

OCT 28 1988

A dazzling encounter

by MAURICE ROTHEROE

The Ministry of Defence is investigating a report that an Unidentified Flying Object may have been circulating in the Felinfach area last Friday evening.

A 36-year-old Lampeter motor mechanic says that he and his wife and daughter had a "Close Encounter of the Third Kind" when driving home to Ciliau Aeron from work.

"As we drove past Theatr Felinfach in our Mark II Escort at about 7 p.m. the whole interior of the car was illuminated by a brilliant greenish light", said Mr. Tony Silvestri, who works for B and S Spares in Lampeter.

"My wife Gwendoline and our eight-year-old daughter Allana were both very frightened.

"The light was so bright that I could not see through the windscreen or out of the windows.

"It only lasted for a few seconds but it

couldn't have been caused by car headlights because it was so brilliant and the wrong colour.

"I immediately pulled over to the side of the road and stopped, but I could see nothing wrong with the car and there was nothing outside that I could see that might have caused it.

"I haven't seen the film 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind', but it sounds as if it might have been a similar experience to the effects in that".

In the film, residents of a small rural area in America are dazzled in their vehicles at night by brilliant green lights emanating from a flying saucer.

Mr. Silvestri said he gave his car a thorough electrical check the following morning and all his tests showed no faults.

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but there was nothing wrong with the car at all", he said.

"Anyway the light was far too brilliant to be caused by a car electrical fault".

He said the incident occurred as the family drove past a transformer on the side of the road.

"I thought it was possible that it might have been a short in that", he said. "But I went along to look at the transformer on Saturday and that was okay too".

Mr. Silvestri was interviewed yesterday (Tuesday) by Flight Sergeant Dave Pengilly, of RAF Brawdy, Pembrokeshire, who is responsible for checking UFO reports.

He said he was passing on the information to the Ministry of Defence, who would continue the investigation into Mr. Silvestri's report.

"Because it happened a few days ago, it may be difficult to trace back, but the incident will be investigated by the MOD", said Flt. Sgt. Pengilly.

"We like to get reports immediately an incident happens, so that the MOD can take immediate action to find out what it was.

"Most of the incidents reported - and we only have two or three a year - turn out to be quite explainable.

"For instance a few weeks ago a woman reported seeing a bright orange light which hung in the air 60 ft above the ground near the M4 in the Carmarthen area. She reported that it stayed there for 20 minutes.

"In the end it was proved to be a hot air balloon hovering at dusk and doing a burn to keep the heat up until its escort crew arrived to

allow it to land.

"The lady was convinced it was a UFO and we will never convince her otherwise.

"Another possible cause of UFO reports is the planet Venus, which can be very bright and low in the sky at certain times of the year and people mistake that for a UFO.

"Car headlights on the bluff of a hill can also be mistaken for UFOs.

"But each report of this kind is always investigated.

"We don't like unidentified things in our airspace. We have to check there is no threat to security and then we want to know, for instance, why that balloon was flying at dusk when the regulations say it should be on the ground.

"In the case of Mr. Silvestri, if the source of light wasn't from inside the car, then it must have come from outside.

"Car sunroofs often produce strange effects, when they go under sodium lighting, for example. But the light must have got into the car from some source outside".

Most low-flying jet aircraft over West Wales take off from RAF Brawdy, and Flt. Sgt. Pengilly is also responsible for dealing with public complaints about these.

Commented Mr. Silvestri: "Although my car has a sunroof, I still don't know where the brilliant light could have come from.

"We travel along the stretch of road every night and this is the first time anything like this has happened. It is really bugging me".

He added: "I hope this chap from RAF Brawdy can throw some light on it!".