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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:09,800

Over the last 30 years, there have been thousands of reported sightings of unidentified flying

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00:00:09,800 --> 00:00:13,800

objects over the British Isles.

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00:00:13,800 --> 00:00:18,600

You think I'm bloodied up, but this is a UFO.

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00:00:18,600 --> 00:00:23,400

In the summer of 2008, reports of flying saucers and other crafts were capturing the headlines

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00:00:23,400 --> 00:00:27,560

again.

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00:00:27,560 --> 00:00:32,760

Over the years, numerous eyewitnesses, including military personnel, police officers and experienced

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00:00:32,760 --> 00:00:38,560

airline pilots have testified to seeing strange lights in the sky and other mysterious phenomena.

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00:00:38,560 --> 00:00:43,560

Oh, my God. Very bright yellow object.

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00:00:43,560 --> 00:00:48,560

It was nothing like an airplane that I'd ever seen before.

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00:00:48,560 --> 00:00:52,560

It's the brightest light I've ever seen in my life.

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00:00:52,560 --> 00:00:57,560

Many of these UFO sightings remain unexplained to this day.

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00:00:57,560 --> 00:01:00,560

But what or who were they?

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00:01:00,560 --> 00:01:05,560

Could they really be evidence of extraterrestrial life?

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00:01:05,560 --> 00:01:11,560

It's a strange, small red light. Weird. It's coming this way.

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00:01:11,560 --> 00:01:13,560

It's definitely coming this way.

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00:01:13,560 --> 00:01:18,560

It was just something out of science fiction for me. It was totally unbelievable.

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00:01:18,560 --> 00:01:24,560

Tonight, we hear firsthand from those who witnessed them and examine the truth behind

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00:01:24,560 --> 00:01:29,560

some of Britain's most celebrated UFO sightings.

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00:01:49,560 --> 00:01:56,560

In 1977, Broadhaven in West Wales became notorious as a UFO hotspot.

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00:01:56,560 --> 00:02:01,560

There have been a number of calls to the police station. Every call referred to objects in the sky.

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00:02:01,560 --> 00:02:06,560

Dozens of witnesses claim to have seen mysterious lights and objects around the village.

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00:02:06,560 --> 00:02:14,560

There was an orange object, which seemed to be split into five, one or two segments.

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00:02:14,560 --> 00:02:18,560

The number of sightings left locals shocked.

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00:02:18,560 --> 00:02:20,560

Experts baffled.

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00:02:20,560 --> 00:02:22,560

We could offer no explanation.

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00:02:22,560 --> 00:02:26,560

And even sparked a Ministry of Defence investigation.

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00:02:26,560 --> 00:02:32,560

The Ministry don't tend to do investigations of UFO sightings. It's extremely unusual.

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00:02:32,560 --> 00:02:37,560

The phenomenon would become known as the Broadhaven Triangle.

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00:02:45,560 --> 00:02:51,560

In February 1977, nine-year-old David Davis was playing with his friends

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00:02:51,560 --> 00:02:56,560

when they noticed something strange in the field behind their school.

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00:03:00,560 --> 00:03:08,560

A silver cigar-shaped object about the size of a bus popped up from behind some trees

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00:03:08,560 --> 00:03:10,560

as if it was trying to take off.

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00:03:10,560 --> 00:03:16,560

I don't know whether it was stuck, but it seemed to pause for about two or three seconds

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00:03:16,560 --> 00:03:19,560

and then disappear back behind the trees again.

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00:03:22,560 --> 00:03:26,560

It was only a matter of seconds that I actually saw the object,

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00:03:26,560 --> 00:03:31,560

but it imprinted itself on my memory forever.

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00:03:34,560 --> 00:03:37,560

The children ran back inside and alerted their teachers.

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00:03:38,560 --> 00:03:43,560

Ralph Thuelyn, who was the headmaster of Broadhaven School at the time,

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00:03:43,560 --> 00:03:50,560

he got us all together and in exam situations he got us to draw what we've seen

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00:03:50,560 --> 00:03:52,560

and describe it as well.

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00:03:54,560 --> 00:03:58,560

At the time of the sighting, Hugh Turnbull was chief reporter

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00:03:58,560 --> 00:04:00,560

for local paper The Western Telegraph.

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00:04:01,560 --> 00:04:06,560

I had a call to say that the children at Broadhaven School had seen something remarkable.

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00:04:06,560 --> 00:04:12,560

They didn't actually say they'd seen aliens, they didn't say they'd seen this thing hovering overhead.

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00:04:12,560 --> 00:04:14,560

They'd seen something inexplicable.

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00:04:17,560 --> 00:04:20,560

Hugh drove down to the school to interview the group of children

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00:04:20,560 --> 00:04:23,560

who were aged between nine and eleven years old.

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00:04:23,560 --> 00:04:26,560

He wasn't anticipating what they were about to tell him.

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00:04:27,560 --> 00:04:33,560

I spoke to the head teacher Ralph Thuelyn and he showed me some of the drawings that the children had done.

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00:04:33,560 --> 00:04:37,560

And it was evident that there was some similarity between the drawings.

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00:04:37,560 --> 00:04:41,560

Some were a bit far out, some showed alien figures, some didn't.

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00:04:41,560 --> 00:04:46,560

But in general they were showing the same sort of object, the same shape of object.

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00:04:46,560 --> 00:04:52,560

And having those pictures made it obviously a very much more exciting story.

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00:04:56,560 --> 00:05:01,560

Initially skeptical about the story, Hugh decided to retrace the children's steps.

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00:05:01,560 --> 00:05:07,560

He asked one of them, David Davis, to take him back to the place where the object had been seen.

