

A PLAN FOR VALENSOLE

Dr. Jacques Lemaître

Our contributor is not related to the Monsieur Jules Lemaître whose articles appeared in *Flying Saucer Review* during the early months of Waveney Girvan's editorship in 1959-60. In fact, "Jacques Lemaître" is the pseudonym of a well-known physicist from Paris who requests, with regret, that we do not reveal his identity. Translated from the French by Gordon Creighton.

DURING the past few months I have been several times to l'Olivol, near Valensole, on the site of the landing of the egg-shaped object that settled down on several legs a few metres from Maurice Masse on the morning of July 1, 1965. This spot is of very special interest, because the lavender plants that were growing there died some time after the landing, and the plants planted there since have also died. Furthermore, various reports have mentioned the reticences of the witness and his unwillingness to say all he knew. My intention was to verify all these facts for myself on the spot.

The first time I went to l'Olivol was at the beginning of November 1968. I possessed no detailed map of the area, but I did have a few precise indications: the lavender field lies about 2 km. from Valensole as the crow flies, approximately mid-way between departmental highway 15 which runs from Valensole to Oraison, and departmental highway 6 which runs from Valensole to Manosque. The access to l'Olivol is along a wide metalled road that links these two highways.

I found this road easily and, using the photographs taken on the site by Charles Bowen (FSR, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 6-12) I was quickly able to identify the unoccupied house and the hillock of stones situated on either side of the field, and finally the field itself. The field was still under lavender, but I found it in bad condition, overrun with dry weeds of a yellowish straw colour that were growing among the lavender plants. The vineyard lying on the northern edge of the field, next to the hillock from behind which Masse had caught sight of the machine before he approached it, had all been uprooted, together

with the curtain of shrubs separating the vineyard from the field.

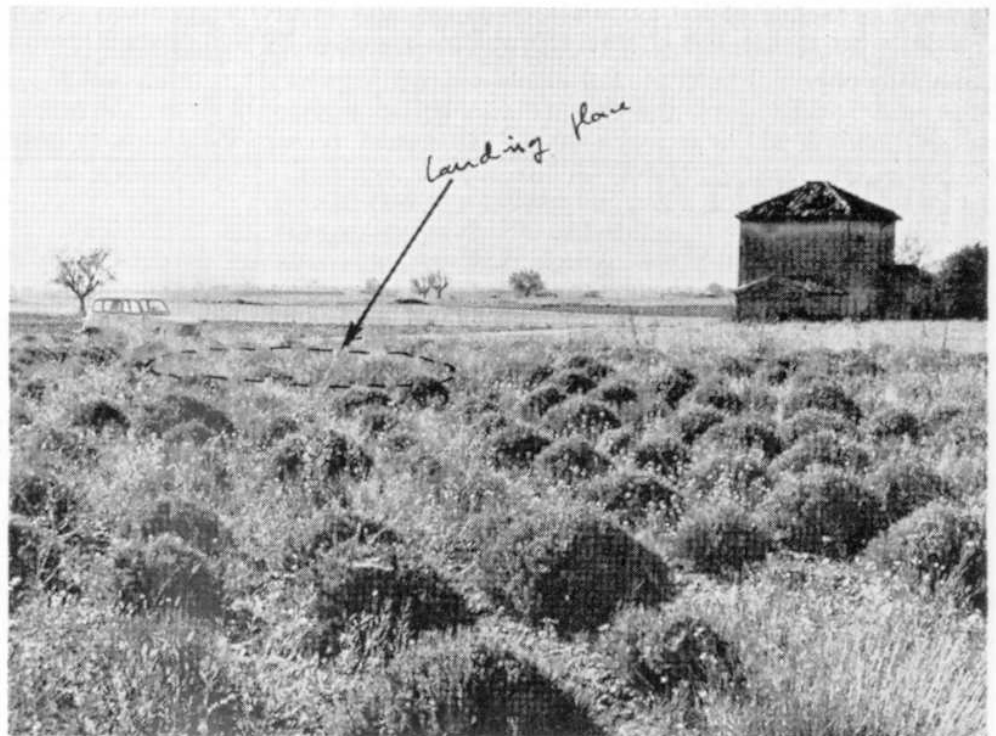
I found the landing site without difficulty, at the exact spot indicated on Charles Bowen's plan in the above-mentioned article (p. 10), and straight away I was able to confirm that no lavender plants were growing on it, it being occupied entirely by weeds (FSR, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 7). I felt a certain degree of apprehension that Masse might decide in the near future to plough the field up entirely and quit growing lavender there, in which case it would become impossible to locate the precise place of the landing. So I took a whole lot of photographs, in order to establish, once and for all, the position of the barren portion in relation to the surrounding areas. The portion in question,

