

22-1-88

Family in fear as 'glowing UFO picks up their car'

By Peter Wombwell
in Perth

AN EGG-shaped unidentified flying object apparently scattering black ash in its wake yesterday terrified a family driving across Australia's desolate Nullabor Plain and the crew of a tuna boat 50 miles out to sea.

The object chased the family's car along the lonely road 800 miles from Perth, and finally picked it up and shook it, they reported.

Both the family and the tuna fishermen said their voices became distorted "as though they were speaking in slow motion" while the object was near them.

The tuna fishermen, who police said could not have known of the other incident, said the UFO had "buzzed" their boat in the Great Australian Bight.

Lodged on roof

Mrs Faye Knowles was with her sons Patrick, 24, Sean, 21, and Wayne, 18, when the "huge, glowing, egg-like sphere" appeared.

Sean Knowles said they stopped their car when they first saw the object, and walked back to look at it. "It was weird, and we got frightened so we ran through the bushes and back to the car," he said. "But the thing followed us."

He said that later it lodged on the roof and lifted the car off the ground. His mother went into shock when she reached out of one of the car's windows and touched it. She told her sons it felt like a rubber suction pad.

They told police at Ceduna in South Australia that their car had seemed to float in the air.

Sean said he had been driving at about 70 mph when they first sighted the object, but even when he increased the speed to 125 mph the thing followed them.

Then it attached itself to the roof. After the car returned to earth, one of the tyres burst.

'Not of this planet'

Mrs Shirley Lundon, of Mundrabilla, where the family stopped after the incident, said they had scratches on their legs through running through the bush to escape the object, and there were also scratches on the roof and on one side of the car.

Police Sgt Jim Furnell said: "We are treating the reports very seriously."

Mr Colin Norris, director of the UFO Centre, said: "It fits in with a lot of other sightings in the world. It appears to be an extra-terrestrial encounter. It's not of this planet."

However, a Melbourne Planetary Society spokesman, Mr Matthew James, was reported to have put the light down to being a rare phenomenon known as ball lightning.

Lightning theory

● **Adrian Berry**, Science Correspondent, writes: The object seems very likely to have been ball lightning, a phenomenon that scientists do not fully understand and the behaviour of which is extremely difficult to predict. An unpleasant smell has sometimes been noted in manifestations.

As for the story of the object following the family, this could be attributed to the fearful state of the people at the time. Whatever else ball lightning can do, it cannot act intelligently.