



THE CALVINE PHOTO: REVEALED! (UPDATED)

AUG 12 - WRITTEN BY VINNIE ADAMS

With thanks to Graeme Rendall and Dr. David Clarke for their invaluable input.

ARGUABLY THE MOST fascinating British 'UFO' case in the last 35 years took place on a remote Scottish hillside one evening in August 1990. For years it has perplexed those who have looked into it, and not only due to the mysterious nature of the craft which was observed. The non-reporting of the story at the time by the Scottish press has puzzled many and in recent years information has been found that suggested terrestrial "black projects" were to blame. When the Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) decision to withhold certain details of the case until 2076 and a former MOD civilian desk officer's involvement are added to the mix, the case becomes even more fascinating and intriguing. 32 years to the month after it occurred, are we any further forward knowing just what was witnessed over the Highlands that summer evening back in 1990?

At around 9pm on the evening of Saturday, 4th August 1990, two men on a hillside near Calvine, a small hamlet situated just off the main A9 road, some 35 miles north-west of Perth in Scotland, managed to take six colour photographs of a large, diamond-shaped craft in the fading summer daylight. They watched as it hovered close to their position for some ten minutes, only to shoot off vertically at relatively high speed. When providing their witness statement, the men also recalled seeing what were believed to be RAF jets making multiple low-level passes in the area at the same time. It is still unclear whether the jets were accompanying the strange craft, or just happened to be flying through the area at the time. Calvine lies close to the only main road through that part of the Scottish Highlands, one which is a relatively busy thoroughfare even on summer evenings, and the valley it follows was a popular low-flying route for RAF aircraft. Indeed, Calvine sits in the middle of Low Flying Area 14 (LFA 14) and UAP Media UK member & aviation author Graeme Rendall recalls using various mountainside locations in the general vicinity of Calvine for low-level aviation photography back in the early 2000s.

According to the copy of the hand-written sighting report that was released by The National Archives (TNA) in October 2008, the witnesses gave an account of their sighting plus the colour photographs to what was the joint RAF/Royal Navy Headquarters at Pitreavie, near Dunfermline (which closed in 1996). As this was in the days before the advent of digital technology, the photo negatives were given to the *Daily Record*, one of the main Scottish newspapers, for potential publication. A journalist from the paper duly contacted the MOD for comment, and, when asked if the latter could have the negatives for examination, duly passed them on rather than take copies or refuse. It would appear that neither the MOD nor the *Daily Record* returned any of these items to the two witnesses. Surprisingly for such an obviously newsworthy case, the *Daily Record* did not run the story at the time, nor did they keep any of the six photographs or negatives. The MOD received everything that confirmed the existence of the strange craft over Calvine.

Although he would not be in the midst of UFO reports for another year at the time when the Calvine case was reported, Nick Pope, a former MOD civil servant and staff member of Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a (who also covered the so-called "UFO desk" in

a part-time capacity), included details of the Scottish sighting in his 1996 book *Open Skies, Closed Minds*. This prompted a Parliamentary Question in July 1996 from Martin Redmond, the Member of Parliament for Doncaster, about the incident:

“To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department made of the photograph of an unidentified craft at Calvine on 4 August 1990; who removed it from an office in Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a; for what reasons; and if he will make a statement.”

Nicholas Soames, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, gave a written reply to the MP's question:

“A number of negatives associated with the sighting were examined by staff responsible for air defence matters. Since it was judged they contained nothing of defence significance the negatives were not retained and we have no record of any photographs being taken from them.” (Hansard HC Deb., 24 July 1996, vol.282, col 39248W)

The Minister's answer sowed confusion regarding the case. His reply appears to be at odds with Nick Pope's version of events, especially the latter's statement that he had an enlargement of one of the shots by the witnesses on the wall of his Sec (AS) 2a office, pronouncing it *“easily the most compelling UFO photo”* he had ever seen. Pope also described the diamond-shaped object as a *“structured craft of unknown origin, unlike any conventional aircraft”*. His statement suggests at least one photo was made from the shots supplied by the witnesses to RAF Pitreavie or possibly even the negatives sent to the MOD by the *Daily Record*. Former desk officer Pope also recalled that his boss removed the reproduction from the office wall and he never saw it again.

The MOD UFO files which were released in October 2008 files also provide a fascinating insight into just how the Calvine case was handled. Dated 14th September 1990, a loose minute from D/Sec (AS) 12/2 to the Assistant Private Secretary/Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces suggested that the *Daily Record* was expected to run the story, therefore a handy set of responses had been drafted for potential enquiries as a result. These were categorised into two groups; *“Defensive Lines to Take”* and *“If Pressed”*. The first included comments such as *“no definite conclusions reached regarding diamond-shaped object”* and *“have no record of Harriers operating in location at stated time/date”*. The second included the somewhat dismissive statement that *“UFO reports from Scotland are rare.”* What is clear from the loose minute is that D/Sec (AS) 12/2 believed that the Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces needed to know both the background of the case in at least some detail and extra lines to take it beyond the UK Government's usual *“UFO reports present nothing of defence significance”* response. This alone seemed to set the Calvine sighting at a level above the run-of-the-mill UFO reports that featured in the MOD files.