roughly oval in shape, has an area of about 15 square metres.

Confrontation

After that I got back into my car to return to the Oraison road. Just before I reached the junction point, at a spot 200 metres from l'Olivol, I passed two men who were driving a tractor near the road. One of these two men, wearing a cap, a little on the stout side, with an oval face and an olive tinge of complexion, was the precise portrait of Maurice Masse as he appears in the photographs taken by Charles Bowen. There was no possible doubt about it: I was face to face with Masse himself.

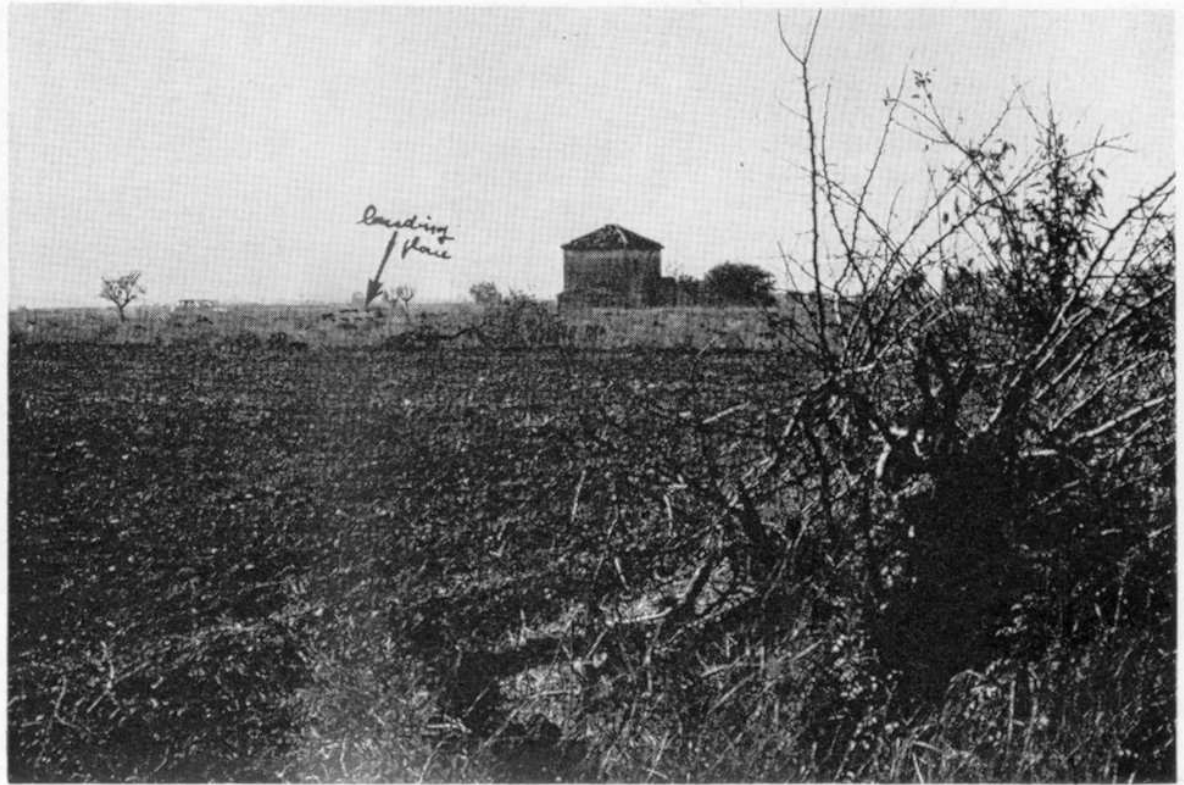
I got out of the car, and, leaning back against the bonnet, lit a cigarette. The man in the cap, who



November 1968: view from spot where M. Masse was immobilised

November 1968: from the position beside the hillock (clapier) from whence M. Masse saw the 'machine' after hearing the whistling noise.

