

THE LITTLE SINGING CREATURES AT ARC-SOUS-CICON

Joël Mesnard

Here, to get the record straight, is a contribution from issue No. 13 of *Phénomènes Spatiaux* (September 1967). Translation by Gordon Creighton.

ON Wednesday, July 19, and Thursday, July 20, 1967, press and radio referred to a report that strange small beings had been seen by several children near a village in the Doubs Département, and by a fifteen-year-old girl named Joëlle Ravier.

As several of the details of the sighting were at variance in the separate reports, we accepted it with a certain degree of scepticism. It appears in fact that these differences which are to be seen in the various accounts are due to differences in the interpretations put upon Joëlle Ravier's declarations rather than to any contradictions on her part.

In the course of the enquiry which I carried out on the spot on Sunday, July 23, 1967, Joëlle Ravier gave a coherent description of the facts and explained the points that might have seemed suspect in the various published accounts.

The village of Arc-sous-Cicon, some 20 kilometres from Pontarlier, lies in the middle of an undulating plateau surrounded by hills covered with conifer forests. Almost the whole of the plateau is cow-pasturage.

Shortly after 3.00 p.m. on Monday, July 17, 1967, a group of young children left the village to go for a walk through fields which, dotted with bushes, lead upwards in a gentle slope to the pine forest that flanks the plateau on the north. A little girl aged five, Patricia Bépoix, who was a few score metres or so ahead of her companions, suddenly turned back, terrified, and made her way back home to her parents as fast as her feet could carry her. Sobbing, she told her mother that she had surprised several "little Chinamen" sitting behind a bramble-bush, and that one of them had stood up with the apparent intention of seizing her.

INTRODUCTION: CRAZY EVENT ON A CRAZY NIGHT

On the morning after what was described as "the crazy night" of July 17-18, 1967, French and Swiss newspapers,¹ and also Radio-Luxemburg, carried a report about a strange incident that had happened at Arc-Sous-Cicon.² In this village in Doubs (adjoining Switzerland, in Eastern France), which has a total of 700 inhabitants, some children, of whom the eldest was Joëlle Ravier (15), daughter of the village carpenter, claimed that they had seen some mysterious beings that were rapidly labelled "Martians."

The versions of the affair as given by various newspapers were at times very different. In one the "Martians" had heads the size of a potato, and in another it would be heads shaped like a potato—which is not at all the same thing! According to certain of the press reports, Joëlle Ravier had said that she had seen either four or three beings, while other reports said she had only seen one.

L'Est Républicain, a paper which had published these contradictory figures on successive days and emphasised the discrepancies, seemed to be suggesting that the young girl's truthfulness was questionable, and Charles Garreau, who was aware of these contradictions about the number of beings, wrote to us saying that, in all probability, this was indeed a case of a piece of fancifulness conceived in the mind of an over-imaginative lass.

As several of the papers had said that Joëlle had seen her "Martians" on Tuesday, July 18, some people found it easy to believe that the story had sprung to birth in her mind after she had read, in the newspapers of that date (July 18) articles about UFO sightings during the previous night. But this argument is untenable. For, as various media attest (newspapers *L'Est Républicain* of July 19 and *La Suisse* of July 20, and the report broadcast on the *Europe-Midi* Service on July 19) the incident at Arc-sous-Cicon occurred on the afternoon of Monday, July 17, and, consequently, before the other sightings referred to.

It is however to be noted that, on Joëlle Ravier's own admission, in the recording made by *Radio-Europe No. 1*, it was only when she read the newspapers of the 18th, which spoke of "flying saucers," that she was led to think that the very strange being that she had seen the previous day might possibly be an extraterrestrial.

We ourselves had seen several articles about the case, and we were quite inclined to fall in with the sceptical view of Charles Garreau when our friend and collaborator Joël Mesnard informed us that he had been to Arc-sous-Cicon, had talked to Joëlle Ravier and the children who were with her on the day of the incident, and that he had made a tape-recording of the essential parts of his interview with the girl.

Joël Mesnard then sent us—and we thank him most warmly for it—a very sincere report. We can certify that this report agrees with the statements of Joëlle Ravier that were tape-recorded, as our fellow-investigator sent the tape to us and we have made our own copy of it.

Having thus taken a fair and honest note of what has been said in the press and on the radio about the incident at Arc-sous-Cicon, we shall now give below the full text of Joël Mesnard's account of it and leave it to our readers to form their own opinion about the case.

RENE FOUERE, Editor of *Phénomènes Spatiaux*.

The next thing was that Joëlle Ravier's brother, aged ten, had seen "smoke" (*fumée*) coming out of a bush. In his description it sounded more like a vertical, luminous, yellowish beam of light.

