

## 'WE SAW A DISC IN THE SKY... OUR JAWS DROPPED'

**Recent reports claim that UFO-spotting is in crisis. But as Chris Bond discovered at the Great British UFO Show at the weekend, there is more to the phenomenon than meets the eye.**

THERE were far more people queuing for Leeds Rhinos tickets outside than attended the Great British UFO Show.

Not that the 120 or so who filled Leeds Rugby Supporters Club for this inaugural event were remotely bothered.

These ufologists, as they are known, made their way to Headingley from all over the country where they listened to talks by paranormal experts and a man who claims to have been abducted by aliens.

If you believe recent newspaper reports these are difficult times for UFO enthusiasts. Only last month, the Cumbrian branch of the British UFO Hunters reported no sightings so far this year, compared to 40 last year and 60 the year before that. It seems the idea of little green men from Mars and inter-galactic visitors from Alfa-Centuri may have lost its lustre.

Russel Callaghan, who organised the event, and runs a UFO website [www.ufodata.co.uk](http://www.ufodata.co.uk) disagrees. "The UFO subject is alive and well," he says. "There are hundreds and hundreds of websites dedicated to the subject so I don't think the interest is waning, it's still there you just have to look for it in different areas. "Websites now make it so much easier for groups to pool information and internet forums have taken over from UFO meetings," he says.

The whole notion of flying saucers and extra-terrestrial beings has always sailed close to the wind in terms of credibility, though.

It is deemed perfectly acceptable to watch films like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* or *War of the Worlds* and believe in the possibility of alien life, but mention you are a UFO-spotter and you'll probably be met with the kind of response that greeted Copernicus when he suggested the world was round.

Callaghan, who lives in Kippax, near Castleford, admits there are a few oddballs but insists they are outweighed by more serious-minded ufologists.

"Yes there's a few kooks out there, we know that, but we've got doctors, we've got professors, nuclear physicists, people with PhDs, pilots and policeman and they're not afraid to come forward," he says. "All the pundits tell us that 95 per cent of what goes on can be explained and fair enough, accepted, but that still leaves a small portion that were unknown aircraft or don't have a logical explanation.

"We're not saying that aliens are landing in fields all over the place and maybe it's not ever happened, but something is happening that makes people believe that this subject is founded on reality."

Callaghan himself has been fascinated by UFOs ever since he spotted something hovering over Bradford in 1980. "I was working at the time as a bus conductor, I was only a teenager and the driver and myself were a little bit early one day and we parked up at Odsal Top. "It was October time and it was about quarter-to-four, it wasn't dark but the sun had gone in and we were stood having a ciggie and we were looking out towards Emley Moor and in front of us a thousand feet up in the sky was a silver spinning disc, there was no sound and both our jaws just dropped.

"We both said 'what the hell's that?' It was only there for about eight seconds and it took off and that was me convinced. I had seen something that I couldn't explain."

He has experienced other UFO sightings since but says there is a general lack of interest among today's media.

"All you ever see in the TV clips is the out of focus ball of light in the sky and there's far better evidence out there than that, but why this footage, which does exist, isn't taken up I don't know.

"I think we've grown out of mass hysteria these days and I think if one actually landed tomorrow it might make the six o'clock news but I don't think the impact would be fantastic and I'm not sure people would be that shocked."

But Callaghan believes sightings should be taken more seriously.

"We've all seen satellites before and you know when an aircraft is going over and we're all aware of what's going on in the skies and what's normal and what isn't. "Satellites in the sky look like moving stars they move in a straight line, it's the things that don't move in straight lines that are interesting."

Rob Whitehead, of the Lancashire Aerial Phenomena Investigation Society (Lapis), also disagrees that UFO enthusiasts are a dying breed. "The grassroots are thriving and there's at least a dozen conferences a year around the country so people are still interested without a doubt."

He admits that interest generated by TV shows like the X-Files has levelled off but believes there will be a resurgence in the future.

"It's been going on for thousands of years, stuff was reported in Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece and the Bible talks about heavenly objects that some people have interpreted as sightings, so it won't go away." Whitehead, a graphic designer by trade, became hooked as a youngster after spotting a UFO while walking along the Durham coastline.

"I was out with a few friends walking along the cliffs one day with my metal detector and I suddenly noticed a black cigar-shaped object quite low and it seemed to follow the coastline as we watched it. The following day in the local paper there was a headline on the front page 'UFO sightings across the North-East' and that got me into it."

He readily admits that most sightings can be explained as either atmospheric phenomena, mis-identified airplanes or temperature inversions, but says it is the remaining fraction that tantalises people.

"Everybody loves a mystery and once you have seen something unusual it stays with you."

One of the guest speakers at the weekend UFO show was Jason Andrews who, apart from an overload of "bling", could pass as any normal 22-year-old. His claims, though, are anything but ordinary.

Andrews says he's a multiple alien abductee and calls himself a "walk-in" also known as a wanderer – an extraterrestrial soul that has been incarnated in a human body. "I have been getting abduction experiences since I can remember," he says. "There was the obvious abduction which is laying in bed, they come for me and then it progressed to them teaching me how to astrally project, showing me things, telling me things about the possible future."

Such as? "Such as I'm not going to tell you."

He goes on: "Imagine being a child and you're laying in bed at night and then these beings come along and they take you away, so you're obviously scared of that because it's the unknown and everyone's scared of the unknown at first.

"I tried screaming out and tried moving even though I was paralysed and every time I screamed nothing came out, no one ever came to my aid."

Andrews, who is training to be an HGV driver, says initially he thought the aliens were teaching him things like telepathy, healing and astral projection, but realised they were simply helping him to remember the past. Despite being terrified initially he says he gradually learned to trust the aliens and still claims to have abduction experiences nearly every night when he is taken to different places.

At this point his story, if it hasn't already, begins to lose credibility.

"I can remember every single existence I've ever had. This is only my second life as a human, as far as dying goes I have never died and neither have you because nobody and nothing can ever die, everything is energy in one form or another and you can never completely destroy it, all it can do is change its form. Which when I say I can remember previous existences it's just remembering previous forms which everyone is capable of doing."

He insists he is here to help and hopes if he can teach others what he has learned then it can spread the galactic word.

"I know what I am and I know everything in my head is real, if other people chose not to believe that, then that's fine."

Callaghan, who invited him to speak, defends Andrews and others who have come forward.

"It takes a lot of bottle to get up on a stage and talk about alien abductions to a room full of people and if you listen to the abduction stories you feel there is something happening. I mean it might turn out to be over the counter medicines that trigger something, but these people are having real experiences," he says.

It seems that UFOs and little green men haven't disappeared off the radar just yet and you never know, one day they might just pay us a visit.

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