Details of the MOD's investigation and conclusion took up a single paragraph of the loose minute:

“The negatives have been considered by the relevant staffs who have established that the jet aircraft is a Harrier (and also identified a barely visible second aircraft, again probably a Harrier) but have reached no definite conclusion regarding the large object.”

The 'Defensive Lines to Take' section of a loose minute sent to the Assistant Private Secretary/Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 14th September 1990. (Crown Copyright)

The 'relative staffs' refers to the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (JARIC), based at RAF Brampton in Cambridgeshire. JARIC was responsible for strategic imagery intelligence and had provided unique insight on both the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc states during the early Cold War period before the advent of satellite technology. In 1996, it ceased to fall under operational control of the RAF and instead came under the control of the Director General Intelligence and Geographic Requirements. JARIC is now also known as the National Imagery Exploitation Centre, due to its expanded role within the wider UK intelligence community.

A copy of a Defence Intelligence Staff (SP)OPS Imagery Tasking Form released in March 2009 sheds light on what appeared at the time to be a sensitive subject. Five vu-foils (acetates for overhead projection) had been provided with a request for *'line drawings of object with size and dimension where possible. This is a re-task of an original passed in Sept 90. Original negatives are not available.'* Listed under *'Essential elements of information'*, handwritten notes included *'Task already discussed with Ops 4 Sqn'* and *'Since remit exists official tasking would be in order, but sensitivity of material suggests very special handling. Suggest therefore an ad-hoc on DI55's IP4005 with minimum handling by listed personnel.'* A response to the request was required by 13th February 1992.

A line drawing of one of the Calvine photographs created for imagery analysis. The Minister's reply in July 1996 that 'we have no record of any photographs being taken from them [the negatives]' may have been correct, as photos were provided by the witnesses in any case. (Crown Copyright)

Buried in a batch of MOD UFO files released in March 2009 were a couple of very crude images showing a large diamond-shaped object as well as a single aircraft, which appeared to resemble a Harrier. According to Nick Pope, when interviewed by UAP Media UK member Andy McGrillen on [That UFO Podcast](#) in October 2020, they were *"a couple of very poor quality black and white photocopies of an old line drawing of one of the photos, which looked almost cartoonish."* Whether this original line drawing, which would have been used for imagery analysis, was the same one requested as per the copy of the DIS(SP)OPS

Imagery Tasking Form released back in March 2009, is unknown. No annotation or analysis accompanies these images, nor is there any sense of scale, size or distance. The files do not reveal whether the two witnesses were contacted for follow-up questioning about their sighting.

What was also intriguing about the loose minute was what the MOD said about the photographic negatives that they received from the *Daily Record* on 10th September 1990:

“The negatives have now been returned to the Scottish Daily Record.”

The newspaper has yet to acknowledge its own part in the Calvine case and informal approaches to staff working for the title at the time were largely met with failures to recall handling the negatives at all. Only the (now-deceased) picture editor remembered the newspaper receiving them and then passing the items on to the MOD. A short article dated 10th October 2020 (available here - <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/secret-ufo-dossier-1990-scottish-22824456>) appears to be the *Daily Record*'s sole contribution, but this simply dealt with the extension of the MOD file's release date and referenced the *Daily Mirror* as the source of the actual story.

Speculation that the *Daily Record* had been the subject of a D-Notice preventing publication remains unconfirmed. The most compelling evidence for such an action came courtesy of a memo buried within Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon (UAP) policy files released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 2018 to Dr. David Clarke, UAP Media UK member & journalist / lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University. A 'UK Restricted' minute titled '*Wrap Up of UAP Material*' (22nd March 2000) included references to slides, photographs and vu-graphs held by a reports library in the MOD archives. Written by Ron Haddow, a DI55 contractor and author of the report '*Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in the UK Air Defence Region: Executive Summary*' (2000, Project Condign), two lines in the third paragraph of this minute read:

“The remaining ASTRA/AURORA photos and 35mm slides are also on this last file. There was a Press 'D' Notice issued at the time.”

There is no mention of which particular report or story the D-Notice referred to, but the likely candidates are Calvine or the strange craft that allegedly crash-landed at Boscombe Down in September 1994. The issue of such a ban on reporting would help to explain the *Daily Record*'s failure to report on the story in 1990 and since.

