

Submarine Craft in Australasian Waters

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ALTHOUGH Unidentified Submarine Objects (USOs) are less often sighted than their counterpart—Unidentified Flying objects (UFOs)—their appearance in New Zealand and Australian waters during the year 1965 has been rather prominent.

Before listing the cases we have on record, we feel that readers should be aware that in most cases these “submarine” sightings have been explained away as conventional submarines. Curiously enough, the explaining away is not always done by the authorities but rather by the usually untrained observer, who because of his lack of knowledge of the facts accompanying the sighting, immediately plunges for the explanation at hand—i.e., a patrolling submarine. On one occasion I had the opportunity of discussing the subject, and in particular “submarine” craft, with an officer of Navy Intelligence. I soon realised that the scoffing attitude usually attributed to men of the Services was completely lacking, and that the possibility of the existence of these alien “submarine” craft was seriously considered. From this officer I received the impression that because of lack of facilities it has not always been possible to follow up sightings in the most efficient manner. I also understood that the liaison between the various Services wasn't always as smooth as it could have been, and in some cases left much to be desired. In brief, the whole thing was considered rather unwieldy and could easily get out of hand.

Usually, if sufficient details of a sighting are available and particularly a description of the craft sighted, Navy Intelligence will have no difficulty in deciding whether it concerns a conventional submarine or a USO. Should they decide on the latter, it is normally stated that “the sighted craft is unlikely to be a submarine”. To make an immediate evaluation of the sighting, important points such as rocky coast, depth of water, small inlets and locality, as well as a logical reason for submarines being in the sighting area, are taken into consideration. Should the points mentioned constitute a definite submarine hazard, then the possibility of it having been a conventional submarine has been eliminated. We may then consider it more than likely that a USO was sighted. Al-

though intelligence reports indicate that more than 80 Russian submarines are operating in the Pacific and that Russian long-range submarines are lurking off the N. Z. coast, they have no need to come in close to the coast, as the short or medium range missiles they are carrying would still allow for a distance of 100 miles to deal a crippling blow. Having regard to all these points let us now examine some recent Australasian incidents.

USO in Kaipara Harbour (New Zealand)

On January 12, 1965, Captain K., an airline pilot, carried out a “positioning” flight (no passengers) from Whenuapai (Auckland's airport) to Kaitaia (north of Auckland). The crew comprised Captain K., first officer and operations officer. They left Whenuapai at 11 a.m., and were to reach Kaitaia by 12.10 p.m. Captain K. decided to fly visually, following the coast line at low altitude. On approaching the southern end of Kaipara Harbour (just north of Helensville) he dropped 500 feet to have a closer look at anything on his flight path. The plane was a DC3. The tide in the harbour was well out and the water over the estuaries and mudflats quite shallow. When about one third of the way across the harbour, he spotted in an estuary what, at first glance, he took to be a stranded grey-white whale. He veered the aircraft slightly to port in order to fly more directly over the object, and on approaching it, he saw that what he had mistaken for a whale was a metallic structure of some sort. He observed the following details :

1. It was perfectly streamlined and symmetrical in shape.
2. It had no external control surfaces or protrusions.
3. It appeared metallic and there was a suggestion of a hatch on top, streamlined in shape, not quite halfway along the body as measured from the nose.
4. It was resting on the bottom of the estuary and headed towards the south as suggested by the streamlined shape.
5. The shape was not that of a normal submarine.
6. Captain K. estimated its length at 100 feet, with a diameter of 15 feet at the widest part.

