

MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

XVIIIth century sighting by Captain Cook's crew

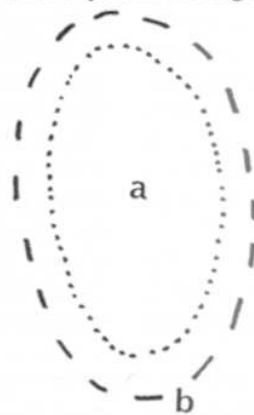
Sir,—There is, in a book by Roderick Cameron, a passage which may be of interest to you if you do not know it already. The title of the book is: *The Golden Haze, with Captain Cook in the South Pacific*. It has been published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, in 1965. I have found the passage in question on p.240 of the Readers' Union edition of this book; the page numbers should be the same here as in the original publisher's edition. It is partly a quotation from the diary of a scientist who accompanied Captain Cook. Here is the text: "On their last evening in New Caledonia waters, Forster reported 'a ball of fire to the north-west in size and splendour resembling the sun, though somewhat paler'. It appeared with a hissing sound and soon burst leaving behind it a few shining sparks 'among which the largest, oblong in shape, sped from our view, followed by a bluish, flaming streak'."—Raymond Eyquem, 6 Beda Road, Canton, Cardiff.

A classic fireball

Sir,—Perhaps readers of the article by C. Maxwell Cade, *Fireballs and Flying Saucers* (FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, Volume 13, No. 1), would be interested in the following, possibly unique account of ball-lightning, which has recently come to my notice. If, indeed this had occurred in an open space, no doubt it could have been described as a "UFO light" or "foo-fighter." As far as I was concerned, the sighting was first brought to light on Thursday, February 23, 1967, and that evening was confirmed by a telephone conversation between myself and one of the observers, a Mrs. Johnston of Normandy near Guildford, Surrey. I subsequently dispatched an information form which was completed and returned on Monday, February 27. This is what apparently occurred on February 19, 1967.

Mr. and Mrs. Johnston and their two children were in the sitting-room of their bungalow on the afternoon of Sunday, February 19, this year. It had been raining for some while when their son, D. P. Johnston, decided to use the telephone which is situated in a recess by the stairs. After

a little time the silence was suddenly shattered by a loud explosion, later described by Mrs. Johnson as a loud paper bag popping, followed by a sound that resembled a clap of thunder. At that instant, the telephone went dead and from the telephone protector appeared a ball of fire. It was the shape and size of a narrow light bulb and was a yellow-orange colour,



a—yellow-orange b—fuzzy blue edge

surrounded by a "fuzzy blue edge." It then travelled slowly behind Mrs. Johnston, who was sitting with her back to the telephone protector box, scorching her neck, and singeing her hair. Later she complained of a headache.

The fireball crossed the room in silence towards the fire, then changed direction and headed towards a power socket on the skirting board. At that moment the fireball increased in size and changed shape. Mrs. Johnston described it as becoming "a bit larger and more octagonal with jagged edges." On reaching the



power socket the fire ball shrunk until it disappeared.

Later investigations showed that the telephone earth wire had become disconnected at some time in the past.

What I believe happened is as follows: the lightning discharge landed on the telephone wires, perhaps attracted by a small earth condition on the line, a characteristic of the type of exchange involved, when a conversation between two subscribers is in progress. The vast potential blew the fuses and carbon electrodes at the protector, disconnecting the line and releasing the earth condition I have described. Finding the air a better conductor than the bakelite of the protector, the ball of energy searched for an earth, in order to release its power. It eventually found an outlet in the earth of the power socket.

This appears to be an extraordinarily well detailed case and is perhaps of some use to UFO researchers who wish to avoid mis-identification.

I should add that I am a telephone engineer and am conversant with both Post Office exchange apparatus and subscriber apparatus.—Richard C. Beet, 16 Hillcrest Road, Guildford, Surrey.

[Mr. Beet is a member of the newly-formed SURREY INVESTIGATION GROUP ON AERIAL PHENOMENA (SIGAP) and would no doubt welcome applications from interested individuals in West Surrey.—EDITOR].

The Guildford Sighting—Balloon or UFO?

Sir,—On November 15, 1966, at 1.35 p.m., something came down through the dark overcast clouds over Guildford. It was the shape of a "double bubble" and was of a silvery grey or dark blue colour. As it descended, four antennae could be seen protruding from the top bubble; after a few seconds a jet of flame gushed from one side of the object and it moved over the city of Guildford. As it moved along, pieces of the bubble appeared to drop off, and then the whole object was enveloped in a ball of flame as it disappeared up through the clouds.

The above incident is based upon the common factors of descriptions given by five different witnesses who saw part or the whole of this sighting.