



## **Beagle 2: Found at last!**

Clip taken from 'The Sky at Night: What have UFOs done for US?', BBC Four.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

It's 11 years since Beagle 2 disappeared. How come we've found it now?

*JIM CLEMMET:*

A high resolution camera on Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter has, over the years, been taking images of Mars – including about 11 or 12 overlapped across the landing ellipse of Beagle 2. And a number of those images are showing an artefact on the surface of Mars.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

The images appear to show a number of objects that scientists believe were the rear cover, parachute and the lander itself. Even though it's just a few pixels wide, closer views appear to reveal the tell-tale shape of Beagle 2 and suggest that the spacecraft had begun to deploy its solar panels.

*JIM CLEMMET:*

So, this is the first panel to come out and this is covered, about 80%, with solar cells, which are glass.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

So, very reflective.

*JIM CLEMMET:*

Very reflective.

And then the next panel would be this one. And we think we're looking at something like that.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

And if this is the case, it radically changes our view of the mission's success.

*JIM CLEMMET:*

Well, it means that the entering descent and landing system worked. That the lander survived impact onto the surface. That all the electronics absorbed that shock.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

So, Beagle 2 was not lost after all. Not only did it successfully touchdown on Mars, it also began to operate. So, why have we heard nothing for over a decade?

*JIM CLEMMET:*

If we open these up now, you will see. So, underneath here is the antenna.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

Yes.

*JIM CLEMMET:*

OK, so, if all the panels had opened up, as we see now, then the antenna would have been free to communicate and then the mission would have been able to proceed. And so, whilst we know where Beagle is now, there's no means of trying to restart it. So, there's no way of communicating with it.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

Yes.

Even so, Beagle 2 still has a hold on us.

*JIM CLEMMET:*

There are other parts of the Beagle mission that were also a success. For example, encouraging young people into science, technology, engineering. And I know there are people out there now who are engineers or scientists because of Beagle.

*MAGGIE ADERIN-POCOCK:*

Perhaps the late Colin Pillinger summed it up best.

*COLIN PILLINGER:*

It was not a failure. Deferred success. Triumph, not a disaster.