

Readers' Reports

A flying log

Dear Sir,—The following account was given to me by a friend, John Munn. At 6.30 in the evening, one day during the summer of 1970, Mr. Munn was travelling back to Portsmouth on the Southampton-Portsmouth train, when looking out of the (open) train window he saw a cylindrical object at an approximate height of 60ft. from the ground and 160ft. from the train and travelling parallel with it and in the same direction. Mr. Munn's description of the object is as follows:

The estimated length was about 30ft., grey-brown in colour similar to that of burnt metal and slightly reflecting sunlight; no apertures or protuberances were in evidence. The sky was a clear blue without a trace of cloud, and the sun was very bright. Any sound would have been obliterated by the noise of the train which had just left Cosham station when Mr. Munn made his observation.

The speed of the object was estimated at about 70 m.p.h. and appeared to increase before the witness finally lost sight of it. When the train reached a junction and turned off the object apparently continued on an unchanged course. There were other people in Mr. Munn's compartment but he didn't know whether or not to alert them to his sighting.

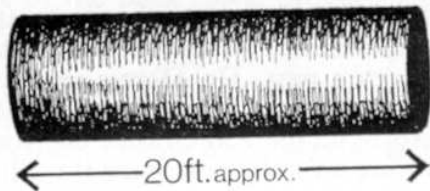


FIG. 1

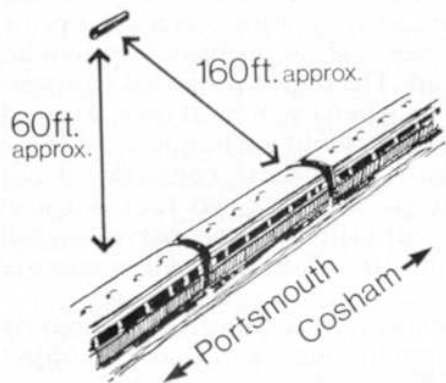


FIG. 2

Fig. 1 Appearance of the object.
Fig. 2 Position of object relative to the train.

The witness used the term "flying log" as his first impression of the UFO. The enclosed drawing of the object is by myself under the supervision of Mr. Munn.

Yours sincerely,
Nicholas Maloret,
Locksway Road, Milton,
Portsmouth, Hants.

1969 Exeter incident explained

[Puzzled by the sighting of an object, brighter than a star, with a tail streaming behind as it sped across the night sky, Mr. A. E. Thomson wrote to THE OBSERVER asking for an explanation of the phenomenon. The Science Correspondent for that newspaper duly passed the letter on to us and it was published under the "Readers' Reports" section in FSR CASE HISTORIES Supplement 9. We are grateful to Mr. Anthony Pace for drawing our attention to an article by Howard Miles in the Journal of the British Astronomical Association (1972, 82, 2) which provides the answer to Mr. Thomson's query.—ASSISTANT EDITOR.]

Briefly, a very bright fireball crossed southern England on April 3, 1969, at 19.38 hours. As readers might be interested to know what appearances this meteor displayed in its journey across the sky, an extract from the article is given here together with the diagrams.

"The object was first seen when it was about 40 km. south of Beachy Head, travelling in a direction slightly north of west. It was bluish white in colour and rapidly grew in size and at the same time developed a long tail. The head was reported by several observers to be slightly smaller than full Moon. The tail tapered to a point and changed in brightness as it crossed the sky. Sparks were reported as separating from the main mass, these sparks being recorded as white by some observers and red by others. The main visual features of the fireball during its passage down the English Channel are summarised in figure 1.

"During the latter half of the visible track, there is evidence to suggest that the diameter of the head diminished to about 50% of the value quoted above, although the brightness seemed to have remained roughly the same. Most observers were content to describe the object as exceptionally bright, or very bright, but magnitudes of -8/-9 were quoted. Towards the end of the flight, the head split into several components but they were very close together and each component had a long tail. From points well away from the track, how-

ever, this resolution was not observed and hence the detailed structure was not reported. Several observers from Cornwall described the tail as orange coloured whereas others still reported the bluish coloration but commented on red sparks. Just before extinction, the tail went red, shortened rapidly and then the object suddenly 'went out'. Two observers, well away from the extinction area, referred to a reddish glow for a short time after extinction but it is thought that this was due to the changed appearance of the object and not to any residual effects."

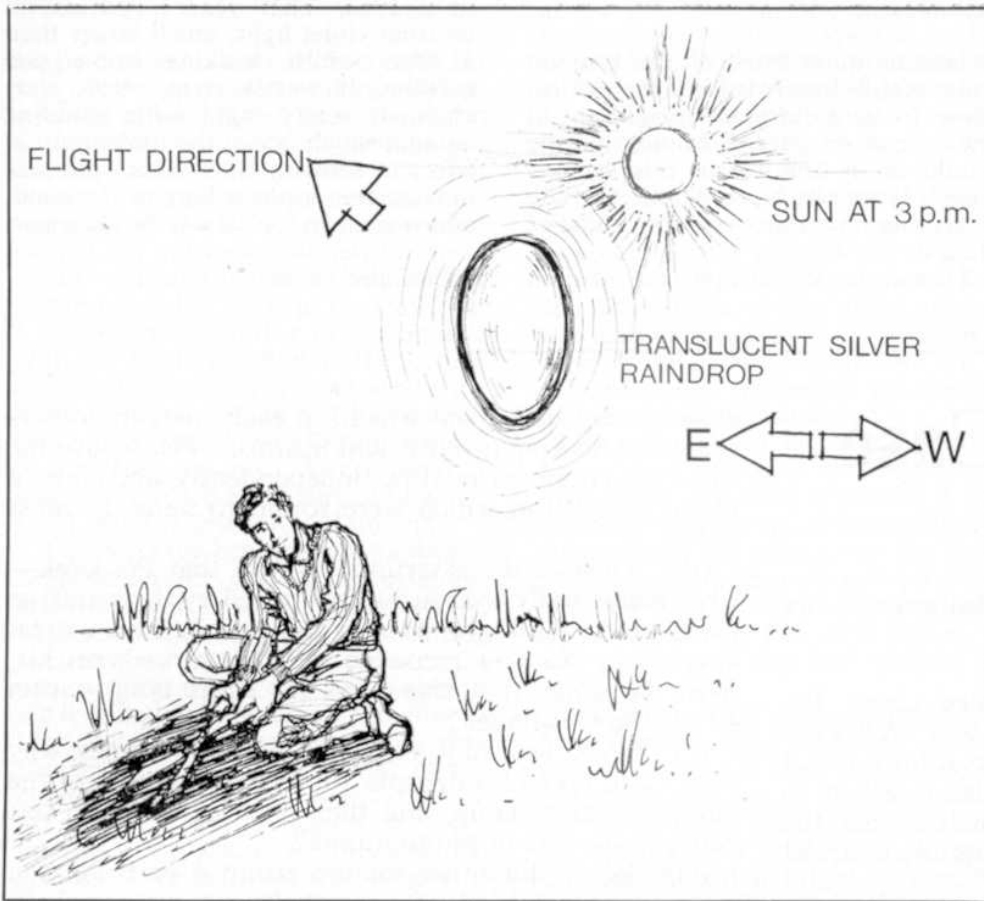
The "raindrop"

The following report was submitted to us by the South West Aerial Phenomenon Society. It was related to Mr. J. C. Drawbridge of 33 Hart Mead Road, Thatcham, Berkshire, by Mr. Fritz Ruffler of 25 Three Firs Way, Burghfield Common, Berkshire, on September 20, 1971.

"It was a warm and sunny day in mid-September, 1956. The time was approximately 3.00 p.m. and there was no wind; the sky was virtually cloudless. Mr. Ruffler was cutting grass in a field near a church at Trash Green (off Bennett's Lane, between Burghfield Common and Theale, Berkshire). Bent over while busily snipping with his shears, Mr. Ruffler suddenly felt the fine hair on the back of his neck bristle and an unusual sensation ran down his spine. He felt as if someone were watching him. Turning round slowly, still in the crouched position, he saw an object which rooted him to the spot. He described it as a 'raindrop,' and as having a translucent, silver colour. Trembling, he watched the object which hovered for about 5 seconds as though looking at him. Then, without warning, it climbed at an angle from its hovering position and disappeared into the sky and was out of sight within seconds. Mr. Ruffler could not estimate the speed of the object. All he could say was that it was 'a fantastic rate of climb,' and not a sound was made. While working, his back was more or less to the sun. The object was directly behind him and took off in an easterly direction.

"After this happening, Mr. Ruffler made off for home as fast as he could. His wife described him as being 'all of a tremble' and absolutely white. She thought he was ill. When he told her all about it she reckoned he had seen a ghost.

"Apart from his wife, I am the only person to whom the witness related this story. Even telling it to me after so many years made him tremble! He

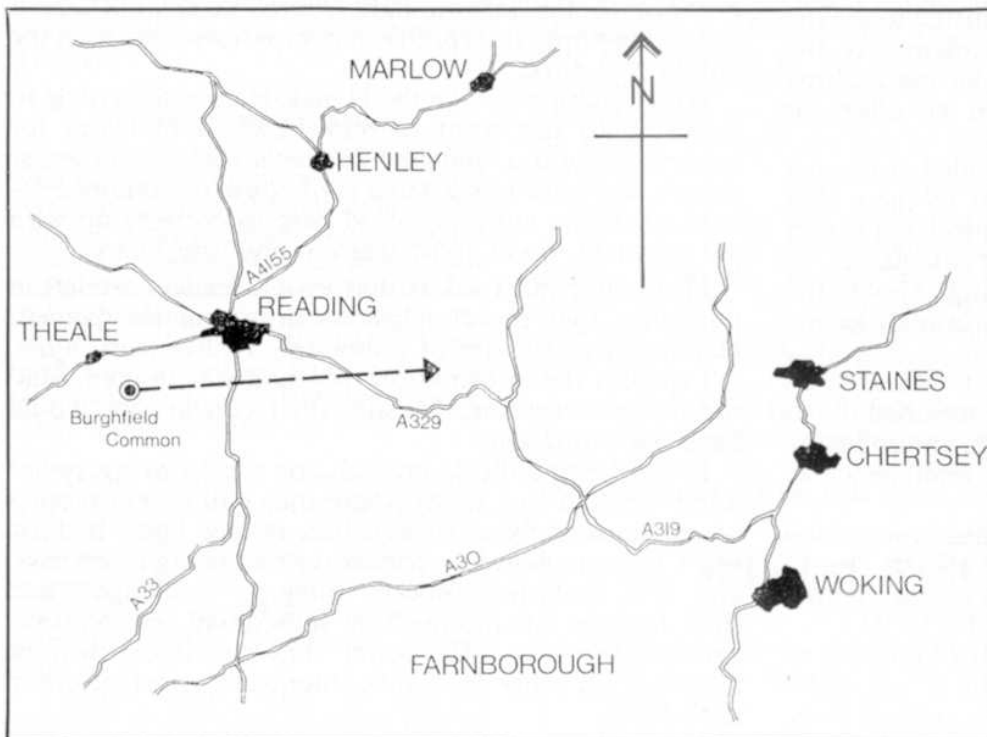


is a hard-working family man who served with the German navy during the war, and he knew what he saw was not conventional. The size of the object was *like* a small weather balloon. It hovered about 20-30 feet away from him. However, he is quite certain that the object was *not* a balloon; there was no wind to make the object disappear so fast. He did not say anything in 1956

because people might think him mad. "A drawing made by myself under the supervision of Mr. Ruffler is attached along with a map of the locality."

A flying "sewage pipe"

Dear Sir,—I experienced a most unusual UFO in the late summer of 1958. It was a clear, warm late after-



noon somewhere between 5.30 and 7.00 p.m. My nearest neighbours had retired indoors for tea. I, on the other hand, continued to dig in my back garden, preparing a sand pit for my young son. On straightening up, I looked south-east over a line of rooftops into a pale blue sky, and there heading north-west on a regular aircraft lane, at a height of some 1,000-2,000 feet, was a huge, milky-white cylinder hanging in the sky at 60°, the more distant end pointing downwards, i.e. its shape and position was like a fat cigarette held at arm's length at 1 o'clock.

