomb family who found it in their attic shortly after the recent blaze.

REPORTS that the blaze at York Minster may have been caused by a UFO attack have provoked a tremendous response from Express readers.

One has even suggested that the raiders from space may actually have landed the night of the fire.

Despite a stream of phone calls from readers backing up the UFO sighting by two York men, churchmen and representatives of the police and fire brigade have dismissed the bizarre blaze theory.

Minster spokesman Canon Michael Bowering was quoted in some national newspapers as saying: "That's very interesting. I have these chaps seen opticians [sight] UFOs. I look forward rather more to seeing the official fire report. When it comes out, I'm an agnostic."

York police are keeping straight-faced about the incident: "The police always look into any report. In this case, we have not been made aware of any evidence to support the suggestion that there were UFOs."

The fire brigade has the same view: "We have looked at every plausible cause and investigated it. This is not considered to be plausible."

National newspapers and local television stations followed up the Express' exclusive coverage of the UFO story.

Readers were not slow in reporting what they saw the night the Minster burned.

Readers' reports of sightings that night have suggested that the Zeppelin-shaped spaceship described by Eddie Acaster and Bill Whitehead looked more like a flying saucer or a silver ball.

One of the first people to call the Express described the two drivers' UFO sighting in similar terms. The woman, who does not want to be identified saw the UFO at the time the Minster caught fire.

"At first, I thought it was

## Express UFO story causes a sensation

part of the moon. It was orange like the shape of a rugby ball," said the woman, a pensioner living in Bootham.

Earlier, that Sunday night, Mrs Sue Taylor and her husband were returning by car to their home at 19 Chestnut Crescent, Holme on Spalding Moor, from a trip to Manchester.

"My husband stopped the car and said: 'There's a UFO'. It was pointed at the top, like a spinning top, and reddish in colour. I saw it for a matter of seconds and then it just disappeared," said Mrs Taylor.

### Remarkable

Mrs Mary Phillips, a housewife of Springfield Road, Poppleton, made a UFO sighting just a week before the Minster fire.

"It was a beautiful clear night, and there was a single cloud in the sky with flying saucers going and coming from it. I watched for about an hour," she said.

Mr Bramwell Taylor, aged 55, of Eastbourne Grove, Heworth, is a keen star spotter, but he was not looking through his telescope when he caught sight of a UFO the night the Minster caught fire.

"I saw a silver ball flash

parallel across the sky — just above house height. It was moving extremely fast," said Mr Taylor, who is retired from the electricity board. He made a sighting of a similar object around 15 years ago, which was spotted by two companions.

A Clifton woman — who does not wish to be identified — called in to the Express to say she had seen the unusual orange coloured lightning which Eddie Acaster talked about in last week's paper.

"I have never seen anything like it before," said the mother of two, who doesn't believe in UFOs.

"It wasn't like a lightning flash — it was straight, like a sword marking out the sky. Every few seconds there was a swish and this straight orange coloured light."

The 32-year-old woman's description was remarkably similar to what Mr Acaster saw. She added: "Whatever he said he saw, I can understand it because I thought it was really weird."

But that was not all the woman saw. "I was convinced I saw something reflected in the front window. I thought it was

a face — it looked like a short person.

"I just saw the head and neck and because of the light, it looked as if it was shining. By the time I turned round it was gone and the flashing carried on as usual. I felt creepy," she added.

Mrs Mair Thomas, of 10 Brompton Road, York, also saw the "lightning".

"It was like a ball of orange fire coming down and going up again — you would swear it was on an elastic band. I have never seen anything like that," said 46-year-old Mrs Thomas.

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