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00:05:08,560 --> 00:05:14,560

I took a look around the field, we were looking really for any sign that an object had been there,

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00:05:14,560 --> 00:05:17,560

be it from this planet or another planet.

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00:05:17,560 --> 00:05:20,560

There were no cut eyes or tracks or anything,

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00:05:20,560 --> 00:05:27,560

but a telegraph pole cross member had been dislodged and was now sort of sitting at 45 degrees.

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00:05:30,560 --> 00:05:33,560

Their journey took them past the gates of the local sewage works,

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00:05:33,560 --> 00:05:37,560

which lay directly behind the field where the sighting had occurred.

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00:05:40,560 --> 00:05:46,560

Liz Philpot, an administrator at the school at the time, had her own theory as to what the children might have seen.

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00:05:47,560 --> 00:05:53,560

Later in the afternoon we walked down the lane to the sewage depot,

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00:05:53,560 --> 00:06:02,560

and there were big wrought iron gates there, so we rattled on those until someone came out and it was the man in charge.

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00:06:02,560 --> 00:06:13,560

And I asked him, in confidence, to tell me whether or not his men had driven a tanker down into the field.

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00:06:14,560 --> 00:06:20,560

And he said, absolutely not, no way could we get down there.

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00:06:22,560 --> 00:06:26,560

I think these children, whatever they saw, it was something unusual,

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00:06:26,560 --> 00:06:30,560

and a sewage tanker I don't think would have fitted into that category.

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00:06:30,560 --> 00:06:35,560

Also, it would have been a very difficult place to get a sewage tanker into, because it was steep.

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00:06:35,560 --> 00:06:39,560

I think the weather had been wet, so there would have been signs of tire tracks.

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00:06:40,560 --> 00:06:47,560

Many of us came from farming backgrounds, so we knew it wasn't anything agricultural.

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00:06:50,560 --> 00:06:55,560

Persuaded by the children's testimony, Hugh decided to run the story.

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00:06:57,560 --> 00:07:04,560

I think I recognized immediately that this was a much bigger story than we had had previously about UFOs.

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00:07:04,560 --> 00:07:12,560

I don't think I realized how the story would take off, and it would become a major international news event in the way that it did.

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00:07:25,560 --> 00:07:33,560

In the winter of 1977, a group of children in Wales claimed to have seen a spacecraft hovering behind their school playing field.

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00:07:34,560 --> 00:07:40,560

When the story hit the newsstands, Broadhaven, a small seaside village with only 600 residents,

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00:07:40,560 --> 00:07:44,560

suddenly found itself the focus of intense public interest.

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00:07:52,560 --> 00:07:57,560

An investigation has begun into a claim that something strange came out of the skies

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00:07:57,560 --> 00:08:01,560

and landed in the Welsh village of Broadhaven, near Haverford West.

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00:08:01,560 --> 00:08:05,560

Whatever it was, was spotted by children from the local school.

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00:08:09,560 --> 00:08:17,560

We just couldn't carry on normal lessons. The phone was going off every couple of minutes.

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00:08:17,560 --> 00:08:24,560

We were even getting researchers and interviewers from as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, America,

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00:08:24,560 --> 00:08:27,560

all wanting to talk to the people who had seen the flying saucer.

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00:08:28,560 --> 00:08:35,560

The incident at Broadhaven Primary School appeared to be a baffling one-off event.

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00:08:41,560 --> 00:08:45,560

Until reports of other strange sightings began to surface.

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00:08:45,560 --> 00:08:53,560

Five miles from Broadhaven in the village of Herbrandston, Maureen Diter also witnessed something for which she had no rational explanation.

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00:08:53,560 --> 00:08:58,560

I was out one day during the week having a bit of fresh air at night

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00:08:58,560 --> 00:09:06,560

and I happened to look up in the sky and I saw this cylindrical object with light on it and it was going very fast.

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00:09:06,560 --> 00:09:11,560

So it was only a question of really seconds that I actually saw it.

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00:09:11,560 --> 00:09:15,560

And I thought, what's that? I couldn't believe my eyes.

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00:09:18,560 --> 00:09:22,560

The village of Littlehaven lies one mile down the coast from Broadhaven.

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00:09:24,560 --> 00:09:32,560

Local resident Dorothy Cale was setting off from home one evening when she too observed something strange.

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00:09:32,560 --> 00:09:47,560

We went out from our house which was on the cliff top at Littlehaven and there were some flashes, very, very bright flashes, which lit up the whole village.

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00:09:48,560 --> 00:09:58,560

All of a sudden there was a very strong light. The driver put her foot hard on the brake quickly.

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00:10:00,560 --> 00:10:07,560

There was the brightest light I've ever seen in my life and it appeared to be inside a glass dome.

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00:10:08,560 --> 00:10:15,560

Well, it took our breath away really. We always looked at it. Nobody said a word. This was a strange thing.

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00:10:16,560 --> 00:10:24,560

None of us said a word and then all of a sudden we didn't see it lift up or go anywhere. It was just gone. It flashed and it was gone.

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00:10:26,560 --> 00:10:32,560

And our driver said, what on earth was that?

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00:10:34,560 --> 00:10:38,560

The light resembled nothing Dorothy had ever seen before.

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00:10:39,560 --> 00:10:44,560

But astronomer Ian Ridpath has been investigating UFO sightings for over 20 years.

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00:10:44,560 --> 00:10:49,560

He believes there's usually a very straightforward explanation for such strange lights in the sky.

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00:10:50,560 --> 00:10:58,560

People in general don't know the sky very well, the night sky, and people can very easily be fooled by the sight of a bright star or planet,

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00:10:58,560 --> 00:11:02,560

particularly when it's low down and particularly when it's twinkling.