7. The object rested in no more than 30 feet of water and the craft was very clearly defined.

Captain K. did not alert the other two crew members, having been ridiculed over the years for various other reports. However, in May he reported to Navy Intelligence, who confirmed that due to inaccessibility of the estuaries, the craft sighted could not possibly have been a conventional submarine. Although the Navy may have checked the spot, we are unaware of it.¹

The Wonthaggi (Australia) USOs

On April 11, 1965, two men had gone to the beach at Wonthaggi, 82 miles from Melbourne, to inspect a wrecked fishing boat. While on the cliffs they saw two objects about half a mile off shore and watched them for 15 minutes. One of the men, Mr. R. Banks, said, "We saw two strange craft, half a mile off shore and about 100 yards apart. Their strange appearance had us baffled, so we sat down and watched them. They turned away from one another and headed out to sea. While they were going away they disappeared, and then we realised they were submarines and only their conning-towers had been showing". The sighting was reported to the Navy and a naval spokesman commented as follows :- "A preliminary investigation of the report suggests, in view of the locality and configuration of the coastline, that the objects are unlikely to have been submarines."—It was also stated that the objects could not have been either British or American submarines, as the Royal Navy submarines operating in Australia were in Sydney, and that any movements of American craft in or near Australian waters were generally reported to the Royal Australian Navy.

Three Sightings North of Brisbane

Three sightings of a submarine north of Brisbane, Queensland, were reported over a period of 5 days.

On April 15, 1965, two youths reported seeing a cylindrical or oval-shaped object three-quarters of a mile off Coolum. On Sunday night, April 18, 1965, two fishermen were chased by a big vessel off Mooloolaba, near Brisbane. They said the craft was 100 feet long, had a small bridge and had a cabin or cowling on its stern. A former Air Force pilot reported seeing from the air an object resembling a crash-diving submarine, between Coolum and Noosa Heads. All reported sightings were investigated by an expert submariner from Sydney, but no comments have been made.

The Fraser Island (Australia) incident

On June 6, 1965 private aircraft pilot, Mr. C. Adams, and a television cameraman Mr. Les

Hendy, reported seeing four or five "mysterious objects" floating in the sea 3 miles east of Fraser Island, 150 miles north of Brisbane, at about 11.30 a.m. Mr. Adams first noticed two of the objects from a distance of about 8 miles while flying over Fraser Island. The weather was clear and the objects appeared to resemble two big dark-coloured logs. They were narrow and up to 100 feet long. As he steered toward them two or three similar but smaller objects appeared near the other two. They did not appear to move, but seemed to "sort of submerge" when the plane was about one mile away from them. From the air they appeared to be lying just below the surface and when "submerging" from sight seemed to do so without disturbing the surface. Mr. Adams was certain that the objects were too big to be fish or sharks, and the wrong shape to be whales. Mr. Hendy regretted that they were too far away from him to film them. Several experts got their heads together and decided that the objects sighted were migrating whales. However, their explanation was soon squashed when part-owner of the Seabrae Hotel—Mr. G. Sampson—and Mrs. V. Grady reported that they had sighted a similar object on the very same day, half-a-mile out between Redcliffe Pier and Redcliffe Point. They watched it for 10 minutes. It was long and black and there appeared to be a black balloon suspended over it. A Fisheries Dept. spokesman commented that it was unlikely to be a whale, because they very seldom come into Morton Bay.²

Strange undersea craft off Rugged Island New Zealand

The date was Saturday, November 13, 1965, when two Bluff fishermen, Mr. R. D. Hanning, aged 41, skipper of the fishing craft *Eleoneai*, and Mr. W. J. Johnson, made the sighting.

They had set out from Bluff, the port of Invercargill, to tend to cray pots in the area of Stewart Island, the southernmost part of New Zealand. At 11.30 a.m. they were about half a mile off Rugged Islands, the north-western point of Stewart Island, when they saw a strange craft come out of the water.

Its tapered structure rose about 15 feet above the surface, and measured about 5 feet high at the top and 12 feet at the water line. Then, about 30 feet away from it, there was another object, box-shaped, about 10 feet long and 5 feet high. There was no sign of any periscope or railing and nothing but the "tower" and "box" were visible. The water was smooth and the object was in clear view only about 300 yards away. (The object's position was only 500 yards off Rugged Islands).

