

Flying object — was it Venus? ^(N.M)

Petersfield's U.F.O mystery deepened this week as four more sightings were reported — but an amateur astronomer believes he may have come up with an explanation.

Nine people now claim they saw a slow-moving reddish object in the sky over the town at various times during a two-day period.

Several witnesses have contacted the Post after reading last

week's report of sightings by a woman in Petersfield and a couple in Rogate.

Now amateur astronomer Mr. Sean Clarke says that the U.F.O alert was probably caused by the planet Venus and a slow-moving meteorite known as a bolide.

Mr. Clarke, who has a mini-observatory in the back garden of his Petersfield home, said that Venus appears as a very large and

very bright object in the morning and evening sky at this time of year.

"It appears as a very, very bright object — certainly nothing like any other star in the sky," he said.

"Venus is particularly prominent at the moment. I have seen it many times, but I can understand people who have never seen it before being puzzled."

Mr. Clarke also commented on the U.F.O seen by a Rogate couple, who reported a very bright object moving through the sky and then disintegrating.

"I believe that what they must have seen was a bolide — a slow-moving meteor which appears as a bright object moving through the sky which disintegrates as it comes into the Earth's atmosphere," he said.