The appearance of the object quite excited me as I believed it to be a rocket case that had escaped burning up on its flight through the atmosphere. I observed the object for perhaps half a minute, and then went indoors to alert my wife. She came outside, saw the cylinder and seemed a bit puzzled by it, although she accepted my explanation that it was a rocket case. By now the object was level with, and slightly to the front of our house, clearly visible the whole time. However, during my brief excursion into the house, the object had started a slow and ponderous tumbling movement. This was not a uniform movement, but was similar to the way clothes can be seen tumbling about through the door of a washing machine.

By now, I was less certain of the origin of the cylinder, mainly owing to the lack of external detail; the object was quite smooth. I remember thinking at first that it looked like a giant runaway windsock, but I soon abandoned this thought as I watched its passage through the sky—the effect was quite weird. I reckoned its length was 40-50 feet, whilst its diameter was about 4-6 feet. The mass and clumsy movement suggested a huge section of concrete sewage pipe, although I'm unable to remember whether the end was closed or open.

The impression it made was one of unreality, and in some way it seemed detached from the surrounding atmosphere. I mean that it was unreal in the way one sees a television commercial in which perhaps one catches a glimpse of a woman floating along in slow motion over the top of a field at dawn, with mist drifting around and with robes and hair billowing out behind—in fact unreal. I cannot say to what extent this impression was heightened or suggested by wisps of vapour round the bottom half of the cylinder as I may subsequently have been influenced by seeing an illustration of an object like this at a later date. However, I think some cloudiness was present during the motion of the cylinder. It certainly ignored the laws of gravity

READERS' REPORTS (continued from page 15).

in so far as it showed none of the floating motion of an airship or a balloon (I have observed both in flight). Instead, it continued its tumbling motion in a dead straight line on an apparently level path into a moderately reddish North-West sky from a pale blue one.

After several minutes of observation,

it became quite small on the horizon but was still clearly visible in the reddish glow. I called out to my neighbour at the foot of my garden, hoping that he would be in time to see this "rocket case". However, he came out too late to see the object as there was a line of trees in the way.

I more or less forgot the incident

until 1964. That year I spotted an unusual violet light, much larger than a star, whilst walking home one evening. It was a crisp, clear, star-studded, windy night with scudding clouds which gave the not unusual effect of moving stars. This light was moving the opposite way to the wind, and was much too slow to be fixed on a

(Continued on page iii)

The Aldridge Case

Michael Davies

Our contributor is a Police Sergeant stationed in the Midlands.

ON reading the article "The Aldridge Case: Pc. Leek's Photographs" in Supplement 9 of *FSR Case Histories*, I was very disturbed to see the solutions put forward by the joint authors. The reader is asked to accept a 'piece of detective work' which rebuts the assumption that the object was an unknown aerial object.

The only thing that the article reveals under analysis is that it is gross speculation around a fanciful theory. Had not Dr. Hynek's name been associated with it, so giving it the mark of respectability, I would have relegated it to the category of 'debunking statements' by official bodies.

I decided to check out the authors' deductions myself, and as the editor knows of my position, and the facilities available to me to do this, I ask readers to accept the sincerity of my comments.

It seems that the authors were not permitted to see the complete police file concerning the incident. As the report is not for public dissemination, let me address myself to the authors (and readers) in an effort to persuade them to think again.

Had they been able to see the complete file I am sure it would have become immediately evident to them that what the witnesses were describing was a moving object capable of hovering at a height that was calculable.

Applying logic (and without dashing about the country dramatically to 'reconstruct the crime') let me ask a few questions:

(i) Had the object been the planet Mars, then would not the observers have stood and watched it . . . and watched it . . . right through to the dawn, unless by that time someone would have had the intelligence to have recognised it for what it was?

(ii) Since when has the planet Mars taken on sudden movement? How does a planet 'take off' or 'move across the sky' in manoeuvres that ridicule any attempted association with atmospheric conditions?

(iii) Why do you think two patrol cars were sent in different directions? They were sent in a *successful* attempt to encircle the object, providing at least three

designated points from which, in each case, the observers were looking inwards and upwards. Please give the witnesses credit for relating, independently, accounts of visual perception which were found to agree in most points.

(iv) Despite the assertions by you that Pc. Leek—who, incidentally, was just as disturbed by the article as I was—took photographs of nothing more than a street lamp, how do you reconcile your remarks with his, when he states that there was no street lamp within 40° of the viewfinder?

