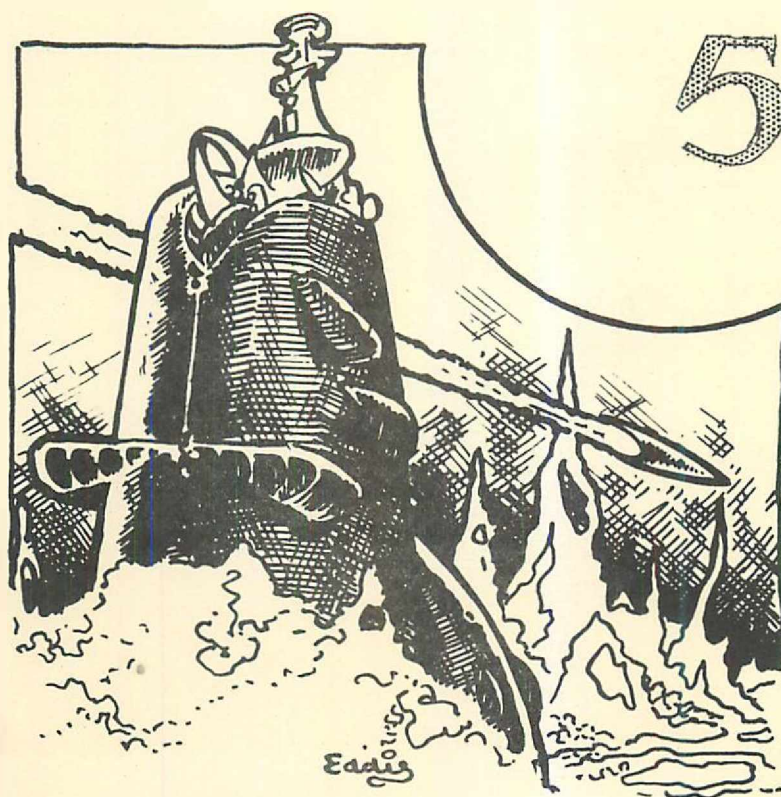
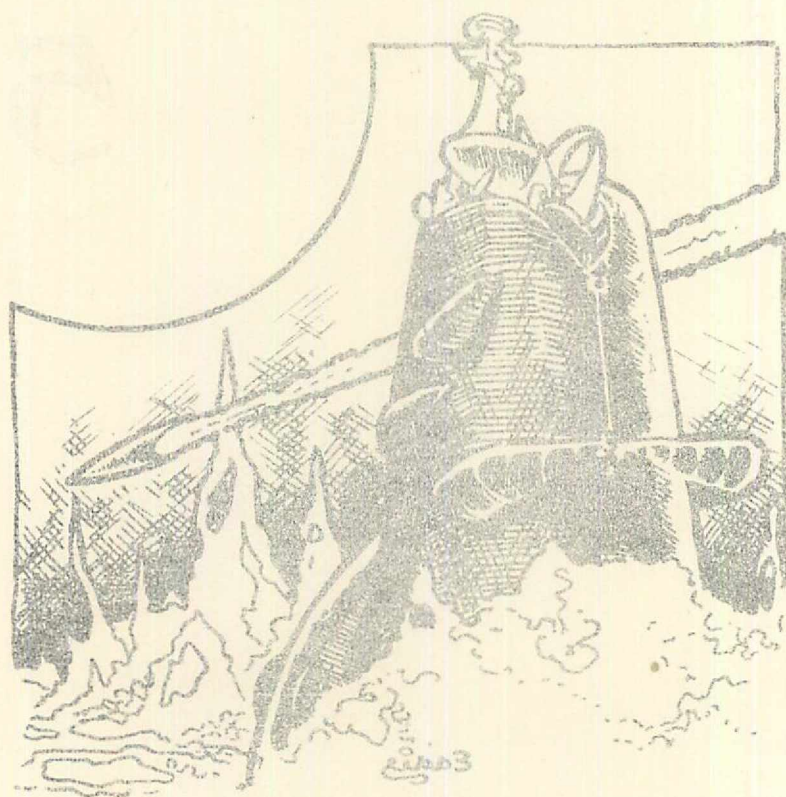
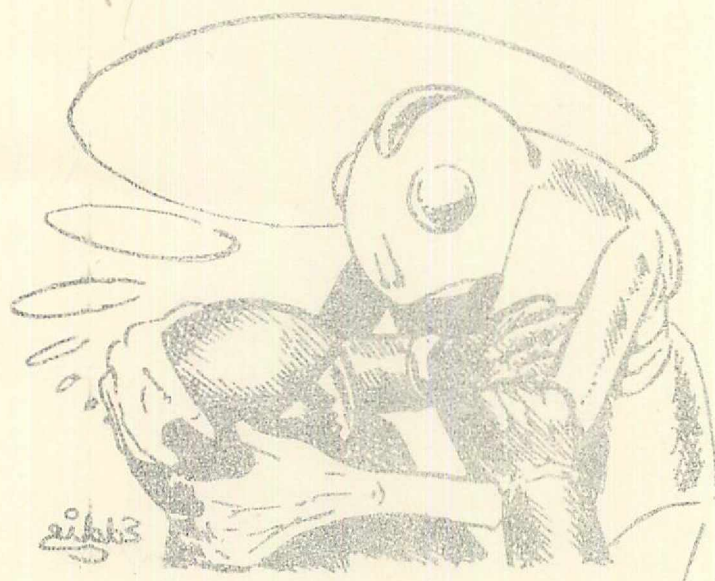


