

MYSTERY OBJECT OVER THE MOON

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**These two investigators work for the Lancashire and Cumbria Investigation group NLUFOIG, and Gordon Barraclough is also a UFOIN representative.
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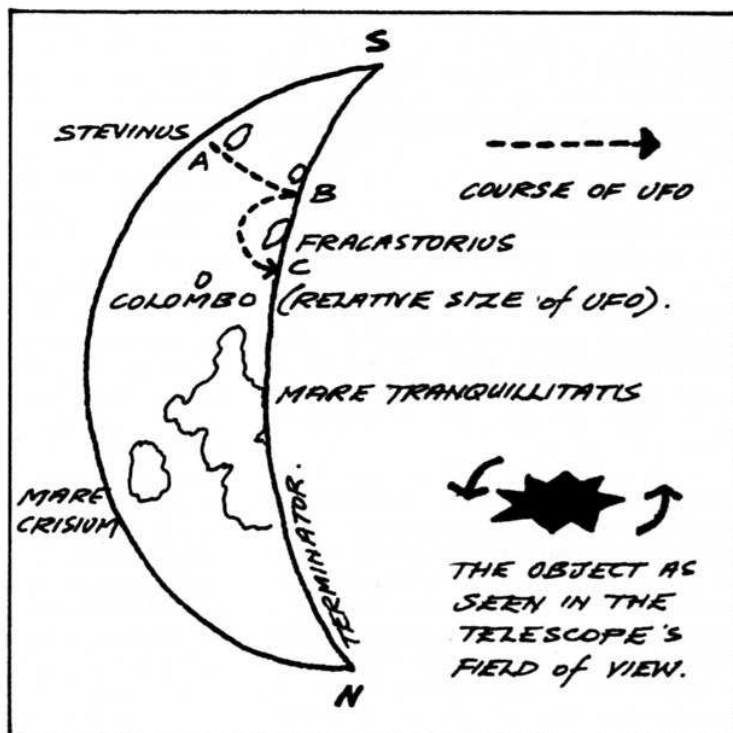
DAVID STORY is aged 16 and a member of the Junior Astronomical Society. While he only contacted us more than a year after his sighting — following a letter of ours which he saw in a local newspaper — he had realised that he had seen something unusual, and made notes about it the same night. The following, it is suggested, is therefore a reasonably accurate record of what transpired.

David was observing the Moon through his small telescope. This has a 40 mm lens and was set on a magnification of 50 times. He first sighted the object near the crater Stevinus. It seemed to be stationary at first, but then started to move slowly eastwards towards the Moon's terminator (it was in quarter phase — see diagram). This motion took 25 seconds before the object was lost to view when it entered the shadow.

The object itself was estimated as being of a similar size to the nearby crater Colombo — although this is of course a meaningless factor without knowing anything about the actual distance from the telescope of the object under observation. It was black in colour (which is why it could not be seen against the Moon's night side) and looked rather like a cog-wheel, although irregular in outline. It was seemingly rotating in an anti-clockwise direction about twice a second.

David removed his eyes from the telescope and looked up but could see nothing. He also took the opportunity to wipe his eyes in case there was something in them which was causing him to see an illusory object. He found nothing. He then returned to the telescope, but at first did not see the object again.

After a period which must have been about 20 seconds over-all since he had last seen the object, it reappeared more or less in the position where it had vanished. It was now moving southwards on a curving path, and at a similar speed to that previously. It then curved to the east and was lost again in the terminator below the crater Fracastorius. It had been in view again for about 25 seconds, making the total duration of the observation



about 1 minute 10 seconds. Despite David's watching for some time after this the object was not seen again.

David is convinced that there was nothing within the optics of the telescope that could account for what he observed. This is the only strange thing he has seen during his three years of interest in astronomy, and he possesses an open mind on the question of UFOs. In this instance, however, he believes that he saw the shadow of an object that was very close to the Moon's surface (and if this were so — as is highly unlikely — it would have been a huge object several miles in diameter). The sighting is of interest, however, and compares with some of the early astronomical observations from the latter part of the nineteenth century when mysterious objects were seen in the vicinity of either the Moon's or the Sun's disc.

FSR BOOKSHELF *(Continued from page 24)*

The U.F.O. Story (Harrap 'Reporters' series, 65p). The illustrations are black and white photographs, and these give the book a more factual feel. The author describes several cases in simple language, and deals with close encounters of the first, second and third kinds. Unfortunately, his ending is a negative one and will tend to leave the young reader doubting the factuality of UFOs.

The fourth offering is for older children and so has much more text than the other three: Brian Ball's **A Young Person's Guide to UFOs** — subtitled rather superfluously, as if he could not decide which title to use:

"A UFO Spotters' Guide" (Dragon Books, 60p). In fact neither title accurately describes the book. It is a history of ufology from Kenneth Arnold onwards, omitting all entity sighting reports (except Father Gill's, and that is 'explained' as defective vision — the "waving entities" were Father Gill's eyelashes!). The 1897 Hamilton calf-napping case, now known to be a hoax, is dragged in, the plots of several fictional UFO films are described, but we are not told much about what UFOs might be. We are left to assume that they are of extra-terrestrial origin (if they exist at all). We owe it to children to tell them the truth, and it is irresponsible to present them with such an inaccurate account of ufology.