Report:

_UFO's in Derbyshire_ , a 28 minute documentary video

By Dr. Heather Joseph-Witham, Folklorist, partially funded by an Otis Faculty Development Grant

I traveled to Derbyshire to film interviews with many ufo sightees. I have been visiting relatives in the rural region of Derbyshire in Northern England for a number of years. I usually stay with family in a 500 person strong village called Winster. The surrounding countryside has pastoral rolling hills, flocks of lambs, occasional pot-bellied pigs and numerous tors and circles of druidic standing stones. Traditional cultural activities and beliefs are highly prized in Winster and its surrounding villages. Such customs include summer carnival and English folk Morris dancing, well-dressings, Christmas mummer plays and local churches that risk schism with the Anglican church by refusing all female vicars sent their way. Of course, normal 21st century life exists, with satellite dishes and cars, and more recently - UFO sightings.

Incredibly, every other person I ask in Derbyshire claims to have seen a UFO. In England, it is well-known that Derbyshire is the new UFO 'hotspot'. I interviewed individuals from Winster and nearby Bonsall Moor who have seen flying objects, as well as one person who saw aliens. I also visited and filmed at the Barley Mow pub at Bonsall which has become a hub for UFO interest. Each person I interviewed had a completely different experience. Some saw flying triangles, some saucers, others saw cigar-shaped flying vehicles or odd hovering lights. Each was convinced that what they saw was not of earthly origin and believed they were in Derbyshire due to the large amount of minerals in the soil and the relative tranquility and quiet of the countryside.

I believe that these sightings and their accompanying narratives are not new, but rather the continuation and modernization of old English traditional beliefs in Faeries and will o' the wisps. People have reported sightings of strange, fiery lights at lead mines in Derbyshire for centuries. Additionally, many have experienced strange things at standing stone circles, on windswept moors, and at many other Derbyshire sites. I absolutely accept that my informants had very real experiences. I also believe that these experiences are interpreted in a manner consistent with the zeitgeist of the times. Perhaps yesterday's ghost-lights and firedrakes are today's UFO's.
For further information about screening or purchase: hwitham@otis.edu

--Heather Joseph-Witham (/faculty/heather-joseph-witham)
Associate Professor, Liberal Arts and Sciences

Screeencaps: