



'Close encounter' put George on the trail of UFOs

"WE'VE got rid of most of the cranks, although we still get some calling us," says burly prison officer George Wild. But as one of the country's leading authorities on unidentified flying objects — UFOs — you must expect a few strange encounters.

Mr Wild, of Ossett, a member of the Leeds-based Yorkshire UFO Society and organiser of the world's first International UFO Conference, to be held in Ossett Town Hall next September, has devoted the past 25 years to the study of Unidentified Flying Objects.

He has travelled the country searching for sightings and dealing with people who have had their own close encounters.

It all started in 1953 when Mr Wild was doing his National Service and spotted a strange sight in the sky. From a small brush with the extra-terrestrial, great things have grown.

Up until two years ago, he worked largely on his own carrying out personal research into sightings around the country. Then he was asked to join the Yorkshire UFO Society and is now a member of the board of directors that makes up Quest Publications International Ltd — the monthly magazine the society sends out to 16 countries.

Research

The YUFOS boasts a strong research and back-up team comprising members taken from almost every profession, including professors, teachers and policemen. "There is a tremendous amount of interest in UFOs," said Mr Wild. "Since we started our 24-hour 'hot line' at the beginning of this

year we have 850 callers reporting sightings."

"UFO sightings are reported every 17 seconds all over the world and there have been a 1,000 in Britain so far this year," said Mr Wild.

In the Wakefield area alone there have been more than 60 reported sightings in just one week. Rothwell boasts an unusually large share of out-of-this-world activity and not a night goes by without something mysterious being seen by the faithful band of "sky-watchers" who keep an eye on the heavens.

"If we are not right about UFOs, what are all these people — crackers?" asks Mr Wild.

The YUFOS keep a comprehensive filing system listing each recorded sighting from across the country and researchers, Mr Wild included, travel miles to see the people who claim sightings.

By Jodie Wainwright

"We offer a counselling service to help people understand what has happened to them to the best of our ability. We can't tell them what they've seen because we don't know," he said.

But from the immense amount of information gathered on the society's six-page Sighting Report Form, he and his fellow researchers can see patterns emerging. Tumbling triangular shapes with shining lights or 700ft long cigar shaped crafts are some of the more common sightings around this area.

"We collect all this information to draw people's attention to UFOs," said Mr Wild.

"Governments are keeping the information they have very quiet. They know they are there, but cover it up. If we don't do it, no-one will. We collate all our

information so that we can solve the mystery behind UFOs."

With all the information that his large filing system can offer Mr Wild can tell some terrifying stories about people who have called on him and the rest of the YUFOS team.

Interest

"There is a tremendous amount of interest in UFOs at the moment but 12 years ago it was a struggle to maintain the society," said Mr Wild who is looking forward to hosting the International UFO Conference on September 23.

Speakers from Belgium, Germany and France have been invited to the show and YUFOS consultant,

Timothy Good, the writer of "Above Top Secret" which chronicles the world-wide coverage of Ufology, is also set to attend the conference.

When Mr Wild retires from his job as a chief prison officer next year he is hoping to devote yet more of his time to tracking down UFOs, although his wife might not be too keen. "Women don't get too involved," he said. "Wives come to meetings and make sandwiches and tea but they are not really interested in it."

Call Mr Wild a "crank" and you get short shrift in return — he is well-respected around Wakefield where he was a prison officer for ten years, and well-known in Ossett.

And he believes he has enough information at his fingertips to convince the most sceptical disbelievers.

□ Above: four artist's impressions faithfully constructed from detailed descriptions of sightings.

□ George Wild studying the sky over Ossett with Quest magazine's features editor Mark Birdsall.