Their curiosity aroused by what Patricia had reported, Joëlle Ravier and her companion Marie-Reine Mairot now set out from the village towards the field where the children were, at a distance of some 300-400 metres from the houses. Arriving at the spot, they saw a strange little creature running from bush to bush, very fast, with a leg movement that was distinctly faster than the leg movements of a human being. The astonishing little creature, which seemed to be about one metre high, was black, and seemed to be wearing a sort of short jacket (*veste*) which floated behind him as he ran. He had a protuberant belly and, while his legs seemed to be very short, the two girls were unable to describe his arms and indeed were not sure that he had any. They were likewise unable to make out any details of his face.³

Joëlle and Marie-Reine then went over to the bramble-bush where the little "Martian" had disappeared, and heard somebody talking in a strange sing-song fashion. Gripped with fear, they quickly rejoined the other children.

Joëlle Ravier denies having said that the little being had a head shaped like a potato. Likewise, she denies that she ever said she had tried to chase him on her bicycle.

When one journalist asked her whether the beings were numerous, she had replied (thinking of the "little Chinamen" seen by Patricia) "Three or four." This led one newspaper to state that she had seen "three Martians," and another paper to say that she had seen four. In actual fact, little Patricia was the only one who saw several beings, but her tender age, and the emotion that she felt, make it impossible for us to expect any very precise description from her.

On July 23 (six days later), it was still possible to see, around the bramble-bush where the strange little creature had vanished, a dozen very pronounced marks where the grass—which was very green everywhere else—was of a yellow, straw colour, and dry. One could actually feel that the grass on the stained areas was quite warm to the touch, whereas the surrounding grass felt cool. Moreover the stained areas still gave off a certain odour.

The shortest route to the forest, from the spot where the creature was seen, is through a succession of clumps of shrubbery. And along the extent of 400 or 500 metres from the spot to the pine forest, six other marks, roughly in a straight line, were found, which seemed as it were to blaze a trail. Nowhere else in the fields around about were such marks found.

According to Joëlle Ravier's parents, who have known the district for a long time, these marks have an altogether unusual character owing to the way the grass is coloured, and owing to the sharp outlines of the marks, and it is impossible to consider them to be due to the urine of the cattle, which merely produces a brownish colouring which is far less pronounced.

Joëlle Ravier seems to enjoy the esteem and confidence of everybody in the village, as do the other witnesses also. Their story cannot be attributable to any sort of possible psychosis created by the many sightings

of the night of July 17-18, inasmuch as the incident at Arc-sous-Cicon occurred during the afternoon of the 17th.

We would mention also that, according to the newspaper *Le Parisien Libéré* of July 20, 1967, two astronomers at the observatory at Besançon saw, on the evening of the 17th, "a luminous, round object which, after remaining stationary for thirty seconds over the horizon, made off towards the south and vanished at high speed."

Finally, we may note that Arc-sous-Cicon is only about ten kilometres from the place near Evillers where Monsieur Tyrode saw a flying saucer on May 22, 1967. (For the report on this case, see *Phénomènes Spatiaux* No. 12, pp. 28 and 29.)

Notes

(R. Fouéré's introduction)

¹ *L'Est Républicain*, July 19, 1967; *L'Aurore*, *L'Est Républicain*, *La Feuille d'Avis de Neuchâtel*, *France-Soir*, *Ouest-France*, *Le Parisien Libéré*, *La Suisse*, all of July 20, 1967.

² The village of Arc-sous-Cicon lies on Route D 41, at 4.5 km. from the junction of this road with the N 462, this junction itself being 2 km. to the north of Saint-Gorgon.

(J. Mesnard's article.)

³ It is true that Joëlle Ravier did a sketch, for a newspaper, of a being with arms terminating in fingers, but she explains that she did this in order to conform to the description given by little Patricia Bépoix.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE ARC-SOUS-CICON CASE

by GORDON CREIGHTON

ACCORDING to a further note by Monsieur René Fouéré, Editor of *Phénomènes Spatiaux*, with whose kind permission we print the Arc-sous-Cicon article, he was interviewed by a reporter from Radio-Luxemburg about the case. In view of our own experiences with the BBC, Monsieur Fouéré's comments on this interview make interesting reading, and I shall quote them:

"Socrates said that a living word can defend itself, but that a written word could not. This is equally true in the case of a word registered on a magnetic tape. Of this whole interview, which lasted a good twenty minutes, all that was selected and broadcast were a few sentences about the various types of beings encountered by witnesses in various countries, in the close proximity of flying saucers on the ground or almost on the ground. The magnetic tape being unable to talk back, these sentences were played over in the twinkling of an eye, and with no possibility of appeal, like a final court verdict, by Lucien Barmier who thus—in our absence—won a too easy victory over them."

Readers of FSR may find that this case sounds familiar to them, and they will be right, for Charles Bowen included a brief and, as it turned out, slightly garbled advance version of it in his article *More Unusual Humanoids* (see FSR, May/June 1968, p. 18). The garbling was due to the fact that at the time the story had reached us only via a Brazilian newspaper (*Notícias Populares*, São Paulo, July 20, 1967, sent in by Nigel Rimes) which described Joëlle Ravier and the rest of the children as all being *boys*.

