

Close encounter a Whitehall man wanted kept secret

THE two teenage girls burst into the house panting, blurring out their words... "We've seen this object!"

"It were some flying thing! It landed right near us! It weren't a helicopter, and it weren't an aeroplane!"

Still breathless and incoherent, the two 14-year-olds, Lynsey Tebbs and Susan Pearson, tried to explain.

The grown-up trying to make sense of it all was Jean Passmore, Lynsey's aunt. She thought the girls were fooling around, having her on.

Mrs Passmore ran her own art class, and her reaction was swift: Separate the two girls, give them pencil and paper, and get them to draw what they'd seen. Unable to put their heads together, they would be sure to give themselves away.

Their adventure had begun at half-past six that icy evening, Thursday November 22, 1979. Lynsey had been called on by Susan to go sledging on the Woodhouse Ridge on the outskirts of Leeds.

LIGHTS

Up on the lonely ridge, suddenly they were conscious of a bright luminosity and saw a cluster of lights that appeared to be little more than a hundred feet up.

A closer look disclosed three green lights in a line, shining directly downwards, with a much larger crimson one underneath; the colours strangely fluorescent and metallic.

Half-blinded by the lights, the girls could just discern an oval shape, with fins at either extremity. It was making no sound at all and was quite unlike any aircraft they'd seen. For the first time they began to feel fear.

Suddenly the object emitted a shrill whine and began spiralling down like a leaf. It seemed to have sensed their presence and they were too frightened to move or speak. Then it slowed down, straightened, the high-pitched whine gave way to a hum, and the object settled itself on the ground only 30 feet away.

About the size of a small car, it still seemed to be watching them. Without a word they began edging along the ridge



Sketch impression of the sighting at the time

in the shadow of a wall before breaking into a run.

Fifty yards along the ridge towards home curiosity overcame fear and they stopped to look back. Suddenly the object rose, slowly and uncertainly, lights flickering, as though undecided what to do next.

Humming softly, it again seemed to be approaching the girls, aware of their movement, seeking them out.

Then at about 100 feet it banked sharply round and descended, disappearing behind the trees down the slope. Emboldened, the two girls retraced their steps to get a clear view.

The object was perched awkwardly on a steep incline some 30 yards down the slope. Still apprehensive, but tingling with excitement, the girls felt irresistibly drawn to the scene.

PATH

They watched for what seemed about two minutes, and then the object began to wobble before ascending smoothly, as though under much firmer control. Eventually it narrowed into a single speck of light before finding invisibility in the sky.

Not until then did they resume their scamper for the nearest safety: Mrs Passmore's house.

When Jean Passmore examined the drawings made by the girls, she was impressed by their similarity.

She hadn't believed them at first, but she was changing her mind. They must have seen something.

"Show me where it happened," she said.

She walked along the top path with the girls and a neighbour, but there was nothing to be seen. Someone told the Press, and the incident was reported in a Leeds newspaper on the Saturday, with the girls' drawings as illustrations.

This attracted the attention of two experienced Yorkshire ufologists, the brothers Graham and Mark Birdsall of Leeds. They called on the Tebbs family that evening and met the two girls.

For the girls the initial excitement was over, and they were getting bored with answering the same questions—but they talked openly enough and accompanied the Birdsalls on Sunday morning, the first chance the investigators had had of examining the area in daylight.

The girls led them to what they believed was the exact position astride the path where the object had first alighted.

The cold weather had preserved the snow on the slopes but the path had been trampled. All the Birdsalls found was a half-circular depression in the hard ice on



Scene of the UFO landing near Leeds and (inset), Lynsey today

by RALPH BARKER

the edge of the path which might have been anything.

Below them lay the area, about 30 feet square, which the girls had indicated as the site of the second landing.

They began to notice cavities in the snow. And as they sketched them on their notepads, these became recognisable as E-shaped depressions, with a circular hole in the middle.

A few inches from one of these depressions they spotted a conical piece of ice. When they placed it in the circular hole it fitted exactly.

Embedded in this lump of ice were a number of black particles or stones, and they remembered seeing something similar on the first landing site. They retraced their steps

SIMPLE

Just off the path, unnoticed on their first inspection, was the top half of a distinct E-shape, the bottom half presumably trampled into oblivion. The circular piece of ice was missing, perhaps kicked away, but there were black particles nearby.

Could these shaped depressions have been made by the object seen by the girls, or was there a simple explanation? Surely if so, or if they resulted from a natural thawing, they would occur elsewhere on the slope?

The brothers spent the next two hours scouring the area, but nowhere else did they find

anything resembling these E-shaped depressions.

Meanwhile two ambulance men in the Pontefract area saw the report of the sighting—and the drawings—in the Yorkshire paper and wrote in to say that later that night they too had seen an object and reported it; only to be met with ridicule by their mates.

They were struck by the similarity—oval-shaped, with fins either end—between their object and that seen by the girls.

It remained for the Birdsalls to deliver their samples to the Department of Agricultural Science at Leeds University for analysis, and await results.

On the Monday the Tebbs family had another visitor: he was, he announced, a Government official. He wanted to question the girls.

Lynsey's father Tony is sure he checked the man's identity, but it's eight years ago and he remembers little of him. What he does recall is the conversation he had with him.

Tebbs was surprised to learn that there was a Government department which looked into reports of U.F.O. sightings. "Have other people seen these things, then?" he asked. "Oh yes," said the

visitor. "I can assure you they have."

"Do you believe what the girls say?" asked Tebbs.

"I can assure you they've seen something."

"What makes you so sure?" "I can tell by their answers to the questions I asked. I'd have found out if they weren't speaking the truth."

"What did they see?" "I can't say at this stage what it was, but it'll be best if you and the girls don't discuss it further. We won't be bothering you again."

RADAR

What was it that the girls saw? Why was officialdom so secretive? Was it some remote-controlled experimental machine that went wrong?

Was it the rumoured "stealth" aircraft, silent in flight and with reduced radar image, in some sort of trouble?

Was it a space craft? Analysis of the samples proved nothing. No explanation was ever forthcoming.

Lynsey and Susan are 22 now. Both are married and Lynsey has an eight-week-old baby.

Neither girl has ever wavered from her story.

Next: Theirs or one of ours?