Further details regarding the Calvine sighting were included in the '*Wrap Up of UAP Material*' minute. Ron Haddow had access to the MOD archive holding UAP reports, describing what had happened to some of them:

“Selected vu-graphs (though insufficient for an up to date final presentation), with some 35mm slides, have been placed on the above remaining file, together with a sample of the last three UAP reports.”

The three reports were not named but mention of a remaining file suggested at first glance that information on the Calvine sighting may have been contained within it. They did not emerge. Despite the MOD's statements in 1990 and 1996 that the Calvine sighting did not contain anything of defence significance, an announcement was made that certain information would not be released until at least 2072, a staggering 82 years after the sighting.

The MOD continues to refuse to comment further on the nature of the object itself and speculation inevitably arose as to what information was being withheld. Did the Calvine photos show a true UAP, or was there a much more mundane explanation for the MODs actions? In response to an enquiry from Graeme Rendall in late 2020 regarding this matter, Dr. David Clarke referred to the sighting report released in October 2008:

“What is being withheld until 2072 is simply the name and address of the informant, e.g., the photographer – that is covered by black ink. The reason is that MOD and TNA regard this as 'personal information' that should be protected for an extended period of time.”

Dr. Clarke confirmed that before the introduction of FOIA in 2005, personal details would have been released under the Thirty Years Rule. If the original procedures had been followed, the name of the primary witness would have been released by the TNA in January 2021. Dr. Clarke chose to fight the MOD's current decision, "...arguing that there is no valid reason for the unredacted versions of these files to be withheld for that length of time."

Whilst the debate over the exact nature of the object continues to this day, mention of ASTRA/Aurora and a possible D-Notice suggests that a man-made vehicle, probably a black project of some description, was involved. This would suggest an unannounced American platform. Others disagree, stating that the Calvine craft clearly demonstrated at least two of the Five

Observables (established by Luis Elizondo during his time running the Pentagons Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program / AATIP), namely instant acceleration, and anti-gravity lift with no visible propulsion system.

Although the loose minute titled *'Defensive Lines to Take'* mentioned a Harrier aircraft featuring in at least one of the images received by the MOD, tracking down which unit or air force it belonged to has presented something of a challenge. The Defence Intelligence Staff (SP)OPS Imagery Tasking Form notes stated that the *"task had already been discussed with Ops 4 Sqn"*. Enquiries had presumably been conducted to determine whether any RAF Harrier or Fleet Air Arm Sea Harrier aircraft were operating in the Calvine area at the time and date specified. According to the minute, no records of such jets had been located. Searches would have included looking at bookings made for LFA 14 low-level flying slots for the day in question, which were controlled by the Low-Flying Operations Squadron at RAF West Drayton. However, in practice these records were probably not 100% complete.

The mention of No.4 Squadron Operations appears to confirm that enquiries about the object were made with at least one unit operating the Harrier ground-attack jet. This squadron was based at RAF Gütersloh in Germany at the time and equipped with Harrier GR.3s but was on the point of converting to the new GR.5 variant. Several pilots from the unit were undergoing conversion training in Surrey and Arizona at that time. Some of the remaining No.4 Squadron Harrier GR.3s may have returned to Britain for exercises and low-flying training in September 1990 due to a complete ban on the latter being in force in Germany at the time. In October 2021, Graeme Rendall checked the Operations Record Books for the various front-line units operating the Harrier at the time (No.1, No.3 and No.4 Squadrons) but found no reference to any aircraft that might have been flying over Scotland on the day of the incident.

However, if the Calvine object had been a secret military aircraft, possibly either British or American, then No.4 Sqdn may not have been the best unit to contact. In 1990, the Strike Attack Operational Evaluation Unit (SAOEU) was based at RAF Boscombe Down in Wiltshire and operated a number of Harrier GR.5 aircraft in weapons and avionics trials. SAOEU also had a Special Projects Team, but it was responsible for engineering procedures regarding modifications to existing aircraft types. If the object was undergoing some sort of test flight, it is possible that one or more SAOEU Harrier GR.5s were accompanying it that evening in August 1990.

A Harrier GR.7 carrying Brimstone missiles on a trials flight over Thirlmere in the Lake District, north-western England, in the mid-2000s. Due to the poor nature of the line drawing, it is unclear which type of Harrier was pictured with the mysterious craft over Calvine in August 1990. Some RAF units were transitioning from the increasingly obsolete GR.3 variant to the newer GR.5 (outwardly identical to this GR.7). (Graeme Rendall)

There is one further possibility: the Harrier was not British but American. Back in 1990, the US Marine Corps operated the AV-8B version of the aircraft, built by McDonnell-Douglas. These operated from the US Navy Tarawa-class landing helicopter assault carriers, known as LHAs. In August 1990, the only one of the five Tarawa LHAs deployed to the Atlantic Ocean was USS Saipan (LHA-2). That month, she was off Liberia, supporting the evacuation of US Embassy staff from that country. Her small AV-8B Harrier II contingent was onboard, drawn from VMA-223 Bulldogs based at MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that one or more AV-8Bs

were sent to Britain to support a black project operation, although the odds of this are somewhat low, given the distance involved. Carrier-based aircraft would more than likely have had to land somewhere in Britain and would invariably have set aircraft enthusiasts into a frenzy. Yet no reports of USMC Harriers appeared at that time, from Saipan or any of the other four LHAs.

