

A CLOSE SIGHTING IN THE CANTAL, AUVERGNE (SOUTH-CENTRAL FRANCE)

Christian Caudy, regional delegate of L.D.L.N.

We are much indebted to the Editorial Committee of *Lumières Dans La Nuit*, from No. 225-226 of whose Journal (March-April 1983) this interesting case has been taken.

(Précis translation from French)

Date: About 11.00 a.m. on a Sunday in October 1964.

Place: Plateau of Le Pieu (altitude: 800 m.), in Commune of St. Cirgues-de-Malbert, Cantal, Auvergne.

THE two eyewitnesses, a brother and a sister, have asked to remain anonymous, from fear of ridicule. We shall call them Monsieur F — and Madame Y —. Their true names, addresses, and professions are known to the investigator who dealt with this case. Both eyewitnesses now live in Mauriac (Cantal) where the lady is a bookseller and her brother is engaged in one of the liberal professions.

At the date of the events Mme. Y — was 24 years old and her brother F — was 18. Both were then unmarried, and were living in Clermont-Ferrand where the lady had her business. F — at the time was still a student (of Law).

The weather was very fine, and the sky clear, the temperature mild, and there was no wind. Le Pieu is a little plateau at 800 m., and the Commune of St.-Cirgues comprises some 300 inhabitants. As readers will know, the whole region of Auvergne was once covered with active volcanoes, and the geological charts show that the nearby village of l'Hôpital stands on volcanic *breccia*. (No nearby fault-line is mentioned.)

The two eyewitnesses were on the southern rim of the plateau above a cliff facing southwards. A power-line (10,000 volts) passes up and over the cliff, and the UFO appeared right above this line. Another very high tension line (225 kW.), running N-S, lies not far to the east.

Both of the eyewitnesses were interrogated (separately), but as Monsieur F — had the clearer recollection of the details of the episode, it is his version that is given here:—

The Sighting, Described by Monsieur F —

"It was about 11.00 a.m. on a Sunday in October 1964. We had set out from Salers (our parents' home) and we had with us a dog, a pointer, which my father had on approval. We wanted to give it a trial. We had left the car and were strolling on the plateau, and the dog frisking around, when suddenly he dashed back to us, howling dreadfully,

and lay down at my feet. At the same moment we caught the sound of a gentle humming which made us look up, and we were amazed to see a sort of metallic saucer coming very fast from the south. My sister, standing on my right, was completely bowled over by the sight.

"The craft came to a halt right there, at a distance of some 30 m. in front of us, and at a height of 20 m. at the very most from the ground.

"It was just above the edge of the cliff, and emitting this gentle humming noise. As seen from where we were it looked oval. It was a disc, surmounted by a dome. The disc part looked quite thick, and I could see small portholes around it, though I could not now say how many.

"It had a beautiful metallic look, and shone brilliantly in the sunlight. It was the silvery colour of aluminium kitchen-ware. It would be difficult to estimate its size exactly, but I would say it was at least 10 m. wide, and its thickness through the part where the dome was would be about 3.5 m.

"My reaction was instantaneous. I had my gun with me (as we were planning to try out the gun-dog) and I quickly brought the weapon up and aimed it at the object. My sister yelled: "*Don't be a fool!*", so I lowered the gun.

"The sighting must have lasted about two minutes at the most. Then it began to move again and shot off at high speed back towards the South. As it went it was climbing slightly, and was out of sight in just a few seconds.

"I felt at once that it must be extraterrestrial. We didn't so much feel panic as a sort of utter astonishment that rooted us to the spot. We were flabbergasted, and in a way annoyed too by the apparition — we felt it was a sort of 'intellectual provocation', because neither of us believed in UFOs! We are very rational, balanced and sober people. We hadn't been drinking.

"We at once hurried down the hill. My sister wanted to ask at the first house we came to, whether the people there had seen it, but I wouldn't let her. Arriving home, we told our parents we had seen a Flying Saucer, but obviously they couldn't take it seriously. A day or so later we went up there again, but found no marks or anything."

COMMENT BY INVESTIGATOR

On January 15, 1982, we had an announcement put in the local paper, the *Reveil de Mauriac*, asking for any other witnesses, but the result has been negative.

The account given by Mme. Y— fully confirmed that of her brother, but it was 18 years ago, and she can recall few details and has little idea of sizes and measurements. It seems that for two years after the event they said not a word to each other about it, nor to any third party. Mme. Y— still cannot bring herself to admit that the craft could have been extraterrestrial, and prefers to think it was something secret from Russia or America.

She agrees with her brother as to its dazzling, metallic brightness — “just as though it had just come out of a factory.” Both are positive that what they saw was no helicopter or sonde-balloon.

Unlike her brother, Mme. Y— does not recall the portholes very precisely. But she did notice four- or possibly more — “stems” sticking out on the upper rim of the disc, like antennae. Mme. Y— has the impression that she was right underneath the craft. She said the “humming noise” seemed to come from the “stems”.

Incidentally, the pointer must have been a good gun-dog, for she noticed that, as her brother aimed his gun at the saucer, the dog stood erect and motionless and “pointing” as though at game. She felt very frightened that, if her brother fired at the craft, it would retaliate.

