

NATURE NOTES: HEDGEHOGS FROM THE COSMOS OR TIDY WHIRLWINDS?

In August 1981 some interesting great "flattened clockwise rings" turned up in a field of wheat near Winchester, Hampshire, England, and were reported on at the time for FSR by Mr. Pat Delgado (FSR Volume 27, No. 5).

Almost exactly two years later, during the night of June 19/20, 1983, the phenomenon has appeared again in precisely the same field — and indeed at almost precisely the same spots. Opinion among the rural populace of Hampshire as to the cause and nature of these "rings" has varied widely, some of the local wiseacres attributing them to the love-antics of rutting hedgehogs or rutting deer, while others have even hinted knowingly at the nocturnal love-antics of ardent buffs from the nearby national UFO shrine of Warminster. The world's leading expert in UFOs was however quoted in the press as being satisfied that the tidily distributed marks in the field were *"not mysterious, but caused by whirlwinds or tornadoes. We think the weather is to blame."*

FSR readers may however be relieved to know that there is a better explanation than mere weather, for, after much publicity and enormous excitement in some of the British newspapers, the matter has now finally been explained and laid to rest in the *Daily Express* for July 13, 1983, with the following expert ruling:-

"Witches and warlocks created the Great White Holes . . . The mysterious rings in the heart of England's UFO-Land are not the calling-cards of "E.T.", but the sinister setting for the magical ceremony of the Great Sabbath", says psycho-physicist Chris Bankford, former director of the London Psychophysical Research Unit. "The circles were trampled out with the aid of a tent-peg and a piece of string", he said.

Lt. Commander H. W. Bruce, the owner of the cornfield, takes a simpler view than that. He says it is the work of common vandals. *"It is extremely easy for anyone to go out there and make these circles. And the result is that more than an acre of my crops has been destroyed. It lets the rooks in too. It's absolutely ludicrous!"*

The vandals, or the witches, or the deer, or the hedgehogs, or the UFO buffs, or the weather, are also reported to have produced identical patterns of clockwise rings in recent weeks in fields at Westbury in Wiltshire and at Wantage in Oxfordshire (just as they generated *anticlockwise* rings in far-away Queensland, Australia, in January 1966.)

We are particularly grateful to Mr. Pat Delgado, who has again visited the "rings" at Cheesefoot Head,

near Winchester, as he did in 1981, and has written the following report specially for FSR. EDITOR

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Mystery Rings Again at Cheesefoot Head, 1983

Pat Delgado

In my article, *Cheesefoot Head Mystery Rings* (FSR Volume 27, No. 5, published in March 1982) I gave an account of the mysterious marks which were discovered in August 1981 in a field of wheat near Winchester in the county of Hampshire.

Readers of FSR will be interested to know that a further pattern of identical markings appeared in the same field, and indeed on almost but not quite exactly the same spot, during the night of June 19/20, 1983.