(v) If you wished to emulate Sherlock Holmes, why didn't you take photographs on meter reading 9 of the offending street lamp, and then do a comparison test between the sets of photographs?

(vi) When did either sodium group A or B lighting—or any other kind of street lighting—alter in light density or shape with the frequency displayed in the Pc's photographs? Look at the photographs—those you were allowed to see—once again.

(vii) Having done that—and just to persuade you further that all you got out of this outing was a wooden spoon—would you not expect that somewhere on the reel of negatives there would be (out of sequence, as they were) shots of a known light source, using the same camera setting, at infinity, as it should be? Once the distance to the known light source is established, it assists the photo interpreter in comparison tests with the unknown source.

Whilst itching to take the Hynek/Hennessey article to pieces, I do not want to make *FSR* a platform for argument [*but it is! Both our magazines are platforms for debate, and what's that, but a polite form of argument?*—EDITOR]. If the authors would care to correspond with me privately, I will assist them in any way I can.

Meanwhile, all I ask is that *FSR's* readers are left in no doubt that the conclusions drawn in the Hynek/Hennessey article are of a fanciful, Walter Mitty type.

I suspect the information they had was limited. Had they seen everything I'm sure their conclusions would have been different.

It has been difficult enough for me to bring police minds around to a point where they will accept reports of unidentified flying objects in a serious light. If those few I have managed to convert are allowing interviews, and then find their officers' integrity challenged, and their feelings left incensed by subsequent irresponsible articles, there is little doubt that the doors will be slammed on other *bona fide*, interested investigators in the future.

READERS' REPORTS (continued)

single-engined trainer. I observed it for several minutes whilst walking, and on arriving home I stood and observed it for several minutes at my front door without being able to figure out what it was. I eventually told a new acquaintance about the light and he revealed during our conversation that he was a UFO enthusiast. I was only mildly interested in his views at the time, but I remember recounting my experience with the floating cylinder. He seemed quite impressed and later showed me a book by Aimé Michel with an illustration of the "cigar" over Dôle in France—and there was my "sewage pipe". I was quite excited at the time, and wrote to M. Michel, but received no reply.

I cannot even begin to find a rational explanation for this flying cylinder, least of all can I see how a damned big object like this could float overhead on a clear day, in sight for minutes on end, without others also being able to see it in flight and raising the matter in the local press. I can only think that the neutral milky-white colour of the cylinder and its lack of sound must be the answer, but I would be very interested to know whether anyone else has ever seen such an object in British skies.—**New Reader.**

[The name and address of our contributor has been supplied, but he requests that these be kept private. We will say, however, that he lives in Chessington, Surrey. He also mentioned that as a professional draughtsman he considers his ability to observe and measure accurately to be slightly better than average. During the War he served for a time with the anti-aircraft and is not unfamiliar with things that float or fly in the sky.—ASSISTANT EDITOR.]

Northamptonshire landings

Dear Sir,—I was very surprised that you did not publish an article on the Weldon UFO. (Weldon is a village just outside Corby, which is about eight miles from where I live.) In case you have not received any information on the happening, which occurred on the night of October 20, 1971, I am enclosing a cutting from our local newspaper, the *Northampton Evening Telegraph* of October 21, 1971:

"Four Weldon women claimed today that an unidentified flying object landed in the village last night. The women said in separate interviews this morning how they watched or listened as the object landed just behind some caravans on the Woodlands caravan site.

"Mrs. Eileen Muir of caravan number 72 saw a bright white light at

about 7.00 p.m. as she was walking through the centre of Weldon on her way home. When Mrs. Muir arrived at her caravan she watched in terror as an object resembling an upturned mushroom landed at the back of her home.

"It made a shrill high-pitched whistle and there was a white mist surrounding the object," she said. "It seemed to stand on three pointed legs and the middle of the object glowed red and green. I went to my neighbour's caravan and together we ran to call the police. When we got back it had completely disappeared."

"But this is not the first time that Mrs. Muir has seen the mysterious form. 'The first time I spotted it was about three weeks ago. It was a different colour but I am sure it was the same object. I saw it again about two weeks ago and for the third time last night. It's like nothing I've seen before. It was so eerie. It was like nothing on earth,' she said.

