

It's official: there are UFOs

by MARTIN BAILEY

THERE are Unidentified Flying Objects. That's official: the Ministry of Defence has finally come clean.

Copies of 16 reports on sightings over Wales have been sent by the MoD to the British UFO Research Association.

If it's only a small step forward for Whitehall—which stresses that there is no suggestion they come from outer space—it's a giant leap for the hitherto-ridiculed alien craft watchers.

Until now, the Government had always refused to release details of UFO incidents passed to it. Six years ago, the Earl of Clancarty—who founded the UFO group in the House of Lords—did launch a debate, but then the government line was that it was not prepared to release information.

Now, following more pressure from the Lords, the MoD has finally relented. A ministry spokesman confirmed yesterday that the department was now willing 'to consider providing reports on specific incidents to serious inquirers.'

The Observer has been given a copy of the first list of 'sightings' and has looked into a typical incident which figures in the Ministry of Defence documents.

At 9 p.m. on 14 September 1982, David Mason, a 32-year-old printer, was watching television when he saw a bright light from the window of his Cwmbran home. He called his wife Angela, and together they went outside into the back garden.

Mr Mason said the light was 'as bright as the sun and about half the size of the moon.' The couple watched for 15 minutes as it hovered more than a mile away, just above a hill range that surrounds the town. The white light then sped off northwards along the ridge at speed and disappeared.

The Masons called the police and two officers arrived to record details of the UFO sighting. This was the last contact that the couple were to



Photograph by BEN GIBSON

Looking up : Cwmbran UFO spotters Angela and David Mason and their son Paul re-enact their experience.

have with officials over the case.

The police report into the Cwmbran incident was forwarded to the Ministry of Defence in London, where operational staff in the air division examined the case. An MoD spokesman said that following these inquiries, 'we are satisfied that there were no defence implications.'

Mr Mason says he was surprised not to have had any further inquiries from officials. 'I do not understand how the Ministry of Defence could have investigated the case without contacting me with further queries.'

Unusual cloud formations

The Cwmbran sighting is typical of the hundreds of UFO reports which reach the Ministry of Defence every year. Some incidents are reported directly by members of the public, but most come via police, airport authorities and armed forces.

Only a proportion of total British sightings filter through officialdom and ultimately reach the MoD. The numbers fluctuate considerably, and between 1978 and 1983 they

amounted yearly to 750, 550, 350, 600, 250 and 390.

Mrs Jenny Randles, investigation director of the UFO research association, said that crucial information was still missing from the government reports. The final sections, containing the results of the MoD's own investigations, had been excised.

The ministry says it is not concerned with what UFOs are—only to ensure that they do not have any 'defence implications.' In practice, this means that the main question which interests the MoD is whether they are hostile aircraft.

It emphasises that many UFO sightings could be caused by 'satellite debris, ball lightning, unusual cloud formations, balloons or aircraft.' The spokesman added: 'There is no evidence that alien spacecraft have landed on the planet.'

Other cases covered in the MoD reports include an incident on 20 September 1982 when a 'beam of green light' was seen near Abergavenny and a 'cottage-loaf shape with bright porthole lights and a pulsating red light beneath' near Caerleon.

Four sightings which were made within a couple of miles were reported on 30 September

the same year during a one-hour period. These included 'two white flashing circular objects' (Pontypool), a 'white/blue flashing light' (Pontnewydd), a 'bright blue light' (Cwmbran) and a 'narrow green band

of light' (Pontypool). Nine incidents were reported on 19 January 1983 between 5.30 and 7.45 p.m. in the Swansea area. This unusual flurry of UFO sightings included a 'very large elongated shape with two pulsating white lights at front and

yellowish steady lights at rear,' an object which was 'very large, possibly saucer-shaped, four or five lights flashing in rotation' and 'one object split into two parts—three white lights at front and three at back, massive in size, oblong in shape.'