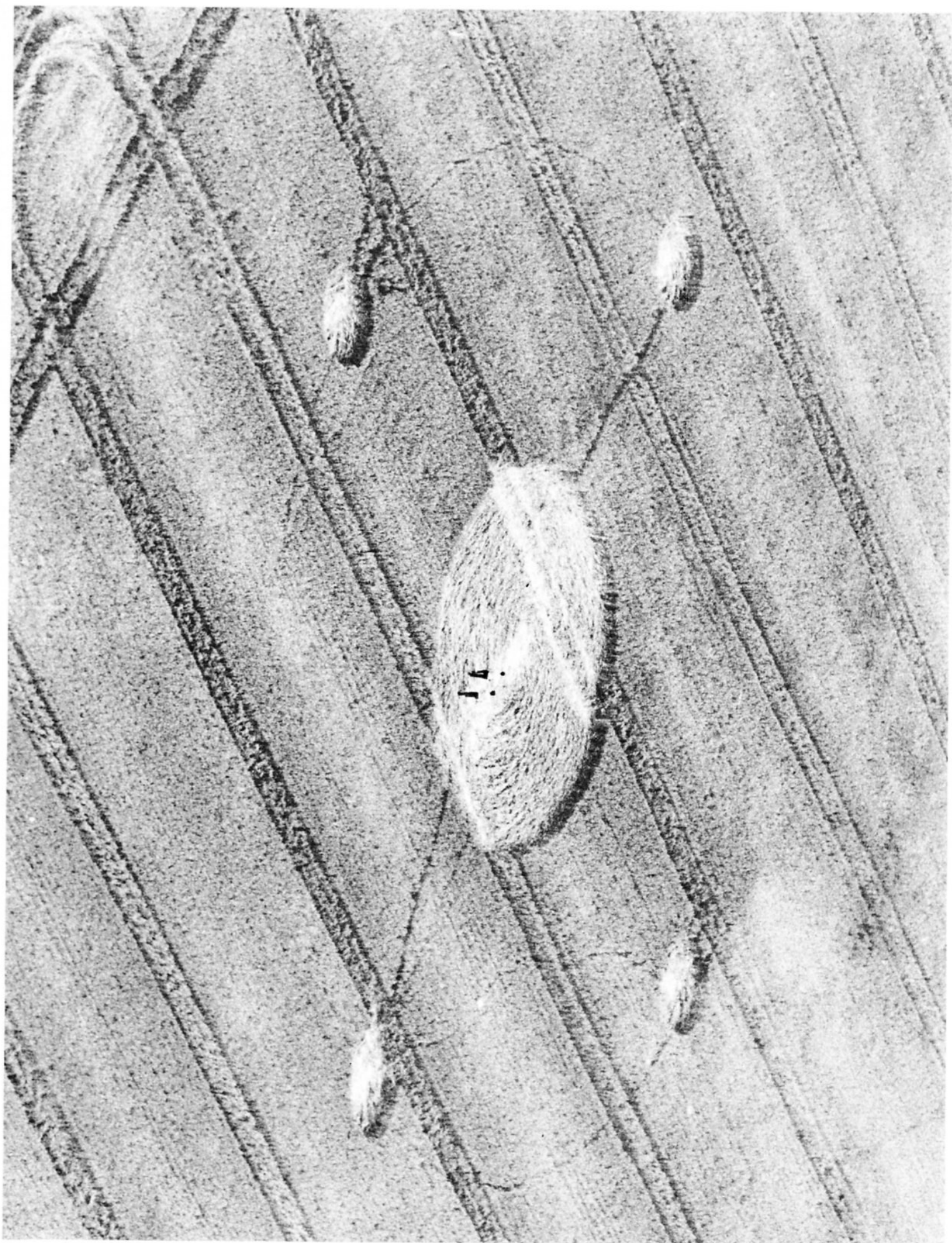
On Tuesday evening, June 21st, a friend of mine telephoned to me to say that the rings had not been there in the field on the Sunday evening (June 19) but were there on the following morning (Monday, June 20). Fortunately I already had my camera loaded with film, so I drove over to Cheesefoot Head on Monday evening and, indeed, there they were again.

The site of the new "rings" is very close to, if not quite identical with, the position of those of 1981, but the ring pattern is different. The 1981 markings consisted of one large circle, with a smaller circle to the north of it and a similar smaller one to the south of it, making therefore a total of three circles in all. This year there were *five* circles, one large one and four smaller ones positioned symmetrically at N., S., E., and W. around it. This year I judge the large circle to be slightly smaller than it was in 1981, while the four smaller "satellite" circles seem to be about one-third of the diameter of those of 1981. This year, one might say that the space taken up by all the circles, that is to say, from the outside edge of a small circle across to the outside edge of a diametrically opposite small circle, is larger than in the 1981 configuration. (see photographs).

I noted carefully the floor of all five circles and was able to observe that, *just as in 1981, the crop was*

The 1983 Cheesefoot rings →

By courtesy of Mr. Tim Daley and Daily Express (c)





The Cheesefoot Head rings 1981

brushed flat in a clockwise direction, and the "walls" of all five circles were sharp and vertical, also as in 1981.

