

Lake District Visitations

THE tail-end of July, and the first few weeks of August saw a burst of activity by mystery objects in the skies of both Cumberland and of the neighbouring counties of Westmorland and (northern) Lancashire, which are the home of the craggy fells and dales of the Lake District. Confronted with awkward questions, and expected—unfairly, perhaps—to answer them, the police and other authorities offered either no explanation at all, or selections from “summer lightning”, “distant fires”, “private aircraft”, and “mistaken observations”. Although we have seen only a few of the reports, we recall no instances of Venus being offered as a solution, but one newspaper remarked ominously that during the summer UFO wave in America, people had excitedly watched stars and planets in the belief that they were flying saucers.

One astronomer asserted that observations of an object over Cumberland were of a “plastic bag filled with gas”. That, I confess, caused me to wonder whether, in the interests of price maintenance, the Gas Board have evolved an unusual way of disposing of unwanted surpluses! On further reflection, however, I decided that the gentleman concerned had either forgotten the word ‘balloon’, or the name ‘Echo’.

Whatever the nature of the observed phenomena (or machines), whether they fell into officially acceptable categories like “mistaken observations”, or whether they happened to be nothing more or less than unacceptable flying saucers or cigar-like objects, they certainly produced alarming effects on both human beings and animals.

We have been fortunate in obtaining on-the-spot reports from investigators, and perusal of these suggest that certain folk had better brush up their conceptions of “summer lightning” and so on.

Brampton

The little north-western wave got under way with an incident on July 24 (there may have been earlier cases, but they are not known to us at time

of writing) which has a certain significance. From the *Cumberland News* of July 30, sent to us by Mr. D. W. Hutton, we learn how David Bell (16) of Brampton, and three friends, saw a bright blue blur in the north-western sky early on the 24th. Fairly high when first observed, the object descended towards the youths, hung stationary awhile before moving off to the East. After disappearing and re-appearing, a series of orange dots ‘came out in front of it’, and the object then vanished.

Ambleside

Next came the first widely-publicised case in the Lake District itself. This incident took place late in the evening of August 6—just before midnight. Many newspapers, including the *Sunday Citizen* (August 8), and the *Yorkshire Post* and *Daily Express* (August 9) told stories of a young couple who had witnessed (the girl with much terror) a ‘groaning’ cigar-shaped object with golden revolving windows, the whole glowing fiery red. There were reports too of sparks and disturbed cattle. We are indebted to reader **Jack Ibson** for his efforts to locate the couple, and to interview them on our behalf. The following is his account:

“Michael Dean, and his girl friend Molly Petherick, both of Bradford, Yorkshire, were nearing the end of their holiday in the Lake district. After reading the account in the *Yorkshire Post*, I traced the hostel where they had been staying, but as I received little help in that quarter, I eventually ran them to ground in Bradford. I taped an interview at my home.

“The hostel at Ambleside consists of a main Guest House and a cottage some distance away in the grounds. After a farewell party with other young people at the cottage, Mr. Dean and Miss Petherick left just after 11 p.m. to walk back to the Guest House. They were some way ahead of the others when suddenly they heard a low droning noise, like an aircraft flying low and pulling a very heavy load. Bullocks at a nearby farm started to kick up a din, which

was unusual, as they had never made any noise before, despite the normal aircraft which passes over at regular intervals. Then Mr. Dean looked up and saw what at first he described as a cigar-shaped object, except that it had a dome on the top. In other words, he saw a circular object, but at an angle. The dome contained several square portholes, which were illuminated. The whole object revolved and the effect, said Mr. Dean, was similar to the flashing light on a police car, but on a bigger scale. It would seem then that as the windows came round there was a flash effect.

“The object moved slowly over Ambleside towards Lake Windemere, and it appeared to be descending towards the lake when they lost sight of it.

“Miss Petherick’s reaction was one of fear. This was something she had not experienced before, and she became shocked and stunned, and had to be taken back to the cottage in a state of collapse.

“The other members of the party had not seen the object, but they had heard the strange noise, and the din of the bullocks. After some discussion, it was decided to inform the police, and eventually six policemen arrived. They believed Mr. Dean’s account, but thought the object must have been an aeroplane. When, however, they checked with Air Control, they were told that no aircraft were in the district at the time. Later the Keswick Mountain Rescue arrived on the scene, complete with Jeep and searchlights: there were also members of the Air Force. An extensive search was made, but nothing was found.