POT POURRI

51





ANATOMY OF THE FIERY CROSS

In just one week there has been an unprecedented interest by the press, TV and radio on alleged U.F.O's which have been dominating the skies of the British Isles, most particularly over Southern England. The particular point I have noticed is that the B.B.C., which usually scorns such things, has taken an active interest in reporting them. True, there have been a few programmes over the years about U.F.O's, or the eternal question about 'Life in the Universe', but these have been slanted in such a way that the serious observers of these phenomena have been shown in rather an eccentric light. This is quite contrary to this last week's reportage, where, as you'll read later, even B.B.C. engineers have been quoted as seeing U.F.O's, and have been interviewed about the sightings in a serious manner.

The facts I wish to discuss commenced on 24th October 1967. On the 1.30pm B.B.C. newscast, it was stated that two Devon policemen in a car 'chased a U.F.O. last night for about twenty minutes at 80.m.p.h.' The object was at tree-top height, was very large and bright, and both policemen agreed it was shaped like a 'flying cross.' The observers stopped a car, and the occupant also admitted seeing the object. On the 8.50pm B.B.C. TV newscast on the same date, one of the policemen was interviewed. He said it definitely wasn't a star or planet or aircraft.

The newspapers, next morning, the 25th, covered the sightings in a big way, probably because policemen were concerned. The DAILY MAIL stated :-

POLICE CAR CHASES MYSTERY LIGHT IN SKY.

An unidentified flying object was plotted on a police operations room map as it led a patrol car on a 90m.p.h. chase early yesterday.

The patrol car crew, Constables Roger Willey and Clifford Waycott, spotted the brilliant, star-like object as they cruised along the A3072 towards Hatherleigh, Devon, at 4.15.am.

In the Operations Room at Exeter county police headquarters startled staff heard them report "Am observing an unidentified flying object seven miles south of Hatherleigh. The U.F.O. is moving off at high speed. Am pursuing."

P.O. Waycott, 33, kept up a radio commentary as the chase went on for 14 miles.

Watched.

He said yesterday : "I saw a light in front of us and my

immediate thought was that it was a funny place for a street lamp. It had a very bright, diffused light.

P.O. Willey put his foot down and the light accelerated at a tremendous speed. We were touching 90m.p.h, but could not catch up with it.

I thought at first it might have been an aircraft in trouble, but when it took off at such a speed I knew it was not."

As the chase went on the two officers saw a similar object join the one they had been chasing.

P.O. Waycott said : "They came together for a matter of seconds and then both vanished. Farther along the road to Okehampton one of them appeared again."

When they arrived at Okehampton police station, night duty officers told them they had also seen the U.F.O. hovering in the sky and had watched it.

Exeter police headquarters telephoned the Meteorological Office, R.A.F Chivener, and were told that there were no operations which could account for the sightings.

The more flamboyant DAILY EXPRESS featured a photograph of Constable Willey, and also gave an 'artist's impression' of the object, which I've copied below for your information. The newspaper reported the affair generally under the heading GETAWAY !, and then quoted Constable Waycott once more :-

Constable Waycott, father of two, said :- "I am a bit sceptical, but this was definitely no star. I saw a light in front of us. I thought it was a funny place for a street lamp. It had a diffused light. It wasn't piercing but it was very bright.