This year I observed that, when I got there, there was already a track running through the corn from the perimeter fence to one of the small circles and thence on into the large circle. (*This track, as I was informed by Lt. Cmdr. Bruce, the owner of the land, had been made by picknickers, to his very great annoyance.*)

The Police were at the site during the early part of the week, when a film-crew from TVS visited the site, having been advised by me of the occurrence. BBC TV South also filmed the rings and transmitted the film during the following week.

Rings a complete mystery

During the second week after the appearance of the rings, I telephoned to the office of the manager of the farm and asked his secretary whether she could explain the rings? She replied that they were a complete mystery to all the farm staff. Several of the farm workers said that the rings were definitely not there on the evening of June 19 but were there early on the morning of June 20, and all of these employees state categorically that when they first found the rings there were no tracks into or out of the field through the corn. This confirms that these tracks were made later and were due to picknickers or other visitors, as Lt. Cmdr. Bruce has told me.

Since my notification of the new rings at Cheesefoot Head to TVS and BBC South and the local paper, the *Hampshire Chronicle*, further rings of identical pattern



The Cheesefoot Head rings 1983

have appeared at Westbury in Wiltshire, and at Wantage in Oxfordshire. It is interesting to note that these three locations form an equilateral triangle on the map. (Is it purely coincidental that all three place-names, *Winchester*, *Westbury*, and *Wantage*, commence with a "W"?)

In conclusion, I can only say that in my opinion these circles are formed by some force unknown to us.

We think readers will be interested to see again Mr. Pat Delgado's previous article, so we reprint it below from FSR Vol. 27, No. 5:-

CHEESEFOOT HEAD MYSTERY RINGS, 1981 **PAT DELGADO**

It was on Wednesday, August 19th, 1981, that I first heard about the discovery of mysterious flattened rings in a cornfield at the beauty spot of Cheesefoot Head "punch bowl", near Winchester in Hampshire. I was at Alresford Golf Club with some friends when two other golfers, well-known to us, asked if we could explain the phenomenon which they had seen a couple of days earlier. Needless to say there was a variety of suggestions as to how the three rings came to be there, ranging from practical jokers, and schoolchildren, and rutting deer, to whirlwinds.

As the site of the rings lies only a few miles from my home, I went to see them for myself on Saturday, August 22, 1981. The road runs close to, and well above, the cornfield, and there were the rings in full view. The cornfield, golden brown, presented a completely smooth top surface broken only by the sharply-defined circles.

I had taken my ten-magnification binoculars with me, so I was able to examine the area in some detail. The edges of the rings were sharp, consisting of a circle of erect stalks, inside which the immediate stalks constituting the floor *were flattened in a clockwise direction*. To get a similar effect one would have to drive a stake into the ground and pivot on the stake a heavy pole, pulling it round to "iron out" a flattened circle.

I was unable to detect, even through the binoculars, any pathway, or track, from the perimeter of the field to any of the three rings, viewed from positions at ninety degree locations. It appeared that the rings could only have been made *by something descending on to the field*. The centres of the rings lined up exactly.

The size of the largest ring may be judged from the photographs, for it was ascertained, at the edge of the field, that the wheat was just over two feet high. The height of the plants goes into the diameter of the largest ring about twenty-six times, so the diameter was at least fifty-two feet. Measured in the same manner, the diameter of each smaller ring was found to be about seventeen feet.

Some faint tractor wheel-tracks were discernible across the field, obviously from fertiliser or pesticide spraying carried out much earlier in the year. The

corn growing in the tracks was erect, but slightly shorter than that on either side. Being an artist as well as an engineer, I drew a crayon sketch of the scene, and this matches with the newspaper photograph, but with much more surrounding detail.

On Monday afternoon, August 24th, I telephoned BBC TV Southampton, and told their news editor about the rings. He was interested enough to ask me to write a letter to him about the affair. So I rang ITV Southampton, and the news editor there was also extremely interested. Indeed, she arranged for a camera crew to go to the site right away, and an item about the rings was accordingly featured in their *Day by Day* programme on Tuesday August 25th, 1981.