“Some newspapers reported that sparks and smoke had been observed, but this was not true. Neither was the description of Mr. Dean as an airfield worker, for he works in a Bradford office.

“It transpired that BUFORA interviewers had already spoken to Mr. Dean, and showed him illustrations of various types of UFOs. Both he and Miss Petherick settled for the Darbshire saucer as being the nearest

type to the one they saw. I showed Mr. Dean copies of Stephen's photographs, and he was adamant that that was the type, except that the one he saw had square portholes.

"Thanks to the publicity, the young couple have had to put up with a lot of ridicule, but all who saw Miss Petherick in a state of collapse agree that it must have been something very unusual. One doesn't usually keel over at the sight of an ordinary plane. At that time they saw it as their duty to report the affair; they wish now that they had kept quiet."

There are one or two other points worthy of note. For instance, we see in the *Yorkshire Post* account that because of the unusual noise made by the cattle, the farmer had gone out to investigate. Again, in another private investigator's report which **F. Malcolm Bull** (of the Halifax Group of BUFORA) kindly sent in, we learn that the descending path taken by the object inclined at about 45° to the horizontal, and that it rotated, turning clockwise as viewed from above. Discussing the possibility that the object was an aircraft, Mr. Bull adds that in such extremely hilly country, turbulent air currents would deter even the most experienced pilot from flying so low at night.

Pokey Dubs, Penrith

It was about 2 a.m., the sky was clear and the scene bright with moonlight, when Penrith angler Thomas A. Bell (who is also a member of the Royal Observer Corps) saw what he called a 'flying cigar' while he was fishing the Eamont at Pokey Dubs.

According to the *Cumberland Evening News* of August 12 (the date of the sighting), the object travelled swiftly over nearby trees towards the South West, emitting an orange-coloured flame or sparks at the rear. Mr. Bell could hear no sound, but he did say that the nearby railway line was busy.

Carlisle, Whitehaven, Cockermouth

Mr. D. W. Hutton relates in a letter how he, and a large number of spectators at the pre-season trial soccer match, Carlisle United v. Bury on August 13, watched an unusual sky object. The time was between 8.40 and 9.20 p.m. "It was a brilliant white," says Mr. Hutton, "about 50 per cent brighter than Venus, at an elevation of about 35°, and stationary in the South West." The next day

our correspondent was playing cricket in West Cumberland, and was surprised to find that the same object was seen by many people in Whitehaven and Cockermouth, and at the same time in the evening. To them it was almost overhead, and stationary.

"A remarkable plastic bag filled with gas," remarks Mr. Hutton, thinking no doubt of the statement about this incident made by a spokesman of St. Joseph's College Observatory, Dumfries.

Windmore Green, Appleby

Yet another mystery object was observed over Westmorland Pennines, not far from Brough, on August 15. Accounts appeared in the *Yorkshire Post*, *Guardian* and *Daily Express* of August 16, and in other newspapers. Immediately apparent is the fact that some newspapers unabashedly use the name "flying cigar", but the *Daily Express*, cautiously conservative, speaks of a strange "flashing beam in the sky just after midnight, which caused cows and sheep to moan in a weird fashion".

Once again we have a report from Jack Ibson. Said Miss Katherine Chambers, who, like her two friends who were also witnesses, hies from Leeds: "I knew about the Loughrigg, Ambleside object, but the one we saw was definitely not saucer shaped . . .

"My friends and I had gone to bed, and had been talking awhile when I heard a sheep making a most peculiar noise. My friends took little heed, but when we heard cattle also moaning, we really took notice, for this had been reported before. My bed was directly under the window, and despite my friends' protests I knelt up and looked out. The first thing I saw, directly ahead, was a pair of vivid orange lights flashing in the sky. I shouted to my friends to hurry, and, their curiosity overcoming their fear, they joined me."

The object was under observation from about midnight until 1.15 a.m., on August 15. The sky was clear, and moonlit. The report continues: "As my eyes became accustomed to the light I could see a dark shape connecting the orange lights. More frightened than ever, my friends went back to bed, but I continued to watch as the object seemed to move slowly backwards and forwards in the sky, and then **changed from a horizontal to a vertical position**, with the

lights flashing intermittently. For a short while it seemed to disappear, but returned, this time in a beam of light rather like that of a searchlight from the ground. The object was in the widest part of the beam.

