

MAIL BAG

Essex re-visited

Sir,—Is the following a further device of the kind that I described in my article *Essex Revisited* in the July/August issue? Last evening an acquaintance from a hundred yards down the road knocked at my door to ask if I had seen the object in the S.E. sky. His wife had first seen it at about 2015 and they had been looking at it ever since. It was then about 2115 and he took me back to look at the object which to the naked eye looked like a slightly brighter edition of Venus which is in the evening sky and very bright at this time.

Through his telescope (of x 8 magnification) it proved to be a vast egg-shaped object but with an apparently flabby exterior which seemed to move about as if a wind were blowing it. It had a yellow look with a bright centre and a bright 'lump' underneath (Fig 1). Once again a sky-hook balloon illuminated by the sun would seem to be the obvious answer—until you inquire further.

By 21.40 the object had sunk slowly towards the west of south and was only visible as a sort of ghostly grey-white 'disc' through the telescope. It had moved sideways over the span between my index and middle finger in about half an hour. The elevation during the whole 1½ hours or more of viewing was about 1°.

If it were a balloon then this motion indicates a wind at its level of 5-10 knots towards the S.S.W. The wind at 9 miles up was 320° 20 kt, i.e. the 'balloon' should have been travelling away from us at this height. At lower levels the winds were from the same direction 50-80 kt which would have taken the object miles away in 1½ hours and in another direction from that observed. The table following shows distances away, estimated true diameter at this distance, and drift speed to the S.W. assuming the height to lie between 6 and 15 nautical miles. This is done because there is a decrease of wind with height to the zone where the tropospheric westerlies change over to the stratospheric easterlies.

At the observed elevation if the height were then the distance away would be and from the apparent diameter the real diameter would be and the drift speed would be ...
6 n.m.	18 n.m.	100 ft	4 kt
9	27	150 ft	6 kt
12	36	200 ft	8 kt
15	45	250 ft	10 kt

So once again as reported in *Essex Revisited* we have an object which looks like a balloon but which does not drift with the wind, but across it at a very slow speed, or in an impossible direction compared to the upper winds.

Was this the same object which once again came back to us one year later than

the one reported in *Essex Revisited*?

Alan Watts B.Sc., F.R.Met.S., Elmstead Market, Colchester. (July 10, 1967).

P.S. Figures were slightly revised on re-checking elevation with an alidade. A.W.

[The "East Anglian Daily Times" of July 10 reported that the Meteorological Office at Mildenhall said that the time and position of the UFO coincided with one of their balloons (released from Hemsby, near Great Yarmouth) designed to discover the direction and speed of the upper wind. If Mr. Watts' figures are correct, then this particular 'balloon' was singularly inefficient!—EDITOR]

"Unmarked" Aircraft

Sir,—I would refer to an article in *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*, Vol. 13, No. 2. March-April 1967, on page 10, titled *The 'Silencers' at Work*.

I read the above article with some interest, in particular the latter section wherein various claims had been made of 'unmarked' aircraft flying over 'UFO' areas. Of course the U.S. authorities denied the employment of 'unmarked' aircraft.

Within a matter of hours of reading the above article I was glancing through the American Aviation publication *Aviation Week* and at first glance I saw some 'unmarked' aircraft which were very definitely claimed to be American Air Force aircraft. [Cutting received—Editor.]

Now on close examination the aircraft are properly identified and carry international markings but by comparison with the accepted lavish U.S. identification colour schemes a quick glance of a fast flying aircraft could, I suggest, lead an untrained observer to say that the aircraft he saw was 'unmarked'.

If I may add, I feel the more sinister implication is that the relatively unmarked aircraft as depicted in *Aviation Week* of 17 April 1967 are high performance combat aircraft and if these are being used—in combat dress as it were — by the U.S. to investigate and 'chase' UFOs such actions could lead to disastrous consequences.

I submit that the U.S. authorities involved are 'playing on words' and are concealing or distorting evidence to suit themselves in this matter.

Ian B. Wright, 194 Icknield Way, Letchworth, Herts.

The Cloud Cigar/Tornado controversy

Sir,—Aimé Michel (letters May-June) is having a little fun at my expense, but unfortunately his basic assumption is 100% wrong, so let me put the record straight. I did not say that the cloud cigars are tornadoes. The tape recordings of the BUFORA Congress will confirm this.