Alerted by the ITV programme, the local newspapers got in on the story. The *Hampshire Chronicle*, on August 28th, published a photograph of the site, gave details, and mentioned that UFO enthusiasts were visiting the site, and that sceptics said the answer was simple — "*youngsters at work, deliberately setting out to create a 'flying saucer' scare.*" What the papers failed to say was how the child vandals got to the site without leaving any marks of their passage through the cornfield. According to the *Southern Evening Echo*, there was a more sophisticated, albeit noisier, explanation: a Royal Air Force *Chinook* twin-rotor helicopter — a type based at Odiham, Hampshire. What wasn't stated was how the *twin-rotor* helicopter made *three* holes in the crop, all neat and tidy. One gathers from the *Echo* article that the owner of another damaged crop was Mr. G. Rowsell, and that he had claimed compensation from the Ministry of Defence, who said they were studying his claim. Meanwhile Mr. Rowsell had dismissed, as . . . "a load of tripe", a claim by the chairman of the British UFO Society that the circles at Cheesefoot Head were caused by UFOs. On September 10th came the RAF disavowal, as reported in the *Winchester Extra*. "*Highly unlikely*" said the spokesman, adding that the pilots were under strict instructions not to fly or hover low over cornfields in summer. "*Aircraft*", he said, "*would only land if in trouble . . . and they wouldn't make such a tidy job.*"

So what are we left with? The UFO Society's load of tripe? It is worth noting that the field had been harvested by the evening of August 31st. The floors of the rings were still visible, although partly covered by heaped rows of cut stalks. The floors of all three circles had the corn flattened in the same clockwise direction. There were no interconnecting tracks between circles. The accompanying photographs are prints made from colour transparencies taken by Mr. Kit Neilson of the *Alton Herald*. Note the quadrants of reflected light in the circles, due to all the stalks lying in a clockwise direction (similar to the effect that can be obtained from gramophone record grooves).

On the map I have located the positions of three sites that recently acquired mystery rings in the corn. No. 1 is the position of the Cheesefoot Head rings. No.

2 marks the approximate site of three reported similar rings at Three Maids Hill near Worthy Down to the north-west of Winchester. No. 3 is the approximate position of rings recently reported in the local Andover newspaper. It will be observed that the three points lie in a straight line. It should also be noted that position 4, quite close to the line, is the site of Mrs. Bowles' famous encounter in 1975. (See the first two articles in FSR Vol. 22, No. 5. ED.)

To round off this interesting summary about the marks in the British cornfields, we give below a reprint of the Australian case of 1966, taken from FSR Vol. 15, No. 3 (May/June 1969.)

Be it noted that, whereas the "flattening" and swirling" of the vegetation in all the British cases is reported as "clockwise", the two Australian scientists who compiled this report tell us that in their principal case, at Tully in Queensland, the direction of the radial "swirling" was "noticeably anti-clockwise." Hopefully students of Geomagnetism may be able to draw some interesting conclusions from these phenomena recorded in Britain and the Antipodes?

All this makes fascinating reading. But what is perhaps far more important for us is to note what happened to the pictures of the UFO which were presumably captured on film by the automatic camera installed by the two scientists at Tully in 1966, and also what happened to a whole lot of other Australian films and photos of UFOs, all of which "mysteriously" failed to reach their destinations when consigned to the care of the Australian Post Office.

We think that few people paid much heed to this article by Stan Seers and William Lasich when we published it in FSR in 1969 and that even fewer believed it. Let us hope that our re-issue of it now, 14 years later, will earn a little more credence for it and will help to wake a few folk up, and that what Seers and Lasich say about the confiscation of material from the public mails will sink into a few skulls.

NORTH QUEENSLAND UFO SAGA, 1966

STAN SEERS AND WILLIAM LASICH

The sparsely-populated coast of North Queensland opposite the Great Barrier Reef abounds in vegetative growth. Tall reed or cane concealing "flying saucer nests" form a notable feature of the UFO saga, which began¹ with the adventure of George Pedley, a 27-year-old banana farmer of Euramo near Tully, some 95 miles south of Cairns.