Foreground right (off frame): the hillock.
 Foreground left: the ancient vineyard, now torn up, with the ground freshly ploughed. The line of small trees alongside l'Olivol now destroyed.
 Middle distance: l'Olivol—overgrown with weeds.
 Background: the unoccupied house.



had seen me coming from a long way off and had plenty of time to observe, from a distance, my visit to the landing-site, stopped working and approached me spontaneously—further proof that he was Masse. We exchanged greetings, but he put no question to me: he remained “on the expectant”. It was I who got the conversation warmed up, by saying I had just come from l'Olivol, where a space-craft had landed in 1965. But I was careful not to let him know that I had recognised who he was.

“No doubt you are a journalist?” he asked.

I put him straight, explaining that I was a “scientist”, a physicist from Paris who was studying the “flying saucers” as a side-line, outside my professional activities. Then he enquired whether I had already been to l'Olivol at the time when the episode had occurred and whether I had already seen the eyewitness. I replied that I had not. Then he at once wanted to know whether I intended to go and interrogate the eyewitness. My reply to this was likewise in the negative, and I gave him my reason: I said I already was perfectly familiar with the case, for I had read the two reports made successively by Masse to the Gendarmerie, and I knew all the places from the descriptions of

them that had been published, which indeed had enabled me to go straight there without having to ask anybody the way. Why then, I said, should I go to see Monsieur Masse? What he had concealed from the gendarmes he would also conceal from me . . . and, I added, it was moreover very much to be regretted that Masse had not told everything, for his duty was to feel solidarity with his fellow-men, and not with the little creatures from Space that had paralysed him. Reassured somewhat as to my intentions, Masse then replied: “Oh, yes, I know Masse well . . . he's a farmer, like me—one of my colleagues. . . . Sure. He saw something all right, but what?”

At that point I drew the *Flying Saucer Review* from my pocket and showed him the photo on the cover, in which he appears in the foreground.

“Monsieur Masse looks like you, don't you think?” I asked.

“Yes, it's true,” he replied. “He is a bit like me . . . and he is a bit on the stout side . . . but that isn't me in the photo, you know! And besides, Masse is a bit taller than me. . . . But tell me, I bet you thought I was Monsieur Masse, and that that is why you stopped?”

I lied in turn, and replied that it was not so. And on that I took

leave of him. I got back into my car, and he stood there a long time, eyeing me as I drove away.

A few days later I returned to l'Olivol with a friend who is a technician at the Observatory of Haute-Provence and who also keeps bees in the village of St. Michel l'Observatoire. Just before we reached l'Olivol, we passed a light *Renault R4* van coming from there: it was driven by the man in the cap, Monsieur Masse. He saw us as he passed, and he recognised me. He was so curious and puzzled that he stalled his engine.

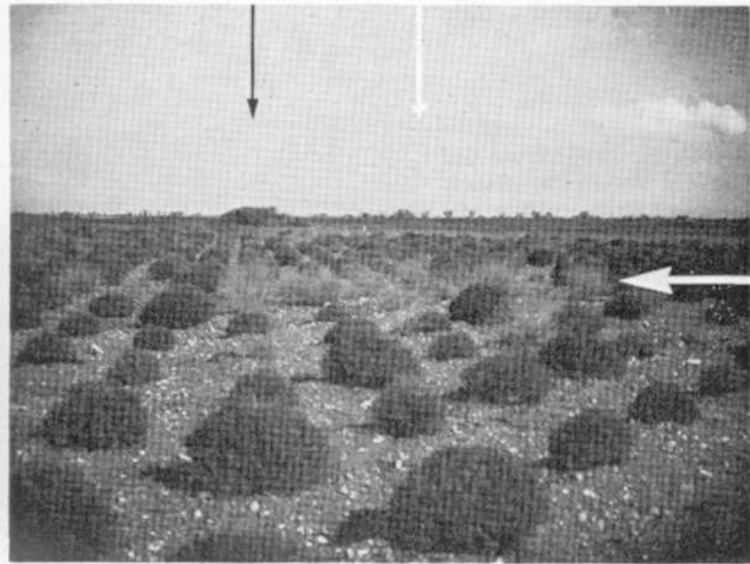
After visiting the lavender field, we went on to Valensole to take photos of Masse's distillery, and scarcely had we got there when the van appeared, travelling slowly, and the driver again eyeing me, really worried. Then we went and took up position at the entrance to the rue de Valensole where Masse lives, and a few minutes later along he comes for the third time! I expect he lost a lot of sleep that following night. I had proved that he was unwilling to be questioned by a stranger and that he would not hesitate to lie in order to avoid interviews.