Dr. David Clarke and Vinnie Adams (UAP Media UK / Disclosure Team)

In September 2021 Dr. David Clarke joined UAP Media UK member Vinnie Adams on his podcast, [Disclosure Team](#), where they discussed his investigation into the case over the years. Following the interview, they discussed David's ongoing investigation, with Vinnie joining David and his team and assisting with the case going forward.

Around this time, after many years of dead ends, David finally experienced a breakthrough – he was put in touch with retired RAF press officer Craig Lindsay. Craig was involved in the Calvine case back in 1990 as the go-between for the Daily Record and the MOD. During his involvement in the case, Craig acquired an original print of the elusive photograph. Along with the photo, Craig had also kept the original envelope containing the photograph sent by the Daily Record to the MOD. In May 2022, David travelled to interview Craig in Scotland and was shown the original print and in June, Craig agreed to donate the photograph to the Sheffield Hallam University Archives, handing it to Dr. David Clarke and Vinnie Adams. The image now resides in its new home at the Sheffield Hallam University folklore archives.

The original Calvine photograph, showing the diamond-shaped craft and a Harrier aircraft in what appears to be close proximity. (Reproduced with permission of Sheffield Hallam University/Craig Lindsay - No unauthorised reproduction, manipulation, editing, cropping or sharing of this image is permitted without strict authorisation of the copyright holder).

Retired RAF Press Officer Craig Lindsay and Dr. David Clarke.

For more details on the investigation, you can listen to Dr. David Clarke recount the story on the Disclosure Team podcast.



Several weeks after the publication of this article, Vinnie Adams conducted a follow up Question and Answer session with several members of the investigation team, including image analyst Andrew Robinson.

UPDATE: With thanks to **Straiph Wilson** for pointing to us the extra information relating to the witness statement in the MOD archives: [DEFE-24-1940-1_2](#) (*only the relevant pages are linked*)

The statement reads as follows:

UFO Incident: Saturday 4th August 90

Location: Calvine, Scotland. 20 miles north of Pitlochry off the A9

Time: 9pm approx.

Description: Large diamond shape UFO hovering for about 10 minutes before ascending vertically upwards at high speed. During sighting RAF aircraft, believed to be a Harrier made a number of low level passes for 5 or 6 minutes before disappearing off.

Witnesses: [name redacted] and 1 unidentified other.

Report posted to [name redacted] RAF Press Officer,
Pitreavie MHQ

Tel: RAF Pitreavie [number redacted]

Additional Information: A number of colour photographs taken by eye witness and pictures posted to RAF Pitreavie and Scottish Daily Record. Original negatives posted to the Daily Record.

Weather Information: Main cloud base 25,000ft dropping down to 15,000ft during showers. Wind, West-SW 10-15 knots. Temperature 14°C. Occasional showers.

Photographic Details: (i) Confirmation of date and time (ii) What sort of camera (iii) What type of lens (iv) What focal length.

As we can see there is some extra information that wasn't available prior to publishing the content. We also have photographic analysis undertaken by **Andrew Robinson**, Senior Lecturer in Photography, Sheffield Hallam University and that can be viewed [here](#).

We can also provide below an extended Loose Minute from D/Sec(AS)12/2 dated 14th September 1990.

UPDATE (17th August 2022): You can now download a high quality, watermark free, .TIF image of the #Calvine Photograph (20+MB) by clicking [here](#).

For the full story visit drdavidclarke.co.uk

To request further information regarding the above case, or if you were the pilot of the Harrier jet and want to tell your story, you can get in touch with us confidentially at [uapmediauk\(at\)proton.me](mailto:uapmediauk(at)proton.me)



Vinnie Adams
https://twitter.com/disclosureteam_

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□ *We know that UFOs exist. This is no longer an issue. The US Navy itself has publicly acknowledged the fact that they exist... So the issue now is: why are they here, where are they coming from and what is the technology behind these devices that we are observing?* □

— CHRISTOPHER MELLON, FMR. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR
INTELLIGENCE

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CONTEXT FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Note: Photographic evidence "ASTRA/AURORA" was mentioned in MOD files (see 12 August 2022), suggesting the British government is aware of Astra.

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