

PR Thomas

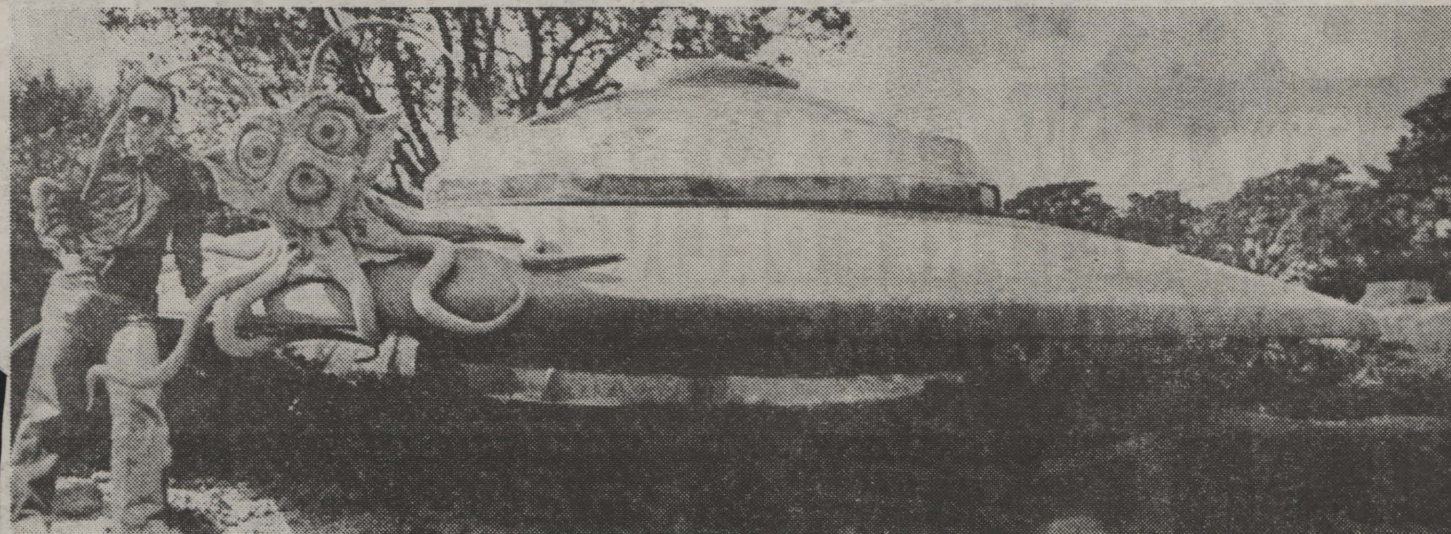
## NOT ALL SAUCER-SPOTTERS HAVE THEIR HEADS IN THE CLOUDS

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Creepy... but would you have been fooled?

# Down to earth for UFO hunters

saucer and octopedal alien — to show just how easy it is to fool the credulous.

The chap in the picture IS real — he is **John Spencer**, a high-powered accountant and lecturer who is also director of The British UFO Research Association, treasurer of the International Committee for UFO Research and research specialist for the Mutual UFO Network.

He is co-editor of **Phenomenon** (Futura, £3.95), a serious attempt to bring together all the strands of ufology (serious and loony) and come to some conclusion.

Is earth being visited by ETs? Do UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) exist, and what are they? And if they are visitors from Outer Space, what on earth do they want with us?

### Nutters

John is at pains to emphasise that members of BUFORA, ICHUR and MUFON (lovely names for a space opera series) are sensible, scientifically based researchers.

Regrettably, he says gloomily, everyone seems to include them in the same category as the I Married a Monster from Outer Space nutters currently

## David Harrison's POST PEOPLE



entertaining tabloid readers.

The fake pictured here was made just to show how easily it can be done. Those pictures of UFOs which aren't clouds, birds of static electricity are usually found to be models, trick photography or familiar objects given a new slant by clever use of long lenses.

Special effects master **Martin Bower**, who made this one, wasn't really trying very hard. "Give me a few days and a reasonable budget and I'll build the full-size craft and get it into the air without wires," he says.

"Photographic evidence is not enough on its own," adds John, a fast-talking and apparently hard-headed businessman with a healthy cynicism about UFO reports.

"There are no really good photographs of UFOs and one wonders why, in these days of

easy-to-operate cameras. We do demand hard evidence, and that isn't easy to come by."

Phenomenon tries to sum up the state of ufology after 40 years of sifting the sensational from the sensible.

At the end of it there is a small core of sightings, reports and pictures which are still unexplained.

### Stuffy

"We don't get much attention from the national press because they look on us as too serious and stuffy," said John.

"They would prefer stories of aliens invading people's back gardens."

John feels personally that UFOs do exist in the sense that there are unidentified objects that fly. As to what they are, he has come to no conclusion.

Things from outer

space? Possibly, although again there is no evidence.

Atmospheric effects? Microwave radiation? Who knows?

"Phenomenon is really not about UFOs but about people," says John.

"Over the past 40 years millions of people have seen something they can't understand, and a large number felt they had to seek out someone and tell them about it.

"It could be a search for something to replace God."

All the wilder stories are carefully and solemnly sifted in Phenomenon, which argues strongly for constructive scepticism.

"We need hard evidence," insists John. "There is a strong case for serious scientific investigation of UFOs. If we could prove their were extra-terrestrials, no one would be happier than me."