

DEFENCE RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT SUFFIELD
RALSTON ALBERTA

SUFFIELD MEMORANDUM NO. 49/67

ONSITE INSPECTION OF REPUTED UFO LANDING MARKS
AT DUHAMEL, ALBERTA

by

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INTRODUCTION

At 0900 hours on Friday, 11 August, 1967 I was requested by Mr. A. P. R. Lambert, Superintendent of Logistics at DRES, acting under instructions from DRB/HQ, to carry out an inspection of certain marks in a pasture near Duhamel, Alberta. Local reports and opinions were reputed to relate these marks to the landing of one or more UFO.

As Duhamel is a small hamlet near Camrose, Alberta, the use of a staff car would have meant that the inspection became a weekend affair. Coincidentally, an RCAF Otter aircraft was operating on that day from DRES airstrip, and it appeared logical therefore to request that the RCAF arrange to fly me to Camrose, and subsequently return me to DRES that same evening. The necessary clearance took rather more than two hours to arrange, and involved numerous expensive phone calls. Excellent service was provided by the RCAF once clearance was obtained, but in any future hurried inspection trip, thought should be given to local charter if the inspection area is not too remote from DRES.

The delay enabled me to hold brief discussions on the inspection problem with various DRES staff members, and also to speak on the telephone to Capt. Walker, RCASC, Army helicopter pilot, who had been instructed to join me at Camrose to act as the CFHQ onsite inspector. I left DRES soon after mid-day, and arrived at the Camrose airstrip some two hours later. W/C Champion, who piloted me on the way up, was to make arrangements for the return half of the journey, the aircraft to be at the landing strip sometime after 1530 hours. Shortly after the departure of the aircraft Capt. Walker, his son, and an Army photographer joined me at the airstrip and, using Capt. Walker's car, we set out to the reputed site, collecting a representative of the Camrose Canadian paper on the way.

INFORMATION FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

Capt. Walker is to obtain detailed reports from local representatives, and the summary I give here is merely that obtained in brief discussions during the onsite inspection. Due warning is therefore given that the juxtaposition of comments and names of individuals must not be taken as reflecting my opinion of the veracity or reliability of individual "witnesses". My objective is merely to give the background as it appeared to me during a brief visit.

It appears that for several weeks there have been reports from this area of "strange phenomena". One report, to be followed up by Capt. Walker, is that two local girls (schoolgirls?) living a mile or so away from the reputed landing site had actually seen a UFO, largish, creamish, standardish, at a range of not more than two or three hundred yards, bobbing up and down near the ground 'as if to attract attention'. (Note that this description could be taken from any of many previously published reports.)

On Friday, 4th August, there was heavy rain in the area of Duhamel. On Saturday morning, according to Mr. Edgar Schielke (who owns the reputed landing site), Mr. Schielke went out to this pasture to bring in his cows. He states that he had not been into the pasture in the previous week, as he only goes there when for some reason his cows do not come home by themselves. He immediately noticed a circular mark some thirty feet in diameter on a region of relatively high ground. He maintains (a) he does not believe in UFO, (b) the marks could not have been made by any of his equipment, (c) he thought at the time that the marks could have been caused by some strange lightning phenomenon, (d) he thought no more about it, had not heard rumours of UFO, and only commented on it casually to a neighbour (not interviewed yet) who said, "Oh, it must be a flying saucer". This neighbour, according to the tale as told to me, then informed a Mr. Ray Sanders, a local school teacher and UFO enthusiast. It appears that Mr. Sanders then became the obvious prime-mover in the growth of the story and its distribution to the Press, a UFO society in Edmonton, and in due course to the CBC. During the next day or two Mr. Sanders and several others visited the pasture, and located three more similar marks. Further, he or his party removed sample material from the marks, and (reportedly) shipped them to the UFO society in Edmonton.

Representatives of the Camrose Canadian visited the site on Tuesday, 8th August, and took photographs of the tracks, one photo being published in 9th August issue of the paper. It is believed to be at this stage that contact was made to CFBQ, since the Telex instructing CFB Namao to delegate an inspector - Capt. Walker - was dated 9th August. This same Telex advised Capt. Walker to contact DRES, who would arrange inspection with him. As indicated above DRES was not advised before the morning of 11th August.

ONSITE INSPECTION OF THE MARKS

By the time the inspection team visited the site, it had been, literally, a seven day wonder. Thus the two pastures concerned had been visited by droves of people, including many who drove cars across the pasture making a variety of car tracks in all directions. Strangely enough, this assault on his pastures does not appear to have caused Mr. Schielke any concern, and he maintains an attitude of nonchalance towards the whole business.

Despite the passage of one week, including heavy rain in the early part of the week, and the droves of visitors, the reputed UFO landing marks remained quite clearly impressed in the ground. Although I must admit to a first impression of disappointment that I had been brought so far to look at so little, detailed study of the marks and reflection leave me more than a little puzzled.