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00:11:02,560 --> 00:11:08,560

And at night there is really no way to estimate the size and distance of an object

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00:11:08,560 --> 00:11:15,560

and people can think that something is actually much closer to them than really it is.

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00:11:16,560 --> 00:11:19,560

Whatever the cause, the sightings in the area continued.

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00:11:21,560 --> 00:11:25,560

Like the incident at the primary school, some involved more than one eyewitness.

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00:11:25,560 --> 00:11:30,560

Stephen Bamford and Robert Best were returning home to Broad Haven after a night out

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00:11:30,560 --> 00:11:33,560

when they noticed something unusual out at sea.

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00:11:33,560 --> 00:11:35,560

We probably saw the people before we saw the object.

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00:11:35,560 --> 00:11:37,560

Yeah, we wondered what they were all looking at.

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00:11:39,560 --> 00:11:41,560

We assumed it was probably the cliff was on fire.

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00:11:41,560 --> 00:11:46,560

It did look like a fire, but it was obviously out to sea and it moved from right to left.

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00:11:46,560 --> 00:11:52,560

It was an orange object which seemed to be split into several...

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00:11:52,560 --> 00:11:58,560

One or two segments and then we thought we'd be brave and drive out there

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00:11:58,560 --> 00:12:02,560

or drive in the general direction to see if we could sort of find whatever it was.

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00:12:04,560 --> 00:12:08,560

And then as it moved across, or they moved across, did they just trump and disappear?

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00:12:08,560 --> 00:12:09,560

Diminished on itself.

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00:12:13,560 --> 00:12:17,560

The men could think of no obvious explanation for what they'd seen.

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00:12:18,560 --> 00:12:21,560

I thought it might have been a harvest moon or something at first.

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00:12:21,560 --> 00:12:24,560

You don't get a harvest moon at about one in the morning.

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00:12:24,560 --> 00:12:26,560

It would have been a ship or something like that.

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00:12:26,560 --> 00:12:30,560

It couldn't have been in front of the cliffs at one moment and behind the cliffs at the next.

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00:12:30,560 --> 00:12:36,560

So it was a very strange anomaly and that's why everybody was stood out here watching it.

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00:12:37,560 --> 00:12:43,560

Psychologist Chris French has made a study of the reliability of such eyewitness testimony.

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00:12:43,560 --> 00:12:47,560

Now situations where we've actually got evidence from multiple witnesses

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00:12:47,560 --> 00:12:51,560

and that evidence seems to be selling pretty much the same story.

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00:12:51,560 --> 00:12:53,560

Everybody is saying the same thing.

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00:12:53,560 --> 00:13:00,560

Then we're quite likely to give that kind of evidence much more weight than single, uncorroborated testimony.

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00:13:00,560 --> 00:13:06,560

But one thing we should bear in mind is that when people see something unusual, such as a possible UFO sighting,

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00:13:06,560 --> 00:13:10,560

then they will actually discuss what they've seen with each other.

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00:13:10,560 --> 00:13:18,560

And we've got lots of good experimental evidence to show that one person's account of what they've seen can actually influence another.

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00:13:20,560 --> 00:13:27,560

But with the sightings continuing to flood in, many were convinced that something strange was happening in Broadhaven.

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00:13:27,560 --> 00:13:30,560

By now the police were being drawn into the mystery.

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00:13:30,560 --> 00:13:32,560

There have been a number of calls to the police station.

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00:13:32,560 --> 00:13:38,560

Every call referred to objects in the sky and always some distance away.

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00:13:38,560 --> 00:13:43,560

They were travelling in a particular direction and then just disappearing into thin air.

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00:13:44,560 --> 00:13:48,560

People were ringing in and writing letters all the time.

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00:13:48,560 --> 00:13:53,560

The ones that I was more convinced about were the ones who said,

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00:13:53,560 --> 00:13:56,560

well I'd rather you didn't use my name but I saw this.

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00:13:57,560 --> 00:14:01,560

It was really the start of what they call the Broadhaven triangle.

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00:14:01,560 --> 00:14:17,560

They call it the Broadhaven triangle, an area here in Pembrokeshire where sensible, down-to-earth people are constantly seeing strange objects in the sky, mysterious lights.

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00:14:17,560 --> 00:14:23,560

It's an area where an entire classroom of school children saw from their playground a UFO.

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00:14:24,560 --> 00:14:33,560

The triangle encompassed the southeast of St. Brides Bay through Broadhaven, down to Milford Haven and towards Haverford West inland.

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00:14:34,560 --> 00:14:39,560

It was an area of coastline which changed dramatically from mile to mile.

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00:14:40,560 --> 00:14:44,560

Could the area's local geography have been a factor in the sightings?

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00:14:45,560 --> 00:14:49,560

There's a number of all refineries and other industries around Milford Haven.

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00:14:50,560 --> 00:14:56,560

Flares at night and odd shaped plant but people round here would have been very familiar with that.

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00:14:56,560 --> 00:15:00,560

Those have been there for many years before anybody started seeing UFOs.

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00:15:02,560 --> 00:15:10,560

The number of sightings reported in the area meant that what had begun as an intriguing local story was turning into a much bigger phenomenon.

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00:15:11,560 --> 00:15:15,560

It was what UFO researchers like David Clarke call a flap.

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00:15:16,560 --> 00:15:24,560

The word flap became associated with periods of intense UFO activity concentrated in certain areas from the mid-50s onwards.

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00:15:24,560 --> 00:15:29,560

So it's a word that becomes part of ufology from that point onwards.

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00:15:29,560 --> 00:15:36,560

Now the first real flap that seems to have occurred in the UK was the one at Warminster in the 1960s.