At about 9.00 a.m. on the clear sunny morning of Wednesday, January 19, 1966, Pedley was driving a petrol tractor across the property of a friend and neighbour, Mr. Albert Pennisi, cane farmer and resident for some 19 years.

The farm track along which he drove wound its way towards, and thence alongside, what is locally known as Horseshoe Lagoon. This contained an area

of still water about 5 ft. deep and an acre or so in extent, much of which was covered by a thick growth of water reeds, the stems of these, about 1½ in. in diameter, protruding above the surface to a height of approximately 2 ft.

As he approached the lagoon, which was to his right, with the sun by this time well up in the sky to his left, he thought he detected a misfire in the tractor motor. Almost immediately, over the noise of the tractor, he heard a sharp hissing noise, and then to his amazement *he saw rising from the reeds, approximately 25 yards to his right and slightly ahead of him, a saucer-shaped object which ascended fairly slowly to an estimated height of 60 ft., tilted a little to one side, and then with a burst of speed quickly vanished in a south-westerly direction.* Except for the original hissing noise, no other sound was heard. The total time of observation was estimated at four to five seconds.

Mr. Pedley stated that the object was approximately 25 ft. in diameter, about 9 ft. thick at the centre, silver-grey in colour, and generally sharp in outline. He jumped from the tractor and hurried across to the lagoon from whence the object had ascended, and immediately discovered a circular flattened area within the tall green reeds. *The flattened stems were radially distributed in a noticeably anti-clockwise manner.*² He was emphatic that the swathed reeds were at that time quite green, as were all other reeds outside this area. The swathe of newly-flattened reeds formed a "nest" of 30 ft. diameter.

He further noted an area of giant water couch-grass immediately outside the perimeter of the "nest", about a square yard of which had been apparently clipped short and the clippings removed. Pedley is positive in recollection that the water of the "nest" was *still swirling* slightly in a circular motion at the moment when he first saw it.

After a few minutes he returned to the tractor, started the motor and went on his way. When questioned later, Mr. Pedley stated that he could not remember whether or not he had switched the motor off when leaving it, stalled the motor when stopping, or whether it just cut out after he left it, but he is quite certain that the tractor motor was "dead" when he returned to it since he clearly remembers re-starting it. The motor's electrical ignition system was the conventional one for the model.

Later in the day he felt that he should tell someone of what he had seen, so he called on Mr. Albert Pennisi, owner of the lagoon and surrounding property, and related to him his experience. At about 4.00 p.m. they returned together to the lagoon. Mr. Pennisi stripped, waded out to the "nest", and found that it was possible to swim through from side to side *below* the flattened area, without meeting with any obstruction, indicating quite clearly that the whole mass of the "nest" was actually *floating* on the surface.

Shortly afterwards, at about 5.00 p.m. Mr. Pennisi,

using colour film, took a series of photographs. The prints subsequently obtained clearly substantiate a remarkable feature which both witnesses had observed and remarked on. The flattened reeds in the "nest" *had turned noticeably brown, but only on the upper surfaces.* The underside of each reed nearest the water still remained quite green. This "browning" of the upper surfaces of the reeds had quite obviously taken place since 9.00 a.m. that morning.

A resurgence of "nest" phenomena at the same Tully lagoon has occurred recently (January/February 1968). Sometime earlier, noting a prediction of sun-spot maximum for May 1968 by the Swiss authority M. Waldmeive, Queensland Flying Saucer Research Bureau were primed to the possibility of increased UFO activity in 1968.³

With this in mind, it was decided to set up two monitor-stations, No. 1 in the Tully district (North Queensland) and No. 2 in the South, some 20 miles out of Brisbane. The precise location of the sites must remain undisclosed, since the monitors operate virtually unattended at some distance from habitation.

The equipment at No. 1 Station was set up by Mr. Vince Mele with the assistance of an electronics friend. The UFO-monitor is built around a photo-cell and a sensitive magnetic compass. The photo-cell light beam is interrupted if magnetic disturbance is present, and the fluctuation of photo-cell current then activates the ciné-camera release. The camera (Eumig 8 mm. auto.) is energised so long as magnetic field disturbance continues (five frames exposed per 2-second interval.)