What I did do was to draw attention to

the report by Vonnegut and Weyer *Science* 153, 1213, (9/9/1966) that they had photographed a tornado, noctilucous by virtue of an electric discharge down its centre. This report has stood the test of subsequent criticism, has received theoretical and experimental backing, and has one particularly interesting piece of observational confirmation. This, a paper by Dessens, "Quelques tornades Françaises récentes" *Journal de Recherches Atmosphériques* 2, 91 (1965), whose most interesting passage I translate here: "It is in fact undeniable that often (about one time out of two, according to the table above) either the tornado is furrowed by lightning or else the tornado 'vomits' balls of fire, or in short, the tornado is luminescent in one place or another."

Purely as an exercise in friendly retaliation for the "cow and steeple" jibe, I will here argue that cloud cigars are tornadoes. Both tornadoes and lightning are ill understood phenomena, but it is clear that both are much more common than is generally realised. Destructive tornadoes occur once per year or two in Britain, and more often in France. Smaller atmospheric vortices frequently arise out of a cloudless sky. I have myself seen a dust-devil form quite unexpectedly over a field in Greece, and Mr. Smith's letter in that same issue presents two more examples. Large electrical gradients in the atmosphere are the general rule, even under cloudless conditions, and a tornado might well generate its own field like a Van der Graaf machine with air as its working fluid. The effect of an electrical discharge up a tornado funnel full of air, water and organic detritus sucked up would be expected to produce a lot of transient high energy polymers, which might take the form of "Angel Hair". (Of the work on the effect of electrical discharges through gas mixtures approximating the Earth's primordial atmosphere.) Tornadoes would be opaque by day, hence casting shadows, and if sufficiently regular refractive index gradients were set up could appear quite silvery. This should be enough to show that M. Michel's flippant riposte is a poor substitute for a reasoned justification of his original negative conclusion about a connection between cloud cigars and tornadoes. Personally, on the basis of the evidence I have seen, I do not think the resemblance good enough, and suggest that cloud cigars are not tornadoes. However, the possibility must be entertained when attempting to put all apparent cigars into one class, that contamination with natural phenomena has taken place.

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There are two further points raised in recent issues that I can answer. Mr. Ronnebeck mentions the article by Carl Benedicks on Ball Lightning. This is a

fascinating and pioneer article, but one which has been rendered obsolete by later theories of ball lightning. The present best theory envisages a continuous D.C. excitation process and is discussed by Uman and Helstrom *J. Geophysical Research* 71, 1975, (1966). A recent survey by Rayle (NASA Technical Note D-3188) showed that ball lightning is much more common than customarily imagined, that there was little evidence for large amounts of energy associated with them, and that the term ball lightning does in fact include a heterogeneous collection of objects. These facts must modify some of the conclusions Maxwell Cade reached in his recent article on "Fireballs". The subject of ball lightning and UFO reports is one of considerable interest and offers a very real possibility of actually demonstrating some useful knowledge gained as "fallout" from UFO research. I am currently engaged in a project to collect together reports of ball-lightning-like objects, and would be grateful to hear of any reports of fairly close, self-luminous rounded objects of finite size, that might perhaps fall into this category.

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W. T. Powers in his interesting analysis of the Socorro landing, argues (*Humanoids*, foot of p.50, that: "[if] . . . the centre of gravity of the alleged vehicle was directly over Burn No. 1 . . . equal weight would be supported by each midpoint . . . [and] each vortex". This is a non sequitur, (though it may be true, and the converse is necessarily true). Indeed, the top left, or the bottom left, or the top right pad need not have supported any weight at all. A fine point, but one that must modify the conclusions drawn about the design of the vehicle.—
A. C. H. Durham, B.A., Clare College, Cambridge.

[In the editorial article of the January/February 1967 edition of *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* it was mentioned that "Mr. Anthony Durham . . . feels that the great 'cloud cigars' of 1952, 1954 and so on, were probably tornadoes." EDITOR.]

When a "Meteorological balloon" buzzed an airliner

Sir,—I enclose a copy of an old but interesting sighting report sent to me following my lecture to the London Airport Branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society on March 10th this year:

"The date of the sighting described here cannot accurately be determined at this distance in time. When it occurred I knew of no-one to whom I could sensibly report it. Accounts I had read of sightings in other parts of the world had spoken of saucer or humming top UFOs whilst the thing I had seen was quite different.