As measured by the Camrose Canadian, the mark varies from five to seven inches wide, and the smallest circular mark is 31 ft. 9 ins. in diameter. Three of the rings are essentially circular - very closely so I would say - while the largest mark is slightly elliptical, varying from 34 ft. 5 ins. to 36 ft. 3 ins.

A description but not an explanation of these marks is to say that they appear almost identical to the marks one would expect by a very heavily laden wheel with rubber tyre moved in an almost complete and accurate circle. Strangely, each circular mark was incomplete on the western (?) side, the circles being only approximately three-quarters complete. There was no evidence whatsoever of a single tyre track leaving any of the circles. The marks were predominantly in the form of crushed and discoloured pasture grass, but where cow dung lay in the mark this dung (reasonably fresh apparently at the time) was compressed in much the same way as would be done by a wheel passing over it. In the dung there was some evidence - which we were informed was clearer the previous weekend both on the dung and grass - of tread (?), lugs (?) or similar protusions on about a three inch repeating pattern.

My impression, which may be quite incorrect, was that the mark was made by rolling contact of some kind. My main reason for this impression is that although there was some slight variation in the ground level the high points were no more compressed than were the low points. Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that a week had passed since the marks were made, and this would give some time for recovery of the ground which could confuse this type of evidence.

There was no evidence whatsoever of any effect by the UFO outside the circular track mark itself. This applies both inside and outside the circle. No exhaust blast, no scorching, no disturbance of the loose surface material. Inside the track itself, there was some evidence that small clumps of material had been removed by the object making the marks - merely thumbnail size piece of vegetation removed.

The most striking feature of the circular marks, other than the close circularity, was that they were quite distinct from the car and truck tyre marks made during the week since discovery. The marks were, in general, very uniform in width and far more sharply impressed in the ground. They stood out in quite sharp contrast to the vehicle tracks in immediate proximity to them.

A radiation count was obtained in the circles, over the tracks, and remote from the tracks. The beta count ranged in the 100 counts per minute zone, low fifty to high 200 cpm. This is effectively normal background.

DISCUSSION

Despite the similarity of the circular marks to the pattern of a tyre track, the four circles were strikingly different from truck tracks. Taken in conjunction with the previously reported "sightings" in the area, the initial

discovery of three more marks, and the casual air of the farmer while his farm became the scene of much visiting, and the speed with which the news media were informed, one must consider the possibility of a deliberate hoax. Such a hoax need not have been perpetrated by any individual who has become obvious in the investigation. Nevertheless, I must admit that I was unable to find anything which would lend strength to this supposition. I believe such a track could be produced by a deliberate hoax, but the hoaxers would require some equipment and a great deal of determination. It would be fair to say that if the mark was produced by rolling contact (a wheel), the load on the wheel even allowing for the rain on the Friday would require to be at least three times the load on a truck wheel. If the track was produced when the ground was very soft after rain, I do not see how the hoaxers could have produced these marks in isolation, without leaving some evidence of their approach to the area and departure from it.

Let us assume that the track was produced by a wheel. Then one must assume that the hoaxers could induce a wheel loaded to roughly half to three quarters of a ton to move in a virtually exact circle. This could be done by a single wheel mounted on a rigid radius arm moved about a fixed centre. One circle did have a small indentation in the centre, but the others did not. An alternative would be two wheels moved on a single axle, pivoted about its centre. Such an axle would have to be over 30 ft. long, and this seems unlikely. A third alternative would be a rather well organized Honda rider going round in a circle several times. At the moment the evidence is against this as there was no sign at all of single tracks anywhere in the field.

Next, consider the UFO possibility, i.e., something coming vertically down onto a relatively narrow ring support - either metal, or, a faint possibility, a flexible skirt. In order to produce the visible marks, the load per unit area would have to be roughly three times that produced by a truck tyre. If we take the load per wheel as being 500 lb. for rough calculations, with an area of contact of four inches by two inches, this would give a loading of just under 63 psi. Reduce this down to say 50 psi, which I consider the absolute minimum needed to produce the visible marks. For simplicity, take a visible mark thirty feet in diameter and of average width five inches. This would give a total area of contact of 5400 square inches, or a total load for the UFO of 270,000 lb. This load of 135 tons would be in right ball park for a large aircraft, or presumably, small space craft.

CONCLUSIONS

My conclusions from this rather quick investigation are:

- (i) The possibility of hoax can neither be confirmed nor denied.
- (ii) The marks in the ground could have been produced by a wheel in rolling contact, but this wheel would probably require a load of at least half a ton and the wheel would have to be moved in a rather exact circle.
- (iii) The marks could have been produced by a vehicle sitting on a circular base - possibly flexible, provided the vehicle weighed at least 100 tons and possibly nearer two hundred tons.

- (iv) There is some evidence that "strange phenomena" have been seen recently in the area. This could be a lead-in to a hoax, or be genuine.
- (v) The marks were sufficiently unique in my experience for me to state categorically that if I saw similar marks elsewhere my tendency to treat the matter as a hoax would be sharply reduced. I have not, however, heard of similar markings in any previously reputed UFO landings. It might be worth enquiring of the competent authorities whether or not similar markings have been observed elsewhere.