Quasi-lavender plants?

My third trip to l'Olivol was in the early part of February 1969. I did not encounter M. Masse this



March 25, 1969: 11.0 a.m. The unoccupied house and track, looking North. Arrows indicate the position of the landing place (at Northern horizon)



25.3.69: View to the North. White arrows indicate landing place, black arrow the 'hillock'

time, but I took some fresh photographs. The lavender field had been cleared of the weeds and ploughed with right-angled furrows running between the rows of lavender plants. At the landing site nothing remained except tufts of dry grass on the places where the lavender plants had been.

Finally, I went back on two more occasions to l'Olivol, namely on March 23 and March 25, 1969. The field was in the same condition as it had been in February, that is to say well tended. It evidently seemed that, for the time being at any rate, Masse was not planning to plough it and put it under some other crop than lavender.

More photography

The photos I took in February and March, with my telescopic lens, from the landing site, and also later from the Haute-Provence Observatory, enabled me to establish the fact that l'Olivol is located precisely on a straight line, running from East to West and linking the following:

- (1) The Ionosphere research laboratory lying to the east of Valensole, with its row of tall masts.
- (2) The Valensole church, which is on a level with the plateau (Valensole being situated in a depression).
- (3) l'Olivol, and, finally
- (4) The buildings of the nor-

therly part of the Observatory.

From these buildings, in the evening when the weather is fine, you can clearly see, with strong binoculars, the masts standing out *in front* of the church, just to the right (i.e. to the south) of it. And it was precisely in that direction that, during the night of September 17 to 18, 1965, some people working at the Observatory saw a steady and extremely bright orange-coloured light with an apparent diameter of several minutes of arc and which continued there for several hours on end without changing either in position or in brightness. Was it a nocturnal return visit by the Space visitors?



25.3.69: View to the South-West



25.3.69: View to the South. Tufts of grass and weed in place of lavender clearly seen



25.3.69. To the South, the landing place. The centre of the landing place is arrowed, and it will be seen that some lavender plants are missing outside the elliptical central zone

And now, to conclude, a few interesting particulars that I managed to gather on my last visit to Haute-Provence, in March 1969:

To start with, I verified that, at the landing site, electrical batteries emit power in an absolutely normal fashion. There is no interference whatever with radio reception by a portable transistor-type set, and photographic exposure times determined by means of a battery-powered cadmium sulphide cell are correct. So it is certain that the effects described by John Keel (FSR, Vol. 14, No. 6, p. 17) are not present at l'Olivol.

New revelations by Madame Masse

On the other hand, my bee-keeping friend at St. Michel l'Observatoire went to Maurice Masse's house at the end of March 1969 with the intention of asking him some questions. The bee-keeper is on very good terms with one of Masse's best friends, so there was ground for hoping that, in the presence of another farmer, like himself a native of the region, and speaking with the southern accent, Masse would not feel so reticent about "spilling the beans" as he would be in the presence of a stranger like myself. It happened however that Masse was away from home when my friend appeared there. It was Madame Masse who received him, incidentally in a very friendly manner. And my friend was only too happy at this piece of good fortune, for she talked to him about her husband in a way that

she surely would not have done had the husband been present.