During February 1966 a spontaneous magnetic field disturbance was actually recorded during initial trials. And, on the same day, a UFO sighting was reported by an isolated witness, some eight miles from the monitor station. Heavy cloud cover in the area impeded further observation of the UFO's flight trajectory. The information was not enough to provide 100% proof that the detector was UFO-triggered on that particular occasion. Nevertheless, things looked quite promising.

At the end of February 1966 both monitors were fitted with cameras, tested, and operated. On March 2, 1966, Tully lagoon contained four UFO "nests", then about three weeks old. The camera site was screened from view and set up some 50 ft. from the nearest "nest."

On that same date, March 2, 1966, Radio 4KZ broadcast an arresting newflash! An airliner en route from Cairns to Iron Range had been paced at 6,000 ft. for some minutes by a UFO some 2,000 ft. above the aircraft. Both of the pilots witnessed the event. Somewhere over the Cooktown area the UFO broke contact and shot off at enormous speed (described as something like 1,500 m.p.h.) An inspection of the No. 1 monitor found the automatic camera still in motion, although all 25 ft. of colour film⁴ had been run

through, and the batteries were nearly exhausted. The roll of 16 mm. film was removed and reversed for a second run, and new batteries installed. (Technically this indicates that the magnetic field perturbation — *cum UFO* — had been present throughout the whole ten minutes for which the film had run.)

On March 4, 1966, two days later, quite a number of local inhabitants reported the passage of another UFO. An inspection of the monitor again revealed that it had been "triggered", but this time, for some unknown reason, only some 15 or 16 frames of the film had been exposed. An examination of the batteries, which had been carefully tested, and were fully charged when fitted, revealed that they were quite flat.

The remainder of the film was wound through by hand, removed from the camera, sealed in the usual container, and addressed to Kodak Ltd., Melbourne, for processing, all of this in the presence of two reliable witnesses. It was then conveyed to Tully for posting, the packet was weighed, and the charge was 14 cents. *Some ten days later a letter was received from Kodak stating that the container, now being returned to Sender, had been empty on arrival in Melbourne! The empty container still had the 14 cent stamp attached, and a quick check at the Post Office established that the postage on an empty container was 5 cents only. Further exchanges with Kodak Ltd. produced no results.*

The loss of the film was reported to the Civil Police, who were very co-operative, but after a careful inter-State detective investigation, the Police were unable to shed light on the mystery of the vanished film so far as can be quoted from official statements. *Unofficially*, however, a hint was thrown out by a person of reliable character and seemingly well-informed in Police matters, that it was likely that the Australian Commonwealth authorities (i.e. the Central Government) had taken possession of the film, and that it would therefore be useless to pursue the enquiries further.

To complete the "cloak and dagger" atmosphere, even more bizarre was a seemingly casual suggestion which was conveyed to one of our civilian UFO investigators by an individual who was undoubtedly knowledgeable in regard to Government intelligence activities. This "contact" advised our UFO-researching colleague that *next time* the UFO camera ought to be loaded with black and white film! (Is this too incredible? No — probably just the verdict of hard-won experience in the photographic laboratory in "salvaging" difficult aircraft images, under-exposed and diffused by grain and distortion. Or even perhaps of photos of UFOs?)

It is not without interest also to record that, about March 13, 1966, shortly after the loss of the film, two Royal Australian Air Force helicopters were observed for some time deploying over the very lagoon involved in connection with the events described above, the witness being the owner of the terrain concerned.

Several "saucer nests" were still visible at that date.

Mr. Colin Bennett, MLA, Barrister, after studying the complete documentation of the incident, expressed a keen interest in it, and promptly offered his assistance with all enquiries. He accordingly wrote to the Commonwealth Government in Canberra about the missing film, presenting, as he stated, "a submission to the Commonwealth authorities in rather strong terms."