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00:15:37,560 --> 00:15:43,560

For ten years the town of Warminster in Wiltshire was famous for being a UFO hotspot.

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00:15:44,560 --> 00:15:52,560

Unlike the Broadhaven sightings, the flap in Warminster began on Christmas day 1964 with a mysterious sound.

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00:15:58,560 --> 00:16:05,560

People were reporting hammering noises, things shaking the roofs of their houses, machinery.

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00:16:06,560 --> 00:16:12,560

Type noises going overhead and when they came out and had a look nothing was wrong.

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00:16:13,560 --> 00:16:18,560

By May 1965 reports of lights in the sky had begun to surface.

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00:16:19,560 --> 00:16:26,560

Local journalist Arthur Shuttlewood connected the lights and sounds and the Warminster thing was born.

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00:16:27,560 --> 00:16:35,560

He was writing for the local newspaper and he got more and more obsessed with this and went out sky watching himself.

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00:16:35,560 --> 00:16:44,560

The more he wrote about it the more the story became part of the local legend and lots of other people then started saying they'd seen things.

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00:16:45,560 --> 00:16:50,560

It was the sheer number of sightings that made Warminster unique.

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00:16:50,560 --> 00:16:54,560

We stood here on Cradle Hill which was the main sky watching location.

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00:16:55,560 --> 00:17:03,560

And every weekend, every Saturday throughout the 60s and 70s there could be up to 50 or 60 people up here observing and watching for the thing.

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00:17:06,560 --> 00:17:13,560

Kevin Goodman was one of those who took to the hills travelling to Warminster to investigate the phenomenon.

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00:17:14,560 --> 00:17:25,560

It was very much a communal thing. It was like-minded individuals, searching, looking for something, wanting to be part of something.

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00:17:26,560 --> 00:17:30,560

After several months Kevin witnessed something himself.

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00:17:30,560 --> 00:17:37,560

Over in that direction from over by the golf club came four red lights equally distance spaced apart.

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00:17:37,560 --> 00:17:43,560

They carried on travelling through, around and over to Battlesbury Hill which is over here.

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00:17:45,560 --> 00:17:48,560

They stayed in the line for approximately about two or three minutes.

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00:17:48,560 --> 00:17:58,560

In the lead object then shot upwards at a tremendous rate of speed, performed a flawless 90 degree turn without stopping and shot out of sight.

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00:17:59,560 --> 00:18:04,560

And about 30 seconds later the following three lights then just shot straight up into the sky.

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00:18:05,560 --> 00:18:10,560

To this day I can't really rationally explain what I saw.

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00:18:14,560 --> 00:18:21,560

The sky watchers were identifying hundreds of UFOs in the hills. But how reliable were their reports?

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00:18:24,560 --> 00:18:31,560

One of the important things about Warminster is that it is surrounded by nervous military bases and camps.

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00:18:31,560 --> 00:18:39,560

There's an artillery school there. There are various tank training areas around there and around Salisbury Plain.

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00:18:41,560 --> 00:18:51,560

The area was one used to military activity. Covering 150 square miles, Salisbury Plain was the largest military training area in the UK.

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00:18:51,560 --> 00:19:00,560

And that wasn't all. 18 miles from Warminster, an experimental establishment conducted trials of prototype military aircraft.

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00:19:01,560 --> 00:19:11,560

The ufologists would say that the reason that you get so many sightings near military bases is because the extraterrestrials are very interested in what's going on at those bases.

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00:19:11,560 --> 00:19:18,560

Whereas it seems far more plausible to argue that what's happening is that it's the activity at the bases themselves.

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00:19:19,560 --> 00:19:33,560

Like Warminster, Broadhaven was also surrounded by military bases. Close to the village was REF Broadie, a base for search and rescue helicopters and a training station for military pilots.

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00:19:33,560 --> 00:19:39,560

Could it have been that it was simply REF activity that was responsible for the Broadhaven sightings?

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00:19:39,560 --> 00:19:55,560

Broadie at the time was a very, very busy base. It had aircraft taking off and landing as frequently as he threw airport at sometimes of the day.

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00:19:55,560 --> 00:19:57,560

So there's an awful lot of activity going on there.

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00:19:58,560 --> 00:20:15,560

As REF Broadies Community Relations Officer at the time, squadron leader Tony Cowan found himself fielding calls from anxious locals who'd seen things around Broadhaven they couldn't explain.

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00:20:16,560 --> 00:20:29,560

We had a look at the flying program which was easily accessed and see if we could relate the time of the incident or the reporting to the time of activity that was taking place at our airfield or indeed in our area.

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00:20:32,560 --> 00:20:34,560

Sometimes the answer was obvious.

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00:20:35,560 --> 00:20:47,560

Apart from the training of the jet pilots there would have been exercises involving our local search and rescue helicopter unit, the local lifeboat stations and the coast guard as well.

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00:20:47,560 --> 00:20:57,560

I can remember at least on one occasion it was quite a big exercise involving all those people plus a Nimrod patrol aircraft to carry out a search and it did take place at night.

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00:20:58,560 --> 00:21:03,560

The Nimrod was dropping flares to illuminate the area so that the lifeboat could spot the target.

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00:21:07,560 --> 00:21:14,560

But Dorothy Cale, who'd witnessed strange lights near her home in Littlehaven, wasn't convinced this was the explanation.

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00:21:15,560 --> 00:21:25,560

We could see Broadie airfield quite clearly so we were very well used to seeing all sorts of lights and flares and things like that.

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00:21:25,560 --> 00:21:33,560

It was nothing like anything we had seen out to sea or across the airfield.

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00:21:34,560 --> 00:21:38,560

And REF flight records didn't always prove conclusive.