"Beyond mentioning from time to time that 'I have seen one', an announcement met usually with varying degrees of incredulity, I have let the matter drop until the lecture on 10.3.67.

"To recapitulate, the nearest estimate I can get to the date is that it was after 1956, when I moved to my new bungalow, and took place whilst B.O.A.C. were still operating Boeing Stratocruiser aircraft during the run-down of those machines. So far as I recall, though this is not clear in my mind, it was just before I took up my present appointment. This would fix it at 1958.

"I was working in my garden, the weather was good, with blue sky, wispy cloud quite high, sunny, not much wind. A Stratocruiser came over, climbing after take-off from London Airport which lies eight miles away to the North (straight line).

"The aircraft's direction was from north to south, it was at about 1,000 to 1,500 feet up, and between a quarter and a half mile away from me to the west and climbing

slowly. The distance away from me is established by the aircraft's position between me and the spire of Ottershaw Church, which is exactly one mile away to the west of my home across a shallow valley.

"I stopped digging to watch the aircraft, looking north west to do so. As I watched, a sphere appeared some 1½ to 2 aircraft lengths to the rear of the aircraft and began to follow it, maintaining its distance.

"I turned my head as the aircraft proceeded south. When I was looking south west the sphere halved the distance between it and the aircraft in one swift dead-beat movement, paused there momentarily, moved to a point quite close above the aircraft's fin, again in one swift dead-beat movement, paused again, moved similarly to a point quite close above and slightly to the rear of the flight deck, paused and then shot vertically upwards to disappear into clear sky in what seemed a very short space.

"The diameter of the sphere was about half the depth of the fuselage of the Stratocruiser from keel to white top. It was a delicate silvery white with a hint of translucent blue about it. It appeared from nowhere and vanished like a stage illusion.

"The whole episode could have lasted only some ten to fifteen seconds.

"There have been occasions when newspapers reported that the Air Ministry (when we had one) had announced that 'sightings' reported to them had been due only to meteorology balloons. This is a plausible explanation for them to offer, for the sphere I saw looked just like such a balloon except that no meteorology balloon I have seen ever behaved like that."

The report is signed by Mr. A. L. Gilder, who lives near Addlestone in Surrey. I don't think he is a flying man.

—R. H. B. Winder, Chalfont St. Peter Bucks.

DO THE CHERUBIM COME FROM MARS?

(Continued from page 22)

have been proposed for this miraculous bread are out of court for the plain—but enormously significant—reason that it fell only six days out of every seven during the entire period of forty years.

As for the angels most commonly referred to in association with the Pillar and with other Biblical UFO manifestations, M. Paul Misraki (Paul Thomas), in his wonderful *Flying Saucers Through the Ages*, has gathered an impressive amount of evidence to show that they were a kind of pint-sized extra-terrestrial pilot known as the Cherubim. Certainly I wouldn't want to suggest that all little UFO pilots are Cherubim and vice-versa—nor, I'm sure, would M. Misraki—but it doesn't seem at all unlikely to me that certain overlapping exists. And if we are willing to admit that angels may be material beings, we are hardly in a position to balk at the notion of assigning to them particular homes on particular planets . . .

Do the Cherubim come from Mars? And did Gary Wilcox perhaps have a conversation in his field with the descendants of beings who spoke to Moses?

One of these days we may find out! But at least now I think we can admit that the Wilcox contact story can no longer be regarded as unimportant—it is either an amazingly subtle and pointless fraud, or the greatest piece of news in modern times: 'the planet Mars is inhabited'.

NOTES

- ¹ *Worlds in Collision*, Immanuel Velikovsky (I have the French translation by Henri Morisset and printed by Librairie Stock, Delmain et Boutelleau 6, rue Casanis Delavigne, Paris, 1961; French title is: *Mondes en Collision*).
- ² *The Velikovsky Affair—Orthodox Reaction at Work*, by K. Mossman; FSR March-April, 1967, pp.27-28.
- ³ Velikovsky, p.305 (my retranslation into English).
- ⁴ *Strange Fate*, Paperback Library Edition, 1965. (Copyright (c) 1963, 1964 by Clark Publishing Company) New York UFO and its 'Little People' by Olga Hotchkiss, pp.151-154.