In a reply from Canberra dated August 29, 1966, Mr. Gordon Freeth, the Minister for Air, stated that he was unable to offer any suggestion as to the fate of the film. He denied positively that the Department of Air had ever, at any time, removed from Kodak Ltd., any material relating to UFOs.

So far — a disappointing outcome for UFO researchers. Could it be that sensible lifemanship indicates that the affair might as well be allowed to fade into limbo? Let the UFOs "buzz-off" so that we can get on with our own affairs. A public philosophy endorsed by our officialdom!

More Visitations

However, the UFOs must be immune to exorcism, or must have ignored the message, since the Cairns-Tully area continues to sport its UFO-active events. A further "nest" was discovered soon after, on April 25, 1966, in a cane-field close to Cairns (25 miles north of Tully.) Flattened stems lay in an oval-shaped area 70 ft. by 30 ft. A horse-riding party described the site as completely screened by standing cane.

A more recent close encounter with a UFO (October 1, 1966) was reported by Louie Maule, 35, a Tully district farmer. Near on 8.00 p.m. he was driving home northwards from South Johnstone, when he saw, descending from the night sky, a large black object ringed with red lights. "I got a shock", Maule said. "It was *gigantic*, and seemed to be slowing up."

The headlights of a passing car momentarily obscured his vision, and he slowed to a stop. "When I looked again, it was travelling towards South Johnstone at maybe 100 m.p.h."

Interviewed by Vincent Mele, the motorist Louie Maule stated that the UFO's altitude was about 500 ft. It was circular in shape, and about 60 ft. in diameter, as clearly outlined by the red lights around the perimeter. The red-ringed disc was last seen to bank and proceed towards the clouds at very high speed.

On the same evening, some three miles to the north, Vince Mele had set up his mobile detector on a hill-site overlooking the surrounding area. Promptly at 8.00 p.m. his detector alarm sounded, and it was two minutes before it re-set itself automatically. After that, it was quiet for the rest of the evening.

Although it must be noted that Vince Mele did not himself see lights, this incident on October 1 now seems to provide the first good evidence for an inde-

pendent visual sighting correlated with the triggering-off of a detector by the ambient field of a UFO.⁵

A Continuing Mystery

The Tully UFO photographs (assuming that *something was on the film*) are by no means the first UFO pictures to disappear on the Australian scene. A recapitulation made at the CAPIO Convention (Canberra) in July 1968 produced the following list of such mysterious "losses":-

- A. 11.00 a.m., August 23, 1953. Of nine photographs taken at Port Moresby, New Guinea, by T. P. Drury (Deputy Minister of Civil Aviation!) the five best shots were "lost" by the Civil Aviation Department, who had "loaned" them to the United States Air Force, Washington, D.C.
- B. Daytime, Easter 1954. Some 200 photographs, ciné and stills, of an object which paced three young men in an Austin sedan who were driving through the Interior of Australia near the border between Western Australia and South Australia, were "borrowed" by the Royal Australian Air Force and never returned.
- C. 11.00 a.m., July 7, 1961. Case of a 6 in. x 3 in. negative of the "Thing" observed by scores of North Queenslanders. It was photographed by R. T. Sheward of the *Cairns Post*. This negative was sent to Kodak in Melbourne by Mt. Stromlo Observatory scientists. *This time the container did not arrive empty. According to Kodak, it just never arrived at all.*
- D. 3.25 a.m., May 27, 1965. Several photographs were taken by an air-line pilot (Ansett-ANA) of a UFO pacing an air-liner in flight for ten minutes over Bougainville Reef en route to Port Moresby, New Guinea. Film confiscated by the authorities.
- E. Actual date and details unknown. This is the case of the missing ciné film relating to the UFO registered by the automatic camera at Tully, North Queensland, on March 4, 1966.

We wonder where all these missing items are?