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00:21:39,560 --> 00:21:47,560

On some occasions we were able to explain by relating the time and the date to known air activity.

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00:21:47,560 --> 00:21:50,560

On other occasions we could offer no explanation.

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00:21:50,560 --> 00:21:56,560

I think to the people that saw something they will always remain a mystery.

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00:21:59,560 --> 00:22:03,560

REF engineer Gordon Bowden was stationed at Broadie in the late 1970s.

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00:22:04,560 --> 00:22:09,560

Years of experience had taught him that military activity could often be misidentified.

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00:22:09,560 --> 00:22:20,560

Helicopter beams, search light patterns can appear very strange depending on the compass direction that the helicopter is operating from

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00:22:20,560 --> 00:22:24,560

and the search pattern that the helicopter is conducting.

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00:22:24,560 --> 00:22:28,560

And to the untrained eye you'll get a visual which will look like a ball of light

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00:22:28,560 --> 00:22:32,560

and then if it moves a different pattern you'll get the beam.

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00:22:36,560 --> 00:22:41,560

But not all the UFO sightings around Broadhaven were witnessed by untrained civilians.

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00:22:41,560 --> 00:22:44,560

Gordon also witnessed them himself.

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00:22:46,560 --> 00:22:51,560

On two occasions at Broadhaven I did see strange lights out at sea.

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00:22:52,560 --> 00:22:58,560

These lights that I saw accelerated with such phenomenal speed.

209

00:23:01,560 --> 00:23:10,560

I cannot explain what they were but my military training would have said we had no aircraft at that time that could have travelled that fast

210

00:23:11,560 --> 00:23:16,560

and changed direction so quickly because it would have killed the pilots.

211

00:23:17,560 --> 00:23:25,560

If flight activity at the REF base couldn't explain all the Broadhaven sightings then what could?

212

00:23:25,560 --> 00:23:29,560

Broadie was not the only military establishment in West Wales.

213

00:23:29,560 --> 00:23:36,560

Less than 500 metres away lay a secret facility. It was run by the United States.

214

00:23:37,560 --> 00:23:47,560

US military bases have been connected to some of the most celebrated and well documented UFO incidents in Britain.

215

00:23:48,560 --> 00:23:56,560

The answer is strange. Small red light. Weird. It's coming this way. It's definitely coming this way.

216

00:23:56,560 --> 00:24:02,560

Could these American bases provide any clues to what was being witnessed on British soil?

217

00:24:07,560 --> 00:24:20,560

In 1977 the village of Broadhaven in Wales became infamous for a series of supposed UFO sightings.

218

00:24:21,560 --> 00:24:26,560

Why were so many people reporting mysterious lights and objects in the area?

219

00:24:27,560 --> 00:24:39,560

With the REF and local police unable to explain all the sightings, attention turned to the secret US base that laid 10 miles from the village.

220

00:24:41,560 --> 00:24:47,560

A seemingly innocent research establishment, the base became the focus of local speculation.

221

00:24:48,560 --> 00:24:59,560

It was a top secret establishment and those people that worked within the facility were very strict with their security code.

222

00:24:59,560 --> 00:25:04,560

They were very hush-hush about what was going on there and if you rang them up somebody would say,

223

00:25:04,560 --> 00:25:12,560

US Navy Broadie, this is not a secure line. Why were they worried about secure lines if it was just an oceanographic research establishment?

224

00:25:13,560 --> 00:25:20,560

It wasn't the first time on British soil that there had been strange phenomena sighted around a US military base.

225

00:25:22,560 --> 00:25:28,560

On two occasions US air bases in Suffolk had been at the centre of supposed UFO activity.

226

00:25:30,560 --> 00:25:38,560

The first sighting took place in August 1956 when radar personnel at US Air Force bases Bentwaters and Lakenheath

227

00:25:38,560 --> 00:25:41,560

observed something strange on their screens.

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00:25:47,560 --> 00:25:52,560

The Lakenheath incident caused all kinds of concern on both sides of the Atlantic.

229

00:25:52,560 --> 00:25:55,560

The Americans alerted the Royal Air Force.

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00:26:01,560 --> 00:26:06,560

The radar station at REF Neaty said they began tracking these same mysterious objects.

231

00:26:08,560 --> 00:26:16,560

And it led to a very, very bizarre evening in which waves of REF fighters were scrambled to go look at this thing over Lakenheath.

232

00:26:18,560 --> 00:26:23,560

Two aircraft gave chase but failed to intercept or identify the object.

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00:26:23,560 --> 00:26:28,560

Running low on fuel, they returned to base and the object disappeared from radar screens.

234

00:26:29,560 --> 00:26:35,560

The Lakenheath case had never been fully explained and it was the first of a whole series involving military establishments in the Stanglion region.

235

00:26:44,560 --> 00:26:52,560

Nothing else significant was reported in the area for 25 years until the night of December 26th, 1980.

236

00:26:52,560 --> 00:26:59,560

Local garage owner Jerry Harris lived next to the joint US Air Force bases of Woodbridge and Bentwaters.

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00:26:59,560 --> 00:27:03,560

He was returning home when he noticed some peculiar lights above him.

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00:27:13,560 --> 00:27:18,560

The lights were hovering above Rendlesham Forest which lay between the bases.

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00:27:18,560 --> 00:27:25,560

What no one realised at the time was that this was to become one of the UK's most iconic UFO encounters.

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00:27:26,560 --> 00:27:32,560

They kept moving about, they went sort of downwards and then disappeared.

241

00:27:33,560 --> 00:27:37,560

All of a sudden this thing came out of the trees.

