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Celebrating a mystery

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WALKING to church one frosty morning, Mrs Marge Bye of Bradley Road, Warminster, heard what she thought was a gritter coming up Bell Hill.

To her amazement, the sound came right above her and although it was a bright, clear morning, there was nothing to be seen.

At the same time Mr Roger Rump, then Warminster's head postmaster, was still in bed in his Hillwood Lane home 100 yards away. He too thought he heard a gritter coming up the hill. But when the noise came over the top of his house, he rushed outside

to see if the tiles were still intact. They were, but again nothing was to be seen.

From this strange and inexplicable start, the UFO - Unidentified Flying Objects - have come to Warminster.

To mark the 20th year of UFOs and other strange happenings in the Warminster area - the most recent being the station-down circles in standing corn - Mr Ken Rogers is staging an exhibition in Warminster Library.

UFOs attracted serious scientific researchers from around the world. They also attracted a lot of oddballs. The

national tabloids had a field day. "Want to meet a Martian? Go to Wiltshire," screamed the Daily Sketch. "Warminster gets ready for invasion," howled the Daily Mirror.

What to make of it all? Some people had undoubtedly reported service activities. For instance, a helicopter flying low at night can look and sound strange, especially if you are half-expecting to see a UFO.

One witness reported seeing a man in service uniform arrive out of the sky with a whoosh and a trail of smoke and then unstrap a pack from his back.

The American army, amid a great deal of publicity, was experimenting with rocket-propelled infantry at the time. It is likely the British Army was doing the same thing in a quieter way.

Then there were the people who would say anything to get their names in the papers.

But that left a hard core of sober, reliable observers, such as Mr Rump and Mrs Bye, whose stories matched and who were too keen on publicity to hear, or see, anything for which there seems no explanation - except, possibly, their experiments.