

A significant report from France

By Charles Bowen

THE first report of a startling incident in France came from a colleague of mine, a young lady who hails from that country. She is Mlle. Huguette Perini, and up till July 6th of this year I had always regarded her as one who set no great store by the flying saucers. So when, with some display of excitement, she poured out a bizarre account of a landing which she had heard over the preceding week-end on the French Radio, my immediate reaction was that this must have been an extraordinary incident to have made such an impression on her.

I gathered that an "engin" had landed somewhere in France, an "engin" with legs like a spider, and a crew looking no bigger than boys of eight. And when a farmer discovered this strange machine, the crew took fright, got into their machine and flew it away, straight upwards at a phenomenal speed. Then, with her tale almost told, Mlle. Perini looked quizzically at me and added darkly that the authorities had said it was a helicopter from the army which was on manoeuvres nearby.

This all-too-familiar tailpiece did not surprise me: the incredible countered by the conventional. It seemed, on reflection, that the French are not lagging behind their American counterparts. They too possess helicopters with unconventional undercarriages which are capable of ascents at unbelievable speeds. Furthermore, they also contrive to man these craft with midgets or dwarfs. Which is surprising, for, as Gordon Creighton recently pointed out, the problems of recruiting sufficient numbers of dwarfs or midgets must be immense. Perhaps a morsel of comfort can be derived from the thought that our dear old-fashioned R.A.F. have a different policy. At least that is how it seemed when I watched one of their sea-rescue helicopters hovering off a south coast beach recently, for the normal-sized crew members sat dangling their long legs over the side as they waved to spectators down below. Or perhaps the R.A.F., which serves this Welfare State of ours with its Health Service, National Dried Milk and bigger, bonnier babies, has given up the unequal struggle of searching for tiny recruits!

Newspaper reports

It was not long before reports came rolling in. In England the *Sunday Post* of July 4 had reported the incident, which had occurred at Valensole in the Basses-Alpes. Next, M. Claude Devismes sent me a cutting from the *Sud Ouest Dimanche* of Bordeaux (July 4), and M. Aimé Michel responded to my request with comment and an item from *Le Dauphine Libéré* (also July 4), and the promise of further details in August after an inquiry has been made. I also received an account from *Le Petit Dauphinois* of July 5, lent to Gordon Creighton for translation by Rev. Norman Crutwell. This account, sent from Digne by the newspaper's special representative Victor Nathan, runs as follows:

"The village of Valensole, located in the Basses-Alpes in the middle of an immense plateau of lavender, is in uproar . . . One of those mysterious objects that the Americans call UFOs is said to have landed on the plateau during the morning of the day before yesterday (Thursday, July 1).

"The rumour has spread like a powder-train, and already hundreds of people have been to see the spot where the landing is said to have taken place, manfully trampling flat the fields of lavender.

"How did this rumour spread, and what credence can one give to it?

"Going back to the beginning of it all, there is a resident of Valensole, a farmer, M. Maurice Masse, aged 41, married, with two grown-up children. He is a solid type, a serious fellow who is not generally given to talking nonsense.

"Last Thursday morning, then, he set out from his home in the Place du Marche at Valensole to go out to his property. It was about 5 a.m., and M. Masse wanted to take advantage of the freshness of the morning. He went to the Olivol area, a place about two kilometres to the north-west of Valensole and near the Oraison road. Arrived there, he set to work with his lavender plants. At about 5.45, he stopped for a moment to smoke a cigarette in the shade of a small hillock. He had been there for little more than a few minutes when he heard a strange sound, or rather a whistling, which puzzled him considerably. He thought the noise was due perhaps to some helicopter or other and that manoeuvres must be going on in the district. The first thought that came to him was: 'Well, he *might* have found some other place to land than in my lavender.' He walked round the hillock behind which he had been sheltering, and it was then that he beheld an absolutely astonishing, unexpected and somewhat terrifying sight.

Like a Montrous Spider

"M. Maurice Masse himself gave us an account of this strange spectacle, and not without some reticence on his part, it must be admitted, for he is obviously afraid of

creating difficulties for himself.

"This is the story he had to confirm before Commander Oliva, Chief of the Gendarmerie at Valensole. 'At a distance of about 30 metres from me, I saw a strange machine the shape of which vaguely recalled a rugby ball. Its size was approximately that of a Dauphine car, and it was of a dull colour. It was standing on four sort of metallic legs and a central support. It looked like a monstrous great spider. On the ground, there was a human being of the height and build of a child of about eight. He was wearing a one-piece suit, but no helmet, and his hands were bare. Inside the machine I could see another being. Suddenly the one who was down on the ground turned round and saw me, and he immediately jumped into the machine. A sliding door closed behind him, and the craft took off at a staggering speed, giving off no smoke or dust, and in a fraction of a second it was all over and the thing was out of sight.

"I didn't believe my eyes. But I can assure you, I wasn't dreaming, and I don't ever have visions. I give you my solemn word that this sight that I witnessed did in fact take place before my eyes."

Ground Hardened Like Cement

"In the company of the Valensole gendarmes, we went to the scene of the landing. There is no doubt whatever that something has happened there. At the place where the central support was, you can now see in the ground a hole 20 centimetres in diameter and about 50 centimetres deep. And radiating out from there are marks in the shape of an 'X', which would seem to confirm the description of the machine's four legs.

"But the strangest thing of all is that, all around the hole, the earth is as though petrified, hard as cement, whereas elsewhere it disintegrates and crumbles in your hand.

"But immediately after the machine had gone," says M. Masse, "the ground there had the consistency of an almost liquid mud. And this is all the more strange, considering the fact that it has not rained here for a long time past."