"The newspaper reports said the object disappeared after an hour. It did not. As nothing much seemed to be happening, and as I felt very tired, I went to bed. The object was still there, but only the lights seemed to be visible by that time. The rest seemed to have blended into the sky. All the time there was a low whirring sound."

Elsewhere in the report to Mr. Ibson, the object was described as being, at first sighting, 'clear and distinct'. There were no sparks or smoke. A rough estimate of its length was 50 feet, but its size was also compared to that of a gold ball held at arm's length. This could indicate a very large object when one considers that two Moons' widths are covered by a sixpence held at arm's length. It also occurs to us that the light beam could have come *from* the object, in which case it was being focused on to the ground beneath.

A last word on this incident. The *Yorkshire Post* tells how a farmer living a mile from the cottage confirmed that cattle and sheep had made a great deal of noise during the night, but he had not bothered to look out.

Barrow-in-Furness

Finally, we read in the *Yorkshire Post* of August 28 that three times in one week, residents of the Newbarns district of Barrow-in-Furness, Lancs., claim to have witnessed the passage of strange sky objects at virtually the same time each night.

A Mr. R. Scott, of Bridgegate Avenue, saw, late on the evening of Tuesday, August 24, objects "like two balls of white which kept **coming together and separating** as they flew along . . . from time to time they would emit red trails. These things were quite high up and were not making any noise. I watched them for a few minutes before they disappeared." The objects were moving in a northerly direction. Similar sightings were made on the preceding Saturday and Sunday evenings.

According to the report, neither Air Ministry nor astronomers can supply an explanation.

C.B.

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"This is as much as I can tell you at the moment."

Dr. Finch comments:

Several interesting points emerge from this episode. We have an example of 'selective attraction'. Why, we ask, was it only Michael Johnson and not the others who appeared to be attracted to the object?

Again, the other two sitting in the car appear to have been protected (or insulated) from the emanating force field: again, the effect of the force field appears remarkable in the fact that according

to its intensity (or distance from source), so the effect varies from simple peripheral nerve paralysis to major interruption of cerebration, resulting in loss of consciousness, shock and loss of memory.

This case should be compared with the Colchester one (Paul Green), also the Valensole case (which you tell me will be dealt with in detail in this issue of the REVIEW), and the Brazilian ones.

Footnote

It should be reported that, according to the newspaper account, the doctors at Felixstowe Hospital spoke jocularly of 'Martians', and probably considered the explanation given by Mr. Maskey and Miss Fordyce to be something of a tall story. One explanation advanced was that the three of them had mistaken the flame from the nearby Propane Gas Plant flare-stack for a sky object. This they denied vehemently.

LATE NEWS

THERE ISN'T A CLUE TO THE BLACKOUT

FROM London's *Evening Standard* (West End Final Edition, November 11, 1965:—"New York, Thursday—The nation's best brains, the top experts in every electrical field, and the nation's highest military men still haven't found a single real clue to the mystery of what caused the worst power breakdown any country has experienced.

"Everyone in the United States is asking why? why? why? but the answer is not forthcoming. And to make it worse, the experts admit: 'It could happen again, perhaps at any moment'."

BUT . . . IS THIS A CLUE?

FROM *Corriere Della Sera* (Italy) of November 15 (or 16), 1965. "A pilot from Syracuse (State of New York) has declared that he saw an enormous 'ball of fire' rise from the electric power line linking Clay to Niagara Falls immediately after the sudden stoppage of electric current which last week plunged vast areas of the United States and of Canada into darkness.

"The pilot, Weldon Ross, a flying instructor, has described how, on Tuesday evening, he was in the vicinity of Syracuse airport aboard a small aircraft with one of his pupils, when suddenly the lights failed. 'We were flying over the electric power-line linking Clay with Niagara Falls', said Ross, 'when we saw the ball of fire. It seemed as though a barn was on fire, a barn full of hay. The ball of fire lasted for ten seconds'.

Another person has also said that he saw a 'ball of fire' immediately after the lights went on." [Translation: G.C.]

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IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Beware the Saucers . . . Dr. Bernard Finch. South American Republics are Watching the Skies . . . Charles Bowen. The Plymton Story . . . Colin McCarthy. A New England Incident. Argentina 1963/1964—Part II. UFO Research in U.S.A.—Part II.