"At her home at caravan number 57, Mrs. Carmen Gray told how she too saw the UFO last night. Her account of the incident was almost identical to the one given by Mrs. Muir. 'It landed just behind the trees near Eileen's caravan. It had a bright glimmering light on top but the body of the thing had an orangey-red glow and a green glow. I was terrified. I know other women on the site have seen the object but it was the first time for me—and I was terrified. After we returned from calling the police, it had disappeared. When the police arrived I felt such a fool, but I'm sure what I saw was an UFO.'

"Mrs. Shiela Mason, of caravan number 39, said she heard a noise and thought it was a farmer using a tractor late at night. But as she listened the noise increased. 'It was definitely not a tractor, it was too high pitched. It was so loud at the end you had to block your ears.'"

This was not the only UFO sighting in the area. I am also sending you a cutting from the *Evening Telegraph* dated October 30, 1971, giving a report of a sighting in Irthlingborough, which is about 9 miles from Kettering:

"Mr. and Mrs. David Alabaster, of 16 Lilley Terrace, Irthlingborough, were walking out with their baby at the bottom of Crow Hill when they

looked up and saw a disc-shaped object in the sky. Said Mrs. Alabaster yesterday: 'It was silvery, very high in the sky and at the time looked as if it was turning. It was travelling in the direction of Addington.' She was sure it wasn't a plane. 'In the last five years, we have seen 13 objects and one of them actually stopped over Irthlingborough.'"

There was also a landing at Irthlingborough, which took place on July 15, 1969:

"Several young children on the Crow Hill estate at Irthlingborough claimed yesterday they saw a flashing red object land in a field behind their homes last night. Sharon, aged 12 and ten-year-old Denise Cuddihy saw the mystery object from the bedroom window of their home at 44 Fettleline Road.

"When it landed in the field it turned into a number of flashing lights. The whole sky seemed to turn a pale blue colour at the same time," said Denise. 'We told our father about it. He came up to have a look but did not know what it could have been.' Denise said that two other children in the street had also seen the object. They are Amanda Fox, aged 8 of No. 26 and Susan Boddington, who lives at No. 52.

Five young boys, who were camping in a tent also saw this mysterious red object flash across the sky. The boys were in the back garden of No. 48 Fettleline Road when they saw a red flash in the sky at about 10.30 p.m. 'It came hurtling through the air and kept flashing red on and off for a few minutes before it came down in the barley field at the back of our house,' said 11-year-old Kevin Spence, 28 Fettleline Road. His companions in the tent, all of the same road, were Nigel Flawn aged ten, who lives at No. 76, Mervyn, aged eight, and Neil, ten, of No. 49 and 12-year-old Christopher Fox of No. 26. Their natural boyish curiosity to investigate the mysterious object has been restrained by wise parents who will not allow the children to play in the field. The field leads to the River Nene and the parents fear for the safety of their children after Monday's tragic drowning."

Michael Carr,
Laburnham Crescent, Kettering,
Northants.

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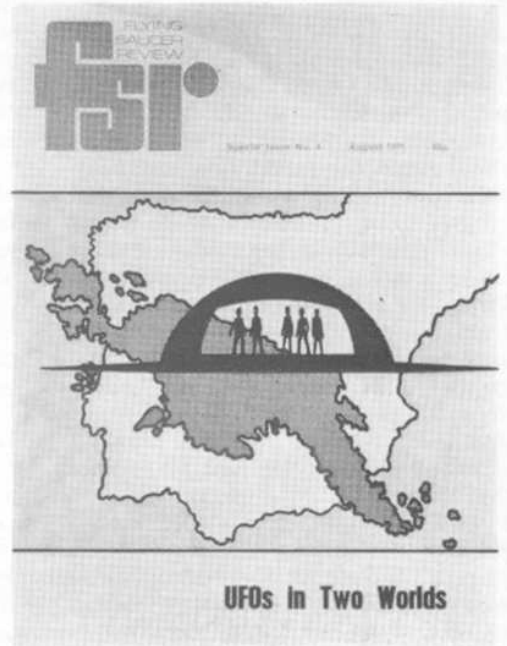
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