

# Yuletide lights in the Solway

DURING recent weeks people living along the West Cumbrian coast have been fascinated by a series of lights which have sprung up on the Scots side of the Solway in the region of Auchencraigs.

At times they appear to be at sea; at other times on the mainland.

Has Scotland decided to brighten up the lives of recession-hit Maryport and Workington this Christmas?

Because so many have been asking about the Scots-side illuminations, we decided to try to solve the mystery.

But even the Scots we spoke to were undecided just what the lights are — though they were adamant that the source was not extra-terrestrial.

Dumfries and Galloway council environmental chief Ken Stewart believes them to be from a giant carrier, anchored off Whithorn Island.

## TRANSPORTED

"The carrier, bringing chemicals from North Africa for use at Marchon at Whitehaven, is too large to get into Whitehaven docks," he explained.

"So it anchors off Whithorn and the cargo is off-loaded on to smaller freighters and transported back to Cumbria," he said.

But neither Marchon nor J. B. Moffat and Co., the ship brokers at Whitehaven, have any knowledge of large shipping in the Whithorn area. The plot thickened.

Then Castle Douglas's environmental chief Bill Davidson suggested that the lights might be from the Dundrennan army gunnery range directly across from Maryport.

"The army have been carrying out night-firing practice for the past two months and this would surely require massive illumination," he suggested. Well, he was

An Army spokesman at Dundrennan said this week that there had recently been an extensive installation of new security lights round the range.

"And as we can see the lights of Workington and Maryport on a clear night and even watch vehicles moving along the

coast road between the towns, it is highly likely that what you are seeing over there are our new installations," he said.

So the mystery is apparently solved. But if anyone sees the lights begin to move this Christmas, don't ring us; ring Dundrennan . . . or put the top on the bottle.

## JOHN WRIGHT'S COASTWATCH

# Solway lights mystery

RED LIGHTS seen over the Solway Firth this week have officially been logged as UFOs — unidentified flying objects.

The lights were spotted at intervals during the early hours of Monday by members of the public and the police.

Interpreted as red flares from a stricken boat, Workington and

Silloth Lifeboats were launched to search the Solway.

However, no vessel in distress was found nor was one reported missing, according to Coastguard headquarters near Liverpool.

Solway Sector Auxiliary Coastguard, Mr Ashley Winterpo, said: "We thought it might have been meteorites but the meteorologists say it is the wrong time

of the year.

"In the official report we have put the lights down as UFOs. There is no explanation for them."

Driving on the marsh road at Skimburness, Carlisle baker Mr Dick Gardiner saw a huge crimson ball. "Pieces were shooting off it, then it just vanished. The whole thing lasted about 15 seconds," he said.

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