After going over the circumstances and the details of the landing, Mme. Masse stated explicitly that her husband had filled in the cylindrical hole made in the ground by the central "pivot" beneath the machine, and had done it with earth taken from the area immediately around the hole. My friend then asked her whether, before filling in the hole, Masse had thought of digging out the bottom of the hole to see if any object had been concealed there. Mme. Masse replied that her husband had done nothing like that, and that even now, he still would be averse to excavating the soil there. In fact, said she, Masse had a feeling of religious respect for the beings from Space. He regarded

the landing-site as having now become their property, as a sacred place where he, Masse, was merely the manager. And he had made his wife and his children promise never to sell that piece of ground in the event of his death. Mme. Masse went on to say that her husband disliked talking about the landing or about the little "men", that he endeavoured to make people believe that he was no longer interested in the matter, but that in reality he was still just as wrapped up in it as on the day when it happened, and that his inner life had been profoundly convulsed by it.

According to Mme. Masse—and she had been told this by her husband—the soil at l'Olivol had been chemically analysed, but they had been unable to find any abnormality whatever in it,* and there must therefore be some sort of "radiation" that was preventing the lavender (but not the weeds) from growing there; but this "radiation" was, by its nature, beyond the reach of the measuring devices of terrestrial scientists, and one must not seek to discover its nature: *that* was the Space beings' business, not men's business.

* * * * *

There is nothing to prove that the little humanoids at l'Olivol buried a material "marker" at a certain depth in the soil under the landing-site when they passed by there—a marker that would emit a "radiation" whether of known or unknown nature that was preventing the



Taken from l'Olivol (200-mm. teleobjective Nikon lens): the church at Valensole, and Dr. Rocard's antennas (ten in view between the arrows)

lavender (but not the weeds) from growing at that spot. But this possibility is not ruled out, even though it is not very probable. It could be an extremely small marker, unrecognisable as such on first sight.

We now know that Maurice Masse will never go there to search for such an object in the ground. But there are investigators who do not feel Masse's religious respect towards our extraterrestrial visitors, and who do not refuse to assume their dignity as Earthmen in the face of intervention by beings from the Cosmos. If they are granted the legal means, *these* investigators will not hesitate to dig up the ground there. But they would have to get an official authorisation, which would at the present time raise vast difficulties, given the state of unpreparedness of people's minds in respect of the reality of the existence of the UFOs. It is certain that Masse would not be at all appreciative if his field were to be excavated clandestinely. When the hunting season begins, guns go off easily in Haute-Provence, and an "accident" can soon happen. . . .

On the other hand, it will be recalled that in November 1965, when he found that the old plants

on the landing-site had wilted and then died, Masse ploughed up the whole field in order to plant fresh lavender. His aim was to wipe out all trace of the visit of the beings from Space. The present lavender crop dates from that time, and you can still see the landing-site, for the new plants, in their turn, soon died off at that spot.

One may wonder whether the agency responsible for this death of the plants is still making itself felt today. If the lavender plants died as a result of some minimal change in the chemical or biological nature of the soil as a result of the passage of the machine, then nothing prohibits our believing that, in the long run, the soil has finally reverted to its previous state, if only because of the infiltrations caused by rain. In which case, a fresh plantation of lavender carried out on the landing-site now might prove hardy and lively, and the hypothesis of a marker buried in the ground would have to be discarded.

The experiment could be tried at the end of next autumn, without Masse being informed about it, for no harm to his field would result from it. All that would be necessary would be quietly to put in three or

four young lavender plants instead of the tufts of grass, in order to know in a few days time whether the landing-site is still infertile.

At this juncture, I venture to request our French friends who read this not to publish a translation of the concluding paragraphs of this article, nor to make any reference to it in public. The success of the experiment will depend upon this. It is essential that Masse shall not know of any attempt that may be made in this direction, so that the experiment can be carried through without any attempt by him to interfere with it.

I am counting on the discretion of all who are involved or interested in the case, and thank them in advance.

NOTE

* In actual fact the calcium content of the soil taken from the landing-site was found to be much higher than in the soil taken from other places in the field (see *Phénomènes Spatiaux*, Bulletin du GEPA, March 1966, page 26).

[It is hoped to publish further photographs showing the relative positions of the church at Valensole, the antennas and l'Olivol, as seen from the Observatory of Haute Provence, in a future issue of FSR.—EDITOR.]

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