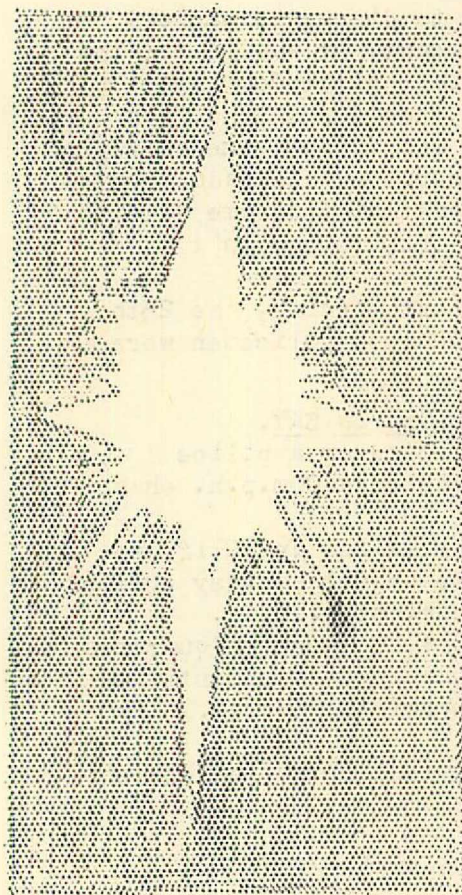
It was star-spangled, just like looking through wet glass."

The patrolmen were so amazed that they woke a man sleeping in a Land Rover.

The Ministry of Defence said that the sighting seemed to tie up with similar reports from the area in the past week and added: "We have insufficient evidence to identify the object."

The B.B.C. TV news at 5.50pm on the 25th October said that the 'Flying Cross U.F.O's' had been seen in four separate areas in England...in the southern part of the country, and some of the sightings were 'made by policemen.'

A later news programme on TV reported that eleven policemen in one district in the South of England saw the "Flying Cross." The Chief Constable was interviewed on the programme. He said he was sure that all the reports were genuine. His own conclusion (although he hadn't seen it,) was that it was the planet VENUS, 'which was reported to be very bright last night.'



Since I obtained my own telescope, a war-surplus 16"-gun gun-sight, with 21x magnification (I also purchased a 60x telescope for my son Colin after passing important school examinations) I scan the skies every time I go out. On the night of 25th October 1967 the sky was mostly overcast, with but infrequent breaks which sometimes showed the stars. One such break occurred at 10.25pm, when I made what I have described in my log-book as an UNUSUAL SIGHTING. I know the major constellations so well that I can espy a satellite immediately by noting it is out of place in the plan of the sky. This is exactly what I saw... URSA MAJOR was revealed for a few moments, and moving slowly downwards from ³ I noticed a reddish light...it continued moving until cloud once more obscured my view. Now I'm not saying what it was I saw....I am not crying out 'U.F.O!...I am as sure as I can be that it was not an aeroplane, and further than that I cannot make any comment. I consider myself a pretty good observer, so do not have any doubt about the authenticity of the sighting. What is important is that the Thursday morning newspapers revealed that three people, walking quite close to where I live, saw a U.F.O. I quote

herewith from THE IRISH NEWS AND BELFAST MORNING NEWS, 26th October 1967:-

The mysterious "flying cross" sightings, which have set theories of outer space visitors buzzing these Islands, appeared over Belfast last night.

According to a young secondary school teacher, Mr. Stanley Mills, objects "about three times as fast as supersonic aircraft" appeared in the sky as he was walking with his fiancée along the Knock Road.

He told police officials of seeing two flashing white lights, moving exceedingly fast from North to west. The objects were between 500 and 1,000 feet up. They made no noise and as they receded "they seemed to join".

Another light, a flashing red object with a steady white light in front of it, passed under the first object, travelling north-south.

With Mr. Mills at the time, besides his fiancée, was Miss Joy Lindsay, The Menase, Green Road.

During Wednesday night, however, sightings weren't confined to Belfast...many were seen over Southern England once more, and also in Wales. The press once more made capital out of the fact that policemen were amongst the observers. The DAILY EXPRESS on 26th October 1967 headlining ELEVEN POLICE REPORT SIGHTINGS AS R.A.F. OFFICER TRACKS 'SEVEN BRILLIANT LIGHTS'

The great "Flying Things" mystery deepened yesterday with more reports of sightings in several parts of the country.