Military appraisal

According to the account in *Le Dauphine Libéré*, the military authorities state that there have been large-scale manoeuvres in the district under the code name "Provence 65", and that the object seen by M. Masse was probably a helicopter of the light aviation command of the Army. It is suggested that the type could have been an "Alouette 2" or "Alouette 3".

Aimé Michel comments: "The police who made the first investigation state categorically that the shape of the marks [on the ground] show that they were made by no known type of machine, which is contrary to the explanation of the military authorities **who had not examined the marks.**"

Little men

This account from Valensole is truly significant for two reasons.

The first of these is the little "man" reported to have been seen outside his craft *without* a helmet. Three questions spring to mind. Firstly, could he be one of the entities actually visiting this planet? If so it would mean that they have overcome the difficulties of breathing in our atmosphere. Secondly, is he a product of breeding experiments by visiting entities? This brings to mind the story

of A. Villas Boas—"Adhemar"—and the so-called incident of interplanetary procreation described by Gordon Creighton in *The Most Amazing Case of All* in the January/February and March/April 1965 issues of the REVIEW. Thirdly, could he possibly be a "native" of Earth—and here I speculate wildly—from another time/space continuum?

Mystery craters

The second reason for the significance of M. Masse's story is that if it is true, then he witnessed an operation of the kind which could have caused the strange hole and marks in the middle of farmer Blanchard's field at Charlton, Wiltshire, in July 1963.

The late Waveney Girvan's account of the events at Charlton appeared in the September/October 1963 issue of the REVIEW—now out of print—where it was told how, after days of fruitless digging by the bomb disposal squad, and after the wide publicity given to "Dr." Randall's rather too fantastic flying saucer story, astronomer Patrick Moore told the world that it was all due to a meteorite. The culprit, weighing half a pound, which was displayed by Mr. Moore, was later demonstrated by the British Museum to be nothing more or less than a piece of ironstone such as is found liberally distributed in the subsoil of that part of the country.

An article by our geologist reader Alan W. Sharp appeared in a News Letter published recently by the Merseyside UFO Research Group in which he presented geological and artificial reasons for all the many types of crater discovered in recent years. Now I readily accept the fact that many of the "holes" for which fanciful explanations have been advanced can be explained quite easily as being the results of normal geological processes. The recent Berkshire "craters" (see the March/April 1965 number of the REVIEW) are good examples of this. However, I am not in agreement with Mr. Sharp on the matter of the Charlton crater, for he assumes that it is a swallow hole, or solution cavity, and that it "... exhibited a symmetrical pattern of surface indentations which accords well with drainage into a central cavity."

Now the thing that puzzled Waveney Girvan and myself on that occasion, even more than the central hole and perimeter indentations, was the complete disappearance of plants, both barley and potatoes, inside the approximately circular area bordered by the indentations. Indeed, no trace of them was found, even when public money was spent sinking a shaft in the search for a metallic object which gave "wild" readings on a detector. The preliminary military report indicated that

there were no burn or scorch marks, and that there was no trace of an explosion, yet the words of Farmer Blanchard, as recorded by Waveney Girvan, were: "There isn't a trace of the potatoes and barley which were growing where the crater is now. No stalks, no leaves, no roots. The thing was heavy enough to crush rocks to powder, yet it came down gently. We heard no crash, and

whatever power it uses produces no heat or noise . . ." (taken from the *Daily Sketch* of July 17, 1963).

A swallow hole of supernatural power? Or does the observed event at Valensole on July 1, 1965, give a clue to the nature of an unobserved incident which may have caused the crater at Charlton, Wiltshire, in mid-July, 1963?

Welcome

THE EDITOR takes this opportunity to welcome all those new readers who have joined the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW subscription list as a result of either the splendid efforts made by many of our valued "old members", or the B.B.C.'s Light Programme radio broadcast in June, when Gordon Creighton answered listeners' questions. We know that they will derive much pleasure from reading the REVIEW, dedicated as it is to presenting and examining news and comment on all aspects of this perplexing, yet fascinating subject. We know too that many of you will be surprised to learn that there are so many strange yet reliably reported things happening in this world which governments, for reasons best known to themselves, wish to "soft pedal", or even suppress: things which many of Britain's National newspapers prefer to ignore.

Our new readers will gather that this is a vitally important subject, that we treat it seriously, and that it demands detailed scientific study. It is high time that more and more folk joined the ranks of our subscribers to keep abreast with the rapid developments in the UFO field, and to read absorbing articles by our band of contributors which includes many eminent and well-qualified writers on the subject.

So now, new readers (and old readers who have not

already done so), please tell your friends about the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, and see to it that they too join our mailing list. It doesn't matter where they live: the REVIEW already goes to readers in many European countries (and under the Iron Curtain too), to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Malaysia, to the United States of America, South Africa, and to several countries in Central and South America. In all these places there is great scope for recruitment, and we are sure that new readers will find that price-wise the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW compares very favourably with other publications.

Don't forget our promotion bonus scheme. Everybody is eligible to join. All readers, who by April 30, 1966, have introduced five new subscribers, will be entitled to one year's free subscription.

Members who wish to participate in this scheme must send in the application and remittance for the new subscriber, and remind us to mark their index card accordingly.

We propose to reward those of you who manage to introduce, say, three or four new subscribers by the time the offer closes, so keep up the good work. The REVIEW is worth it, and we really do need many new subscribers so that we can maintain our price at its present level.

Late Extra

A WARMINSTER PHOTOGRAPH

On Friday, September 10, the *Daily Mirror* published a photograph which a Mr. Gordon Faulkner claims to have taken of an unknown object which he saw in the sky over Warminster (an object in the class which the Press has seen fit to christen "Things").

Our thanks are due to the *Mirror* for sending us a full print of the photograph, and this we propose to reproduce in our November/December issue.