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TV show to probe famous Livingston UFO encounter

Robert Taylor

Robert Taylor

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IT is perhaps Scotland's most famous "close encounter" and one which has fascinated scientists, investigators and UFO hunters from around the world.

The mystery of what happened to a forestry worker called Robert Taylor on a chilly November morning more than 30 years ago is one that has baffled all who have examined the case – including the police, who keep the file open and consider it "unexplained".

The fact that the police were not able to come up with some rational explanation is one of the enduring elements of a story which Mr Taylor continued to insist was true up until his death in 2007.

And now it is the subject of more scrutiny, thanks to a new show being produced by the National Geographic channel.

UFOs: The Untold Story aims to take a look at some of the most famous – and supported – UFO encounters from around the world, and it seems only fitting that Mr Taylor's story should be among those told.

It started for him on November 9, 1979, when he worked for the Livingston Development Corporation ensuring that no cattle or sheep wandered into Dechmont Woods. It was a job he'd done for a long time with no unusual incidents – something that was about to change.

He arrived for work as normal in his company-owned pick-up truck with his Irish red setter Larah and started to walk down the path into the woods. But as he rounded the path into a clearing he was absolutely astonished to see what he later described as a "large dome-shaped object" of about 20-30ft circumference hovering 15ft above the surface of the grass.

He said that parts of it seemed to disappear around the edges – it would seem to dematerialise so he could see the trees behind it, then solidify again.

As he watched it, what resembled two WWII sea mines dropped from beneath the object and rolled towards him. Just before they reached him a burning smell, like burning brake lines, flooded the area and he heard a loud swishing noise. The "mines" rolled across the grass and rods came out of them, which attached themselves to his hips and began to pull him towards the object.

At this point he lost consciousness. He didn't know for how long but thought it could only have been for one or two minutes. When he came to the objects were gone and there were marks and holes on the ground, more than 20 circular or triangular indentations in the grass. Robert also had a nasty graze on his forehead and another one on his chin, and an incredible thirst.

He stumbled back to his truck and tried to drive off, but he was so shocked and disorientated he reversed it into a ditch and couldn't get it out. He then tried to radio his base to tell them what had happened but found he had lost his voice.

He staggered back to his home in Deans near Livingston. When his wife saw him she thought he had been attacked because of the injuries to his face and the fact that his trousers were torn and his clothes were muddy. She asked him what had happened and he said he

had been attacked by a spaceship.

His wife called his boss Malcolm Drummond who came to the house. He knew Robert and knew he wasn't the type of man to make up stories and that if he said that was what he saw, then that was what he saw.

That was when the police were contacted. Because Robert had been injured it was deemed to be an assault and they took him back to look at the scene and saw the marks on the grass for themselves. They fenced off the area and Robert's torn trousers were sent for forensic testing at Bathgate Police Station.

The scientists who examined them said they had been ripped upwards in a manner consistent with pulling by a mechanical device and that the rips hadn't been made by forest debris.

Malcolm Robinson, below, a founder member of Strange Phenomena Investigations (SPI) and a prolific author, was among those to speak to Robert immediately after the event and to this day believes it could be one of the few genuine cases of a UFO encounter.

"About 95 per cent of UFO sightings have a natural solution but it's the five per cent minority that we are trying to provide answers for," he says.

"I was there the following day. I saw the marks and I met Bob, who struck me as a very sane and rational gentleman who didn't want any of the publicity he had been thrust into. He never changed his story. To his dying day, which unfortunately came in 2007, he said: 'Until the end of time I will say that I saw what I saw.'

"I'm so pleased National Geographic are re-examining the case so that a new generation of Scottish people, and others around the world, can hear about it."

The programme also spoke to Nick Pope, a leading authority on UFOs who worked on the Ministry of Defence UFO Project and has examined reports of alien abductions, crop circles and animal mutilations. He too believes the Dechmont case merits closer study.

"This case is truly bizarre and remains unexplained to this day," he says.

"The MoD had a file on the incident, which would have been investigated by one of my predecessors. It's a significant case because of the physical evidence.

“Robert Taylor seemed to be an honest man who had little to gain and much to lose by coming forward with this story. MoD should have used metal detectors and a Geiger counter at the site of the encounter, but it was difficult, once the police got involved, as word would have got out and it was always MoD policy to downplay the extent of our interest.

“There’s not much middle ground with this case: either some practical joke got out of hand, or Robert Taylor genuinely encountered something bizarre.”

• UFOs: The Untold Story is on National Geographic on Tuesday, November 20, at 8pm.

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