Eleven more policemen saw the "fiery cross" in the sky. It was like the one two Devon patrolmen chased on Tuesday.

Yesterday it appeared over East Sussex. In Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, two more policemen saw "two very dark oval-shaped objects" moving towards Banbury at about 500 to 600 feet. Wing Commander Eric Cox, 56, of Hyde, Hampshire, rang police to say he and his wife saw "seven brilliant lights in V-formation" over the New Forest. Three moved off and four went into the shape of a cross and hovered above trees and pylons near Godshill Ridge for 10 minutes.

All the reports have brought high excitement in the unidentified flying object societies. But astronomers at the Royal Greenwich Observatory are sure the fiery crosses were, in fact, "the planet Venus, now close to earth and very bright in the morning sky."

I must mention here that the B.B.C. have very rarely tried to make news items about U.F.O's. Once or twice I recall brief mentions of sightings, but usually they are dismissed in a few terse words. But the sightings during this week in late October were fully reported, never more so than on the Friday morning, 27th October 1967. I lay in bed and listened to the newscasts avidly, to keep up to date with the latest sightings. In a period of twenty minutes, between 8 am and 8.20am, there were three separate mentions of U.F.O. sightings. The National news at 8 am stated that several sightings had been made during Thursday night, specifically mentioning one over Dartmoor. On the Northern Ireland news at 8.10 am I was amazed not to say completely astounded to hear that a flying saucer had landed in Falls Park, Belfast, the previous night. "Police rushed to the scene, but found nothing." My wife, who had also been listening to the news on the radio downstairs came rushing up to tell me about it. Just a few moments later, at 8.20 am, on the TODAY programme, the sightings over Dartmoor were described in detail, and a BBC engineer and several boys told what they had seen, the usual 'fiery cross' of bright light.

But these BBC statements were just a small lead-up to the climax to come. When I got to the office, and scanned the newspapers, I saw that many of them led, with large black letters, the fantastic news that it was officially admitted that whatever was being seen all over the British Isles was not a star or a planet. The NEWS LETTER for this day blasted forth with:

SOMETHING IS UP THERE - OFFICIAL.

As further sightings were reported yesterday of the mysterious object said to resemble a flaming cross, a Royal Observatory spokesman said: "There is something up there which is not a star or planet."

The Royal Observatory statement followed a sighting by Mr. Peter Baker (25), a Hastings (Sussex) hospital clerk and amateur astronomer.

"Mr. Baker said he saw a bright light in the sky at about 6.40 am yesterday," the spokesman said. "We thought it might have been Venus."

Brighter.

"We asked him to look out in the same direction at the same time this morning. He saw Venus at 7 am today. He said that what he saw yesterday was brighter and further to the left - that is further to the north. Since yesterday morning was very cloudy

it is certain that the bright object he saw was on this side of the clouds, and that there is something up there which is not a star or a planet."

A milkman on his rounds at St. Neot's, Huntingdonshire, reported seeing the object travelling at speed over the town centre yesterday. His milk-boy also says he saw it, and both described it as looking like a bright star and moving fast. The two men then attracted the attention of several passers-by to confirm the sighting, and then reported it to police headquarters.

The DAILY EXPRESS on this date avers that the sighting by the hospital clerk was 'firm'. It was the only paper which suggested that if the U.F.O's were real, they were over the British Isles for an ulterior motive :

DEFENCE CHECK ON 'U.F.O THREAT TO BRITAIN.

The Defence Ministry is probing the latest 'unidentified flying object' sighting - 'in case it threatens Britain.'

Would a flying saucer constitute a threat ?

Said a Defence Ministry spokesman : "We cannot answer that yet. From around 100 U.F.O. reports each year, we have never proved that any exist."

But disappointment came yesterday to schoolgirl Hazel Williams, 13, and her family of Windsor Drive, Old Colwyn, North Wales.

Photographs they took of " a bright oval object" were identified by Professor Bernard Lovell of the Radio Telescope site at Jodrell Bank, as being of the planet Venus.

Said Prof. Lovell: "Venus is at its brightest this month, and this could lead observers to believe it was an object flying at tree-level height."