Both witnesses said their sight and hearing were good at the time. F— was wearing glasses, but there was no defect in his vision. He was wearing a watch, which showed no adverse after-effects.

Mme. Y— would have liked to have gone and reported the affair to the Gendarmerie, but did not do so, through fear of ridicule.

Both witnesses were from a very calm, bourgeois background, and both were studying Law at the time. Their tastes in reading were very conventional, she being especially fond of Balzac. And she loathed Science-Fiction.

SUMMING-UP BY INVESTIGATOR

It seems impossible to think of this case as a hoax. Both witnesses are held in very high esteem in the region and nobody in Mauriac who has heard about their experience casts the slightest doubt on the veracity of what they say. It is difficult to speak of a hallucination, for both not only saw the saucer but heard its whistle, and there is also the matter of the dog's violent reaction (due, as Monsieur F— thinks, to that whistle).

* * *

[The Report ends with reference to several extremely similar sightings in France (not known to FSR readers and not reported outside France) in which witnesses have suddenly seen a UFO at very close range and have aimed a gun at it. ED.]

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“If I do not believe as you believe, it proves that you do not believe as I believe, and this is all that it proves.”

— Thomas Paine

THE VANCOUVER ISLAND PHOTOGRAPH

Gordon Creighton

THIS photograph, which was reportedly taken in October 1981 on the north-eastern coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Western Canada, came to us in October 1982 in a letter from FSR reader and correspondent W. K. (Bill) Allan of Kelowna, B.C.

Details of the Occurrence and of the Photographer

Mrs Hannah McRoberts (aged 25) of 247 Wayne Road, Campbell River, British Columbia, was with her family at a rest-area some thirty miles to the north of Kelsey Bay on the east coast of Vancouver Island, from October 10 to 15, 1981. During this five-day period she says she took a number of pictures of her family and of the local scenery, using her 35 mm. Mamiya camera with a 50-55 mm. lens, 125 speed, and ASA 100 film.

At one point during the holiday they observed that one of the mountain-peaks was surmounted by a cloud somewhat suggestive, as they described it, of "a volcano issuing steam", so Mrs McRoberts snapped that as well. *None of the party noticed anything else in the air at the time*, and the presence of the UFO was therefore only discovered by them when the prints and negatives came back to them after processing.

The resulting photograph shows an object to the right of and above the peak and the plume of cloud. This photo came to the attention of Mr David A. C. Powell of Vancouver, who is on the staff of the MacMillan Planetarium in that city, who in turn contacted Bill Allan and provided him with an enlargement, and also got in contact with APRO of Tucson, Arizona, the respected American UFO investigation group who claim now to be the oldest in the world.

In the meantime, Mr W. K. Allan was able to speak with Mrs Hannah McRoberts, and to interview her on a CKOV Kelowna open line radio programme, in the course of which he formed the opinion that her story was entirely genuine and that what we have here is therefore a "legitimate classical-type UFO photo."

(The place where Mrs McRoberts says she took her photograph lies incidentally, some 450 kms. or so to the north-west of Mount Rainier in the U.S. State of Washington, where, as readers will recall, Kenneth Arnold claimed on June 24, 1947, to have seen his famous flight of nine saucers moving in formation at 1,200 m.p.h. and at an altitude of 10,000 ft. over the Cascade Range.)

The Examination of the Prints in U.K. and U.S.A.

Very wisely indeed, in view of past experience

(what a story there is to be told, one day, about the interceptions of UFO photos and UFO reports from the public mails — and all over the world!) Mr Allan had arranged that the negative of this photograph should remain very firmly in the hands of Mrs McRoberts herself.

APRO had meanwhile passed their prints of the picture to one of their most eminent specialist consultants, Dr James Harder, who is the Professor of Engineering in the University of California at Berkeley, and he and APRO agreed too that the negative should remain where it was.

Here in Britain we passed our copies of the prints to FSR's photographic consultant Mr Percy Hennel, who is generally regarded as the leading expert in this country in all matters where colour-photography is concerned.

The Verdict on the Prints

After careful scrutiny, Mr Hennel informs us that he would naturally have preferred to have the actual negative in hand for, as he warns, all kinds of hoaxes are possible, and do occur. Nevertheless, he says that he finds nothing dubious or suspicious about the picture, though he does warn us that, if the picture is indeed genuine, then the disc must have been of enormous size — several hundreds of feet wide — to have shown up so large at such a distance! (There have indeed been frequent reports, over the years, of discs estimated to be of such sizes — indeed in some cases of discs believed to be as much as 1,000 ft. in diameter, as for example in the confidential report which APRO published a good many years ago, and which they had received direct from the pilot and co-pilot of an American troop-carrying plane which, while en route from Tokyo to South Vietnam with a party of American soldiers, encountered two enormous metallic discs that flew on a parallel course with them for half an hour.)

The Verdict of Dr James Harder

We now see, from *APRO Bulletin*, Vol. 30, No. 12, that Dr James Harder submitted his report on the photo on November 4, 1982, and they give their own conclusion, which is as follows:—

"All this considered, the photo presented here appears to be an excellent and probably genuine photo of a classical disc photographed in daylight. Although unlikely, if further information and clarification is available, it will be presented in a future