242

00:27:37,560 --> 00:27:47,560

When it got to the top of the trees it took off and flew up into the sky straight as a narrow and disappeared out of sight and I couldn't see it anymore.

243

00:27:49,560 --> 00:27:52,560

Jerry decided to investigate the mysterious lights.

244

00:27:52,560 --> 00:28:04,560

I went into my van to have a look and I was stopped going into the forest by an English policeman and a military policeman.

245

00:28:04,560 --> 00:28:08,560

They're both together unless I couldn't go through the forest.

246

00:28:09,560 --> 00:28:11,560

So I had to turn around and come back.

247

00:28:12,560 --> 00:28:18,560

Jerry put the sighting out of his mind and the Rendlesham incident seemed forgotten.

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00:28:19,560 --> 00:28:26,560

Then two years later the story resurfaced after an anonymous tip-off to a national newspaper.

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00:28:27,560 --> 00:28:32,560

It was in 1983 that the story first broke and became headline news.

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00:28:32,560 --> 00:28:37,560

The news of the world got hold of this story and put it on the front page.

251

00:28:37,560 --> 00:28:43,560

UFO lands in Suffolk and that's official. This blew the story wide open.

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00:28:43,560 --> 00:28:51,560

Nick Pope used to run the British government's UFO desk at the Ministry of Defence and has investigated the Rendlesham Forest incident.

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00:28:53,560 --> 00:29:04,560

With Rendlesham what you had was a report from the deputy base commander of one of NATO's most important military establishments.

254

00:29:04,560 --> 00:29:11,560

And here he was saying not only had some of his personnel witnessed a UFO but he'd seen it too.

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00:29:11,560 --> 00:29:23,560

Colonel Holt is probably the most senior military officer ever to have gone on the record with a first person written account of a personal UFO sighting.

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00:29:25,560 --> 00:29:32,560

With the story now out in the open an extraordinary piece of evidence was released by an officer from the Woodbridge base.

257

00:29:32,560 --> 00:29:36,560

A tape recording of Colonel Holt's investigation.

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00:29:37,560 --> 00:29:46,560

Colonel Holt took a small team of men out into the forest to investigate and he recorded his observations as he went out into the forest.

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00:30:02,560 --> 00:30:04,560

It is definitely coming this way.

260

00:30:04,560 --> 00:30:06,560

It is definitely coming this way.

261

00:30:06,560 --> 00:30:11,560

This is a little shrieking off. There is no doubt about it. This is weird.

262

00:30:11,560 --> 00:30:21,560

You can hear the tension in Colonel Holt's voice. You can hear the tension actually in all of

Holt's team.

263

00:30:21,560 --> 00:30:27,560

Look at that. It looks like an eye winking at you. It has a hollow, dark, dark shadow.

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00:30:27,560 --> 00:30:32,560

It looks like the people with an eye are looking at you, winking. This is unreal.

265

00:30:35,560 --> 00:30:38,560

We're going around heading back to the base.

266

00:30:39,560 --> 00:30:44,560

These are not people who mistake aircraft lights for something more exotic.

267

00:30:44,560 --> 00:30:56,560

When these people say and go on the record as saying we experienced something above and beyond anything we've ever seen before, you can take that to the bank.

268

00:31:00,560 --> 00:31:07,560

A UFO sighting made by several credible military witnesses made the Rendlesham story unique.

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00:31:08,560 --> 00:31:16,560

Astronomer Ian Ridpath has investigated a number of UFO cases and was keen to get to the bottom of the airman's sighting.

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00:31:17,560 --> 00:31:32,560

When the Rendlesham Forest case hit the headlines in 1983, I realised that I actually had to take this case seriously because it had apparently very good evidence.

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00:31:32,560 --> 00:31:34,560

What's that?

272

00:31:36,560 --> 00:31:42,560

But conversations with locals soon convinced him that the Rendlesham case was not all it at first appeared.

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00:31:42,560 --> 00:31:55,560

From the position in the forest where they saw their flashing UFO, you can actually see straight to the Orford Nest Lighthouse which appears to hover between the trees, not very far off the ground.

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00:31:55,560 --> 00:32:10,560

As you move towards it between the trees, the light seems to recede in front of you which is

exactly the effect that the airman reported as they moved towards this flashing light but they never actually got to it because it got further and further away.

275

00:32:11,560 --> 00:32:24,560

I've been to Rendlesham Forest at night and anyone who's been to Rendlesham Forest at night and has seen the lighthouse will realise that it's a tiny pinprick of light in the distant horizon.

276

00:32:24,560 --> 00:32:29,560

There's no way that Halstead and his team could have misidentified that for something more spectacular.

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00:32:32,560 --> 00:32:41,560

Jerry Harris and the US Airman had reported that the lights in the forest had moved in strange directions but this too could have had a rational explanation.

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00:32:42,560 --> 00:32:56,560

I knew from experience that bright meteors or fireballs which are natural pieces of day-brief and space burning up in the atmosphere can give the impression that something has come down quite nearby.

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00:32:57,560 --> 00:33:08,560

I was able to find from the British Astronomical Association that indeed a bright fireball had been seen at that same time that the men had seen something apparently descending into the forest.

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00:33:09,560 --> 00:33:16,560

Ian Ridpath's evidence suggested that the UFO was nothing more than a combination of unusual but naturally occurring phenomena.

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00:33:19,560 --> 00:33:31,560

It appears to be an absolutely superb, almost inexplicable case but when you look at each of those aspects individually there is a rational explanation for each of them.

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00:33:32,560 --> 00:33:41,560

But this conclusion didn't satisfy everyone. If the lights did have a rational explanation why were the Americans so reluctant to discuss it?

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00:33:42,560 --> 00:33:51,560

All the Americans I knew from the base and none of them would talk about it at all. They weren't allowed. They had strict instructions from up above not to talk about it.