Meanwhile, during Friday Northern Ireland had a visitation from a more mundane flying object, the type of which has been allegedly seen and photographed for years...I think someone identified it as being a photograph of a Chrysler hub cap.... in the BELFAST TELEGRAPH dated Friday 27th October 1967 two sightings were reported for the day:

MORE 'FLYING OBJECTS ARE SEEN OVER ULSTER.

.....a Mr. Joe Maguire reported :- "The object I saw looked like two saucers on top of each other. It was surrounded by square lights with a bright light at the front and a red light underneath. It was travelling at a height of about 300 feet and made a faint humming noise. It was not an aircraft."

Patrick O'Loughlin (46), of Hawthorne Crescent, Rathfriland, and Richard Rodgers (40), of Murphy Crescent, Newry, (Co. Down), who were out shooting today, claimed they had seen a mystery object flying over Millbay, two miles from Killybegs, at about 200 feet."

Because news was coming thick and fast about this mass of sightings over the British Isles, I was tuned to all newscasts on both the radio and TV, and just as I switched on the transistor at 6.30 pm on BBC Radio 4, I caught the end of a sentence thus '....that the sightings are most probably caused by American Air Force re-fuelling exercises being carried out at night."

Saturday's newspapers all reported this new explanation, but none were really convinced. I'll quote later one or two short paragraphs from a newspaper, but it merely confirms what I had noticed with increasing interest....that the size, shape and colouring of the objects being reported were utterly diverse. It is a well known fact that people see things differently....eye-witnesses to a particular incident will give widely differing opinions, although basically there is corroboration. First of all, however, the IRISH TIMES for Saturday 28th October 1967 gave what I thought to be the most comprehensive summary of the situation to date, including the mid-air re-fuelling theory :

FLYING OBJECTS ARE SIGHTED 28 TIMES.

Unidentified Flying objects have been sighted at least 28 times in the past two days, from Dublin to Tunbridge Wells. These have been in the form of the "burning cross", the cigar (surrounded by a bright green glow), the saucer (with star-shaped beams of light) and a very large plate. The most frequently seen has been the burning cross.

Places 'visited' included Brighton, Stalybridge, Glossop, Mottram-in-Longdendale, Colchester, Hastings and Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Liverpool, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Lincoln, Ipswich and Felixstowe.

Meanwhile the explanations proliferate.

The Vicar of Stourton Candlo, near Sherborne, Dorset, the Rev. Lawrence Inge, suggested that the unidentified flying objects were a mid-air refuelling operation. Rev.Inge, who operates an international visual satellite tracking station, saw with powerful binoculars loaned him for spotting by the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, Hants, a formation of light.

Mid-air Re-fuelling ?

"There was one very bright white light surrounded by seven or eight red lights, some of which were flashing. There was no sound at that time. The group got nearer and nearer quite suddenly."

On Thursday night a Southern Rescue Co-ordinator spokesman at Plymouth said a mid-air re-fuelling exercise was taking place over the West Country, and this would necessitate a lot of light.

The Test.

The United States Air Force may hold the answer to the flying crosses. A spokesman at the Third Air Force base at Ruislip (Middlesex) said that re-fuelling exercises were taking place over Southwest England on Thursday night. On Tuesday and Wednesday night similar exercises were taking place over Scotland - but none were scheduled for last night. "So this is the test," the spokesman said.

He explained that the giant jet-tanker carries powerful lights under its fuselage, and its tail and along both wings. Aircraft to be fuelled fly alongside showing red navigation lights. Four aircraft can be attached to the tanker at any one time - and the lines, lit by the powerful tanker lights, would form a sort of cross-shape.

The NEWS LETTER didn't like the re-fuelling theory. It concluded :-

But in spite of the statement by the U.S. Air Force other sightings during the past few days remain unexplained.

There was, for example, the saucer shape at Colchester, the large plate at Liverpool, with a very bright bluish-white light; an oval orange shaped object at Felixstowe, a white cigar-shaped object at Preston with a blue halo and a giant tube at Winsford, Cheshire, with projections above and below, glowing as though hot, ten times the size of a Boeing 707.

The DAILY EXPRESS, as always, continued to give credence to sightings by policemen:

CIGAR-SHAPED.

The New riddle arose from a sighting at Bacup, Lancs, early yesterday. As in many previous cases, the U.F.O. spotter was a policeman.

Police Constable Brian Earnshaw saw a 'cigar-shaped ship with portholes' hovering 250 feet above a police station.