AUTHOR'S ORIGINAL NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See *Queensland Again*, by Judith Magee, in FSR Vol. 12, No. 2 (March/April 1966).
2. Clockwise swirl observed contrary to hypothetical ground effects from a helicopter landing. Rotor-blades are driven with left-hand screw motion. [N.B. I do not understand this Note. The swirl found at Tully is clearly described in the Article as *anti-clockwise*, not clockwise. A misprint? G.C.]
3. A study of the graphs (1851 to 1961) contained in the work *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* by Jacques Vallée suggests the possibility of peak UFO activity being related to maximum and minimum sunspot activity and/or geomagnetic activity. The latter could well be the signifi-

cant factor, in view of the UFOs' well-known electromagnetic effects.

4. The film was Kodachrome II, ASA speed 25.
5. No electric cables, geophysical prospecting, etc., are present in the area to act as a source of magnetic field disturbances.

COMMENT BY EDITOR, FSR

Many of our readers will remember the Australian investigator Colin McCarthy, who was working for EMI in London for some years and built UFO detectors for us. (He is now married and, so far as we know back at Kilkenny, South Australia, with his wife and family.)

I recall that Colin McCarthy gave me a full and graphic account of the extraordinary case listed as B in the article above, and, if my memory serves me aright, I think he told me that he was himself one of the young men involved in this bizarre episode. He said that they were driving through an uninhabited great tract of the Australian Outback when they saw the UFO, and took a great number of still photos and (I believe) also filmed it with ciné camera. Then very shortly afterwards, while they were still driving along, an aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) suddenly appeared and landed not far from them. They were called upon to halt, and a member of the crew of the aircraft stepped across to the car and confiscated everything!

McCarthy told me that what puzzled him and his companions most at the time was this: *how on earth did the Royal Australian Air Force KNOW that they had just had an encounter with a UFO in such a very lonely and uninhabited tract of the country?*

There is of course no proof whatever that the light aircraft in question did belong to the RAAF, or that the individual who came over and confiscated the films was a member of the RAAF. Indeed, there have been plenty of cases in the USA and elsewhere where impersonation would appear to have occurred, with individuals, wearing uniforms to which they were not entitled, stepping out of aircraft or vehicles bearing insignia or number-plates which on subsequent investigation have been found to be fraudulent.

If impersonation, then impersonation BY WHOM? Speaking for ourselves, we can only say that, as firm disciples of William of Occam, we usually go for the simplest explanation. Our vote is therefore for the whirlwinds or the hedgehogs. (Maybe both hedgehogs and whirlwinds are involved? Maybe the hedgehogs from the Cosmos produce the whirlwinds, and maybe they then go to these great lengths to intercept films and photographs because they don't want us to know that their whirlwinds are clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and anti-clockwise in the Antipodes?)

G.E.P.A.N. QUIETLY DELIVERS THE GOODS!

"Sextus Empiricus"

As a follow-up to Dr Jean. F. Gille's article, *The Bankruptcy of the French UFO Research Body, G.E.P.A.N.*, which we published in FSR Vol. 28, No. 5, our expert political/ufological commentator in Paris has now sent us this latest remarkable comment on the French scene. — EDITOR

"I AM writing to keep your readers abreast of the developments here in G.E.P.A.N., which seem to be acquiring a more and more secretive or 'occult' character.

The French Government, or, to be more precise, its Minister of Defence (Ministre des Armées), Monsieur Charles Hernu, has decided that the research work of G.E.P.A.N. should continue, under the direction of two engineers of the French National Space Centre (C.N.E.S.) — the French equivalent of N.A.S.A. These two specialists will have the job of collecting all the UFO reports that come in through the official Press agencies, and have them studied by private laboratories. *The results of such study will not be published.*

First Results

The most remarkable result of this, up to the present date, is a bulky (66-page) *internal memorandum*, NOTE TECHNIQUE NO. 16 (PROVISOIRE) (TECHNICAL NOTE NO. 16 — PROVISIONAL) submitted by G.E.P.A.N. to the C.N.E.S. on March 1, 1983, and dealing with a 'landing' that took place near Nice. Various laboratories have studied samples of soil and samples of plants taken from the site and from round about it. These laboratories, *working quite separately from each other, without collaboration*, have found: (1) anomalies in the soil; (2) biochemical anomalies in the plants; and, (3) they have found that these