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00:33:52,560 --> 00:33:56,560

So I couldn't find anything from them whatsoever. They would just try to cover it up.

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00:33:57,560 --> 00:34:07,560

When a wave of UFO sightings had hit Broadhaven in West Wales in 1977 attention had also turned to the US military.

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00:34:08,560 --> 00:34:20,560

Not far from the village lay a secret US base. When strange lights and objects were reported in the area speculation grew that the Americans were developing secret state-of-the-art military technology.

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00:34:21,560 --> 00:34:29,560

Nobody really knew what was going on there. So I think it's quite a possibility that all this could be linked to some sort of military activity.

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00:34:31,560 --> 00:34:38,560

But when the base was deactivated in 1995 the truth about the Americans activities was finally revealed.

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00:34:39,560 --> 00:34:44,560

It turns out they were listening for Russian submarines at the height of the Cold War.

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00:34:45,560 --> 00:34:53,560

Far from developing prototype weaponry the mysterious building had housed nothing more than banks of computers and monitoring equipment.

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00:34:57,560 --> 00:35:03,560

This revelation put paid to the theory that the mysterious lights in Broadhaven had come from the secret US base.

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00:35:04,560 --> 00:35:11,560

But the sightings were about to take a bizarre new turn with the counts of more than just unexplained lights in the sky.

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00:35:15,560 --> 00:35:23,560

Two months after the first sightings dozens of eyewitnesses reported seeing strange silver figures around the village.

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00:35:26,560 --> 00:35:31,560

Police officer Ernest Jones personally investigated one of the sightings.

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00:35:32,560 --> 00:35:38,560

The call came into the control room there and I happened to be in the station.

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00:35:39,560 --> 00:35:45,560

A report of sighting of a silvery figure quite close to a dwelling.

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00:35:47,560 --> 00:35:53,560

The call had come from the Coombs family who lived on Ripiston Farm a few miles from Broadhaven.

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00:35:54,560 --> 00:35:59,560

Although the Coombs no longer wish to talk about the night's events Ernest Jones remembers them well.

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00:36:02,560 --> 00:36:12,560

So here I was going to a farm on a dark night in the middle of the night not knowing exactly what to expect.

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00:36:13,560 --> 00:36:17,560

But expecting to get close to something that nobody knew nothing about.

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00:36:18,560 --> 00:36:20,560

So a few things were going through my mind.

302

00:36:21,560 --> 00:36:27,560

We were riding in the yard, went to the front door, doors open, we went in.

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00:36:28,560 --> 00:36:32,560

There was a family there, established her husband and wife.

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00:36:33,560 --> 00:36:36,560

Spoke with the wife, she was very very frightened.

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00:36:37,560 --> 00:36:41,560

She saw a silvery figure moving about very close to the window.

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00:36:42,560 --> 00:36:48,560

Her husband, he turned around and saw this figure very close by the window outside, but he was sitting.

307

00:36:50,560 --> 00:36:51,560

He was really frightened as well.

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00:36:52,560 --> 00:36:57,560

We're not talking of a softy man working until five in an office.

309

00:36:58,560 --> 00:37:03,560

We're talking of a man who was quite used to going out of the house all times day and night checking on cattle.

310

00:37:04,560 --> 00:37:07,560

No way would he come out of the house with us.

311

00:37:08,560 --> 00:37:09,560

No way.

312

00:37:14,560 --> 00:37:19,560

So we went out, went a little around the house, around the back.

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00:37:21,560 --> 00:37:23,560

The garden, the fields nearby.

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00:37:25,560 --> 00:37:27,560

The cattle pens, checked machinery.

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00:37:32,560 --> 00:37:39,560

With the silver figure nowhere to be seen, P.C. Jones returned to the house and made arrangements to evacuate the family.

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00:37:40,560 --> 00:37:46,560

From the condition that we're in that night, especially Mrs. Coombs, she didn't feel safe.

317

00:37:46,560 --> 00:37:50,560

She didn't feel the house was safe for the family.

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00:37:54,560 --> 00:37:58,560

The ripest and farm incident was not an isolated one off.

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00:37:59,560 --> 00:38:03,560

Reported sightings of strange silver figures were taking place all over the area.

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00:38:06,560 --> 00:38:10,560

With the mystery deepening, the investigation would now step up to a new level.

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00:38:16,560 --> 00:38:23,560

The M.O.D. branch, which was responsible for UFOs, they had received quite a few letters from members of the public.

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00:38:24,560 --> 00:38:28,560

They'd seen all the lurid press coverage of the Welsh Triangle.

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00:38:29,560 --> 00:38:35,560

There's one particular member from the head of the M.O.D. UFO branch to the RAF police.

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00:38:36,560 --> 00:38:39,560

There's a lot of concern in West Wales. Some things have obviously been seen.

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00:38:40,560 --> 00:38:42,560

Some of these witnesses are quite level-headed, reliable people.

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00:38:42,560 --> 00:38:46,560

Could you make some discreet inquiries into what's been seen there?

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00:38:47,560 --> 00:38:50,560

The very fact that the military were interested was very, very unusual,

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00:38:51,560 --> 00:38:56,560

because the ministry don't tend to do field investigations of UFO sightings. It's extremely unusual.

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00:38:59,560 --> 00:39:03,560

The Broadhaven Triangle was now being taken seriously at the highest level,

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00:39:04,560 --> 00:39:09,560

and an M.O.D. investigation was underway. Its conclusions would be completely unexpected.

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00:39:13,560 --> 00:39:15,560

The M.O.D. branch

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00:39:22,560 --> 00:39:24,560

They call it the Broadhaven Triangle.