Two other policemen, Colin Donahoe and Malcolm Reader also watched the ship for several minutes. Then it rose vertically and disappeared.

And thirty miles away, at Stalybridge, Cheshire, a 'flying cross' like the one spotted over Dartmoor was seen by six policemen.

It hovered for about five minutes 1,000 feet over nearby Glossop.

The Saturday issue of the IRISH NEWS gave prominence to a local sighting by two school-boys:-

MORE SIGHTINGS OF 'STRANGERS' IN THE SKY.

Belfast boys see a 3-prong tail UFO.

Latest sightings of a mysterious object have been made by two pupils of St. Malachy's College, Belfast - Paul Burns and Desmond Dick - both of Rampan Gardens, Andersonstown, Belfast.

The object had a circular head with a three-prong tail. The front section was bright red. It was travelling very fast as it disappeared over the Black Mountains.

I was lying in bed on Saturday night, listening to the radio, when the 11 pm newscast reported that two farmers in Cornwall reported seeing a U.F.O. with cross-shaped lights. The U.S.A.F. reports that no flight re-fuelling was being carried on at the time.

On Monday morning, the newspapers had dropped the U.F.O. mystery to cover the start of a series of Russian spacecraft launches. The only item I could see after perusing many newspapers was a small section in the DAILY EXPRESS (dated 30th October 1967) regarding a sighting, and true to form, it had been made by a policeman.....

P.C. spots UFO over harbour.

A Rugby-shaped UFO, stationary and glowing with an intense white light, was seen over Portsmouth harbour yesterday by Southampton policeman John Whitcombe, 39, his wife and 10-year old son.

Last night he was back at his station to make a detailed report for his Chief Constable.

I must state that I have been scanning newspapers for years in order to obtain clippings about UFO's, and until the week 24th to the 30th October 1967 the harvest was extremely poor. And I must announce the fact that I am not an eccentric flying saucer enthusiast. But I do admit that the phenomena excites me...if I was cynical I suppose I could say it is a psychological experiment in imagination and hallucination, because there can be no escape from one inextinguishable fact...if just one of the many thousands of sightings is genuine, then this planet is under observation from an outside agency. This statement, I hope, is not dismissed as nonsense. For instance, Mars, Venus and the Moon have all been under observation from an outside agency - us ! Therefore the basic situation that an alien planet can be photographed, examined, physically observed in great detail is an established fact. It would be stupid, unscientific, and definitely unrealistic to state categorically that Earth could not be the recipient of such visitations.

I know of course that a great many spurious magazines and publications have got on to the band-wagon of public credulity insofar as UFO's, or flying saucers, are concerned. This has probably done considerable harm to serious investigators of the phenomena for two reasons ...(a) because hoaxes, stunts and bizarre alien confrontations have tended to obscure the genuine sightings, and (b), because serious-minded people who have seen strange objects in the sky have remained silent about it, for fear of being labelled cranks.

I have studied most of the UFO literature, and it is patently clear that the so-called 'fast buck' has been the primary consideration for publication. Imagination has run riot and a situation has arisen whereby to even admit an interest in UFO's is to suffer public ridicule.

This is why I became so absorbed with the October '67 Sightings over the British Isles, and why I took such considerable pains to attempt to record every word printed in the newspapers, and every reported detail on radio and TV.

Having gathered this information, I have attempted to analyse it insofar as I am able - having as my yardstick a knowledge of many previous sightings and personal observations which have led me to certain conclusions. And also, I might add, an essential factor when considering this notorious subject ... an open mind.

Two personal experiences are pertinent to my considerations.

(1) On 20th October 1967 I arose at the horrible hour of 6.30 am. I freely admit it almost killed me, but I had no alternative, having to travel by train to Londonderry, almost 100 miles away. I looked out of the window whilst shaving...it was a clear morning with little cloud...and Venus was a frightening sight, the biggest I've ever seen it.

It was a bright magnesium-flare-like light in the East. I knew it was Venus, and was prepared for it. But to a person without even my limited astronomical knowledge it must have been a surprising sight, and hard to reconcile as a mundane heavenly body.