The men had it in sight for 10 to 11 seconds, when suddenly there was a great surging of water like a tide boil and both objects disappeared. Both men were rather startled at this display and in fact were somewhat frightened by it. They hung around for a few minutes, decided not to investigate and steamed off. The water—at the spot from which they made the sighting—was about 30 fathoms deep to a sandy bottom, although the coast near Rugged Islands is rocky and rugged.

Late that Saturday afternoon the *Eleoneai* put into an anchorage, and after having discussed the sighting again during a meal, Hanning and Johnson called Awarua Radio and asked whether any submarines were known to be in the area. They related their experience and the next thing they received was a message from the Navy.

On returning to Bluff on the Tuesday following, the men were interviewed by the Navy. Hanning then made the statement that he had seen a submarine once at Bluff and had looked at pictures of others. He was emphatic, however, that the object they had seen looked quite different and that they could not have mistaken it for whales or logs, of which they had seen any amount. It

was then that they described the object as being black or brown in colour, without any markings.

The Press suggested that the men had seen part of a Russian nuclear submarine and that they had been sworn to secrecy by the Navy Authorities. However, the men, as well as the Navy, denied this. The Navy, through its spokesman, the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff stated that "it was most unlikely that the object—whatever it might have been—was a submarine, because it would have been operating in an area, where there were rocks, a definite submarine hazard. Besides, there was no logical reason for any submarine to be in that area".

Our efforts to obtain additional information from the two fishermen has proved unsuccessful, and we feel that the witnesses are loath to have further publicity.

NOTES

1. See SPACEVIEW No. 43.
2. See SPACEVIEW No. 44.

World round-up

ENGLAND

Another ovalloid

Reports of ovalloid-shaped objects along the Channel coast came frequently during last summer and autumn. Reader Frank B. Pearson of Ipswich writes to tell of yet another such sighting at Eastbourne Sussex, on Monday, August 23rd, at about 9.30 p.m. The incident was reported in the local newspaper on August 25th, as follows (cutting enclosed, but name of newspaper omitted):

"The Eastbourne inshore rescue boat was launched just before 10 p.m. on Monday after a report to the police that a 'long white object' had been seen floating some way off the shore near the Central Bandstand. No trace of the object was found."

Mr. Pearson was one of those who sighted the object, and says that to him it appeared as a misty nebulous ball shape in a grey-blue colour. It seemed to skim across the sea, without noise, and must have been quite unusual to have attracted so much attention.

More from Little Hulton

From the *Farnworth and Worsley Journal* of February 5, 1966 come the following strange accounts:

"The boys of Junior R. Peel Hall School, were busy at their craft desks, making a helicopter when one of them saw something which made their eyes as round as saucers. He nudged his friends, 'Look, a space-ship.'

"Four boys watched silently as a silvery elliptical object hovered high above Madams Wood for several minutes. Then it rose into cloud and disappeared."

After details of two 'fly over' sightings, the *Journal* continues:

"Most dramatic of all, a nine-years-old boy to whom I spoke described in detail how he had watched a 'flying saucer' land that afternoon in a field less than a quarter mile from the Armitage estate. He described the saucer as being 'as big as a football field.' The point on which his story stands or falls is that the 'saucer' produced two grabs which picked up a cow. A sliding trap between the grabs opened in

of news and comment about recent sightings

the side of the superstructure and the cow disappeared within. The saucer took off.

"Sad to relate, no farmer in the area seems to be missing any cattle, even to out-of-this-world rustlers.

"Those are the broad out-lines of the case for flying saucers in Little Hulton.

"Details: the four boys of Junior R class are called Brian Fenlon, James William Minor, Geoffrey Gunschom and Kevin Mather. They are all 10 years old. The nine-year-old who watched the cow 'rustling' is Graham Allan Moss, 61 Owlwood Dr., and although he attends Peel Hall Junior School, he does not know any of the four other boys, neither do they know him. All the boys are said by their teachers to be truthful and unlikely to exaggerate a great deal any minor incident."
(Credit: John Peers of Little Hulton, Walkden, Manchester.)

SCOTLAND

Experts baffled

The *Daily Record* of April 29, 1966, carried the following account: "Hundreds of people were