

THE SALTWOOD MYSTERY

Strange happenings in Kent

THE evening of Saturday, November 16, 1963, was cold and bright and there was a new moon in the sky. Four teenagers, three boys and a girl, were walking along a country road in the area of Sandling Park, near Hythe, Kent. John Flaxton, aged 17, a painter employed in the Kent village of Saltwood happened to look at the sky above the woods at Slaybrook Corner and noticed that one of the stars above him appeared to be moving.

John Flaxton admitted to being frightened, for not only was the "star" moving: it was descending towards the four young people. Flaxton stated to a reporter: "It was uncanny. The reddish yellow light was coming out of the sky at an angle of sixty degrees. As it came towards the ground it seemed to hover more slowly. I grew cold all over as it vanished behind a clump of trees." The next thing to happen sent the four young people rushing for safety in terror. A bright golden light suddenly appeared in the field alongside them. "It was about eighty yards away," John Flaxton declared, "floating about ten feet above the ground. It seemed to move along with us, stopping when we stopped as if it was observing us. The light was oval, about fifteen to twenty feet across with a bright, solid core.

"It disappeared behind trees and a few seconds later a dark figure shambled out. It was all black, about the size of a human but without a head. It seemed to have wings like a bat on either side and came stumbling towards us. We didn't wait to investigate."

Was it a ghost?

One of John's companions, 18-year-old Mervyn Hutchinson, a plastic moulder of Bartholomew Lane, Saltwood, also saw the figure clearly.

"It was just like a bat with webbed feet and no head."

All four teenagers were convinced they had seen a ghost.

"I've never been so frightened. I didn't believe in ghosts until then," says 16-year-old Jenny Holloway of Lenham.

From the preceding account it will be seen that the four witnesses assumed that what they had

seen was supernatural. The story was given publicity in the local newspapers and in the national press, too. As the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW has pointed out from time to time, ghosts and miracles may be merely rationalisations for flying saucers which the majority will even now not accept as real. On the other hand, Hythe and Folkestone may well have been confronted with two or even more mysteries. But it would certainly seem that John Flaxton's experience appears to be well within the Type 1 sighting classification (see Jacques Vallée's article in the REVIEW'S January-February, 1964, issue).

Other experiences in the area are as follows:—
November 21, 1963. Witness: Keith Croucher.
Age: 17.

Occupation: Apprentice
Electrical Engineer.

"I was passing the Brockhill School football pitch which leads on to the Sandling Estate when I felt a sudden breath of cold wind and saw what looked like a golden mist beginning to cross the pitch. At the centre of the mist was a solid oval light that seemed to move slowly over the ground. The whole thing was about twenty feet square. I was frightened and ran away. When I came back it had gone."

November 23/24. Witnesses: John McGoldrick
and friend.

Age: 16.

Address: Hythe, Kent.

"After hearing about Keith Croucher's experience, I went with a friend into Sandlingwoods to investigate. In a clearing in the woods we found a vast expanse of bracken that had been completely flattened — as if some huge and heavy object had rested there. Nearby we found three giant footprints. They were clear footprints, almost two feet long and about nine inches across. They must have been a full inch deep. On December 11 we went down to the site with two reporters and found the wood lit up by a strange pulsating light. It seemed to come from the heart of the trees. We kept watch at a distance for over half an hour but saw nothing except the light. We were far too frightened to go any closer."

Mr. William Waite, a retired senior civil servant

who used to work for the Aeronautical Inspection Board, near Uxbridge, Middlesex, was walking with his dog in the neighbourhood about a week before the event described above made the following statement when interviewed: "I saw this bright bluish-white light, about the size of a golf ball flying directly ahead of me. It travelled quite slowly in a steady horizontal direction. It definitely wasn't an aeroplane. The whole thing struck me as very peculiar. The light appeared from the north, crossed Sandling Road, where all these strange things have been seen, and headed out for sea."

Sceptics then got busy with explanations which ranged from magnesium flares to poachers flashing

torches to hypnotise the birds.

The local rector, the Rev. E. E. Stanton, when asked his opinion, replied: "It definitely isn't a hoax. Several youngsters have told me about the strange things they have seen. All were very frightened. Obviously they have seen something out of their normal experience."

Some adherents of the ghost theory recall the legend that Slaybrook Corner was the scene of a bloody battle centuries ago. Others declare that the ghost of William Tournay Tournay is the culprit. Tournay was an eccentric who was buried at his own request on an island in the middle of a lake on the estate.

WHAT HAPPENED AT FÁTIMA?

by ANTONIO RIBERA

The strange events at Fátima in 1917 have led to controversy which persists to the present day. In presenting this resumé, it is necessary to warn investigators into the UFO problem that attempts to rationalise the mysterious are not by any means confined to the saucer sceptic. Those who accept the interplanetary saucer may themselves fall into the same error. To these people the flying saucer has become so acceptable and even so commonplace that by explaining the miracle at Fátima in terms of the UFO it is possible that we may be trying to simplify an occurrence connected with a mystery of divine profundity. In fact, it could be that the UFOs themselves are more "miraculous" than many of us would care to admit.

Two points of interest can be made. Unexplained in terms of present UFO knowledge is the fact that date of the miracle at Fátima was predicted with remarkable accuracy some weeks before the event.

SOME years after the turn of the century—in 1917 to be exact — when war was still raging, there happened in Fátima, a small village in the district of Leiria, at some 62 miles north of Lisbon, Portugal, a series of strange things which at the epoch were interpreted as "miracles" but today, scrutinised through a UFO "lens" — to quote Mr. W. R. Drake — they look very different and full of new meaning.

A visitation?

Fifty years ago Portugal was a very backward country and the strange happenings which took place in that remote corner of it, among illiterate

peasants, were apt to receive a "religious" explanation, more so in times of superstition, as was the condition which existed in the Portuguese countryside in 1917. Those happenings were currently interpreted as an apparition of the Holy Virgin, but two thousand years ago they could have been interpreted as the coming of the gods upon the earth . . . referring in both instances to some visitation by extra-terrestrial beings, very real in fact and neither "godlike" nor "miraculous." M. Agrest, Professor of Physics and Mathematics in Armenia and well-known science author in the Soviet Union, has published a very interesting article in the