(2) A few nights previously, at about 8.30pm, I was in the back garden with my son Colin and a friend of his, Paul. It was a windy night, but relatively clear in patches. Colin and I were aligning our telescopes to show Paul some sights. I heard Paul gasp with amazement, "What's that?" For a second, too, I was bewildered by what I saw. It was a long cigar-shaped object, with lights along its length. Red and white lights were flashing above and below it, and there was no sound. It was low, and moving extremely fast. I had seen the same thing many times...it was a British European Airways-operated Vanguard passenger airliner coming in low for a landing at Aldergrove Airport, a few miles north of Belfast. There was no sound because of the wind. And it was heading exactly towards the Black Mountain. I could quite appreciate how an observer, with a modicum of imagination, could be convinced that he or she had seen a UFO.

In one swift karate-like chop, I have dismissed a large percentage of the October Sightings, especially the Belfast ones. (But not mine.) For instance, the observation of Mr. Stanley Mills on the night of the 25th October 1967, and detailed in THE IRISH NEWS AND BELFAST MORNING NEWS on 26th October 1967 is obviously the nightly Vanguard, perfectly on cue. Hill's sighting is a parallel to the one I described above. Hill also describes a similar object appearing to meet the first object, pass under it, and race away...this again was obviously an aeroplane...there is also an airport a couple of miles away from the Knock Road, where his sighting took place, and one particular aircraft, a Beechcraft Baron, is taking off from there all the time at night. I know, because besides having seen it often, it also effects my TV picture.

I am also certain that the two Belfast schoolboy's sighting (IRISH NEWS, 28th October 1967)...was also the Vanguard...coloured lights and flying over Black Mountain.

The majority of the other sightings in England were the planet Venus...Sir Bernard Lovell thinks this is so, as does a Chief Constable after studying eleven first hand reports...and I agree, because I have seen....

There can also be little doubt that the USAF re-fuelling exercises account for most of the remainder - which leaves a couple of unexplained phenomena. And strangely enough, every serious account of groups of sightings ruthlessly eliminate 99%, and are left with the unexplained and unexplainable 1%.

I consider the most important sighting reported during the last week in October to be the one in the DAILY EXPRESS, 28:10:67, reporting the Bacup, Lancs, UFO. Three policemen saw a cigar-shaped ship with portholes, hovering for several minutes 250 feet above the police station before it rose vertically and disappeared..

This description is typical of hundreds of sightings during the last twenty years...just to quote two examples :-

(a) Modesto, 27:2:63..."large cigar-shaped craft with

portholes, descended to 1,000 feet." Seven witnesses.

(b) New Mexico 10:8:'49..."cigar-shaped dark object with portholes" Three witnesses, the principal one being Dr. Clyde Tombaugh, who discovered the planet PLUTO.

As regards the Bacup, Lancs, sighting, the situation, as I see it, resolves quite simply round the authenticity of the sighting as reported, i.e, if the three policemen are telling the truth, the object they saw does not fit the description of any known aircraft, and therefore it must be a genuine alien UFO. I cannot see any logical reason for any alternative conclusion. But it is equally possible that the three policemen conspired together to get their names in the National Press by inventing a sighting...a description previously given many times. There are many books available in the Public Libraries about UFO's, and a few moments study would suffice to give a budding pseudo-observer sufficient data to be able to concoct an authentic description. Yet the only motive for doing so would be for a temporary moment of 'fame'...mention in the newspapers and on radio and TV...their names brought forward favourably (or unfavourably) under the notice of their superiors.

Flying Saucers and UFO 'authors' have mostly sought to study the subject by tabulating the types of object seen; the localities in which they are observed; corroboration by different observers of the same phenomena at the same time. In other words, they have concentrated entirely on the UFO. Instead, perhaps, psychiatrists should study the persons who have made the observations...in that way, if the psychiatrist is satisfied that the claimants are not motivated by insanity...insobriety, vainglory or other unhealthy personality defects, then a tabulation of sightings made by sober, sane and truthful witnesses should produce a more accurate account of what is appearing in our skies.

I must quote an official statement made in the House of Commons London, on Wednesday 8th November 1967, by Mr. Merlyn Rees, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence. He said :-"We received a number of reports of objects seen in the sky over North Devon in October. After investigation some proved to be aircraft and some were lights. Of the lights the majority were the planet Venus but the source of a few lights has not been positively identified. I can say, however, that none of these unidentified lights was an alien object. There are standing instructions for RAF stations to report unusual objects seen in the sky, and standing arrangements for investigating these reports and similar reports from other sources."

John Berry

1967

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