Commenting upon the case, Charles Bowen said it might be tempting to ask whether or not these particular creatures seen at Arc-sous-Cicon were like those seen by the French farmer Monsieur Masse at Valensole on July 1, 1965, he having spoken of little men with "pumpkin" (*courgourdo*) heads whereas Joëlle Ravier's experience involved "potato heads."

LANDINGS AND HUMANOIDS REPORTED IN CAPE PROVINCE

Speculation on the cause of the damage to Rosmead Tennis court

Charles Bowen

THE wave of UFO reports which in the winter months of June, July and August 1972 had given the South African press unforeseen opportunities for weeks of lively writing, much speculation, and some investigation, had seemed to have fizzled out by September. Then, quite suddenly, the furore was building up again.

There were one or two "linking" reports, a little low-weight, between the main wave and the new outbreak. (The word "outbreak" is used somewhat guardedly, for at the time of writing there are no indications that the flap will be prolonged: the ingredients, nevertheless, are intriguing.)

Two Pretoria UFO reports

Typical of the "linking" reports were two that were published in the *Pretoria News* of October 23, 1972:

1. A Permanent Force soldier, Pte. M. A. Raubenheimer, was sitting on the verandah of his house in Pretoria Gardens. With him were five other people, and the time was 7.10 p.m. on Saturday, October 21. They saw a bright light in the sky shaped like a figure-of-eight. The light dimmed and grew brighter, and so on, and moved from east to west and back again. The party rushed to Pte. Raubenheimer's car and drove towards the object to get a better view. The object was soundless, and Pte. Raubenheimer says it was neither a flare nor a helicopter: he is well acquainted with these, and other devices used by the forces. After 15 minutes the object dimmed and disappeared.

It will be seen that a number of elementary points are

missing from this report, namely (i) the direction in which the witnesses were looking when they saw the object; (ii) estimates of size; (iii) estimates of altitude and speed; (iv) colours. (For the witnesses to have "driven towards" the object suggests it might have been close and sizeable.) Some attention to these details would have improved the report, and facilitated analysis.

2. Mr. Dick Richards, ex-Spitfire pilot and managing director of a motor firm, who lives in Hatfield, saw the second object over Pretoria at about 1.50 a.m. on October 23. Awakened by the noise of the wind, he and Mrs. Richards got up to close the windows: they saw a light, which they thought was a satellite, climbing slightly at an estimated distance of 4 km. and at a speed of about 800 km.p.h. It was moving north towards the centre of the city. Mr. Richards hurried to fetch his binoculars. He saw the light continue to burn for three seconds, then "blink off" for about a $\frac{1}{2}$ -second: it was then at an estimated altitude of between 300 and 450 metres. The object now slowed and stopped, then hovered for some 30 seconds before moving away to the North East.

These two reports were gentle heralds for what was to follow in mid-November.

Rosmead

Mr. J. du Plessis of Middelburg, Cape Province, claims to have seen a UFO "flying about" in the Karroo sky for some three months. The *Daily Dispatch* reported on November 18 that Mr. du Plessis said

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From the fuller story now available, I think we can take it that there is no great resemblance to the Valensole case, where, so I believe, the facial colouring of the small creatures was described as being rather "white," or "European," and certainly not "black."

On the other hand, it strikes me very forcibly that there are at least two other cases with features that are much more in agreement with this one. The first one is the case of the small black beings seen (also by a party of children and in a country pasture) on the Cussac Plateau of South Central France on August 29, 1967 (the same year). This case was fully described in *Phénomènes Spatiaux* for June 1968, and John C. Hugill's translation of it appeared in FSR for September/October 1968. The original French account was by Joël Mesnard and Claude Pavy, and the title under which the case was given in FSR is *Encounter With 'Devils'*.

The second case—and here I think that in some respects the resemblances are more striking—was reported by our colleague Bryan Winder in *The Little Blue Man On Studham*

Common (in FSR for July/August 1967). This case, in a village in the Chiltern Hills lying to the North-West of London, also involves a party of children, a puff of smoke, shrubs and bushes (including brambles), an incomprehensible "foreign-sounding" babble or talk heard coming from inside the bushes, and a small being also described as being about one metre, i.e. about 3ft., in height.

As at Arc-sous-Cicon, so also at Studham, the children did not claim to have seen a "flying saucer" or UFO.

As I pointed out long ago (see page 83 of the hard-cover edition of *The Humanoids*), there is a vast accumulation already, from every part of our globe, and for centuries past, of reports of similar experiences, involving similar types of small creatures. One of the sad myths of our time is that in some fashion or other we are "better educated" than our forebears were. Such, alas, is certainly not the case. Previous generations, in all cultures and in all parts of the world, would have recognized these creatures for what they are. There would have been less silly talk about "Martians."