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00:39:25,560 --> 00:39:32,560

In 1977, Broadhaven in West Wales became known as a hotspot of UFO activity.

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00:39:33,560 --> 00:39:41,560

Claims of lights, strange objects, and even silver figures were being made by dozens of local witnesses.

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00:39:42,560 --> 00:39:46,560

Six months into the sightings, the M.O.D. decided to launch an investigation.

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00:39:47,560 --> 00:39:52,560

In itself an unusual occurrence, and something not made public for nearly 30 years.

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00:39:53,560 --> 00:39:56,560

Before the Freedom of Information Act came into force,

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00:39:57,560 --> 00:40:00,560

you have to remember that the default position of the Ministry of Defence,

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00:40:01,560 --> 00:40:04,560

an inherently secretive organisation, was to say nothing.

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00:40:05,560 --> 00:40:11,560

In 2005, the Ministry of Defence's report on this incident was finally made public.

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00:40:13,560 --> 00:40:19,560

It does look as if some discrete inquiries, as they described at the time, were made.

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00:40:20,560 --> 00:40:25,560

And the answer that came back, which is mentioned in a briefing to the Defence Intelligence staff

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00:40:26,560 --> 00:40:33,560

later in 1977, was that a practical joker was behind some of these more bizarre reports.

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00:40:35,560 --> 00:40:41,560

The practical joker revealed himself to be Glyn Edwards, a local businessman from Milford Haven.

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00:40:42,560 --> 00:40:46,560

We had a round table dinner, and the theme was a fancy dress dinner.

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00:40:47,560 --> 00:40:52,560

So it was topical at the time. I decided to dress up as a spaceman.

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00:40:53,560 --> 00:40:57,560

So I borrowed an industrial suit from one of our local suppliers.

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00:40:58,560 --> 00:41:02,560

I went to the dinner, and before the dancing started, I went out to the car to remove it.

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00:41:02,560 --> 00:41:07,560

But some of my colleagues said, let's go around the village. So we all jumped in the car.

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00:41:11,560 --> 00:41:17,560

Bumped into a few people, turned a few heads, and after about 10 minutes we decided to go back.

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00:41:18,560 --> 00:41:21,560

Going back then, we stopped outside the Haven photo tell.

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00:41:21,560 --> 00:41:28,560

I started walking up the drive in this silver spacesuit, and they had the headlights of the car behind me.

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00:41:29,560 --> 00:41:34,560

So I was silhouetted going up the drive of the hotel.

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00:41:36,560 --> 00:41:41,560

All my colleagues were hiding in the bushes at that time, and one of them said, there's somebody in the window.

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00:41:42,560 --> 00:41:45,560

I went a bit further, and another one shouted, oh, she's got a gun.

356

00:41:45,560 --> 00:41:52,560

And I thought, right, that's it. I dived under a roaded ender and bush and lost my foot in and rolled all the way back down to the road.

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00:41:53,560 --> 00:41:56,560

One of them said, let's do it again. I said, not so likely, she's got a gun. I'm off.

358

00:41:57,560 --> 00:42:01,560

So then we went back to the hotel, changed out the suit, and we just carried on with the dinner.

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00:42:03,560 --> 00:42:10,560

With such an obvious explanation for the little Haven sightings, why were so many people willing to believe they'd witnessed something extra true?

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00:42:10,560 --> 00:42:20,560

We know that eyewitness testimony can be very, very fallible. People genuinely and sincerely believe that they've seen something that day, which defies any conventional explanation.

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00:42:21,560 --> 00:42:27,560

But the evidence from psychological studies would suggest that we should actually take those accounts with a pinch of salt.

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00:42:28,560 --> 00:42:31,560

But the hoaxer has always denied responsibility for one sighting.

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00:42:31,560 --> 00:42:36,560

Adripiston Farm. PC Jones, who investigated the incident, has kept an open mind.

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00:42:37,560 --> 00:42:45,560

I can't help thinking of the state or in that night. There was something certainly out of the ordinary that frightened that family.

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00:42:49,560 --> 00:42:56,560

As 1977 drew to a close, the police were also looking for a way to get the evidence out of the house.

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00:42:57,560 --> 00:43:08,560

As 1977 drew to a close, the number of UFO sightings in the area began to decline and the unusual events were consigned to memory.

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00:43:09,560 --> 00:43:18,560

Given the large number of people who saw it, the number of pretty intelligent people who came forward and said they'd seen something, I think most people found, I think there must have been something behind it.

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00:43:19,560 --> 00:43:21,560

Not necessarily flying sources, but something.

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00:43:22,560 --> 00:43:28,560

Because we didn't know what it was, we just sort of ignored it and decided that we don't know what it was, we can't talk about it.

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00:43:29,560 --> 00:43:32,560

And it just, you know, that was it, it just went away really.

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00:43:37,560 --> 00:43:43,560

For many who witnessed the Broadhaven phenomenon, it remains something that they find difficult to explain.

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00:43:44,560 --> 00:44:05,560

I'm a very rational person and I say I don't believe in UFOs, but having seen something unusual myself, but it seems ridiculous to me really to think there's something from outer space that's come down and settled in the Broadhaven.

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00:44:06,560 --> 00:44:25,560

There's no physical evidence, there's no photographic evidence and that's a great shame because I think most people have an open mind about the whole business and I think if you look into a night sky, you must believe that there must be something else out there, what it is, I don't know.

374

00:44:25,560 --> 00:44:48,560

I'm absolutely sure of what I saw that day. I saw an object that was large, cigar shaped, silver. After 30 years I know nearer the understanding than I was on the day that I saw it, but I am 100% sure that what I saw that day is as we reported it.