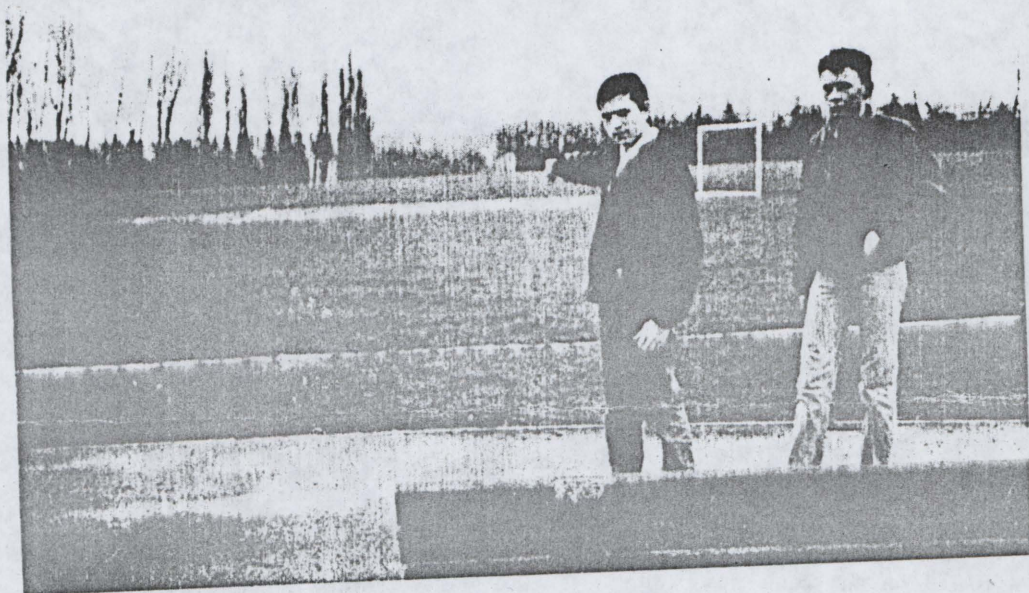


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Geoff McWilliams points to the spot in Riverside Park, where the U.F.O. first appeared. Matthew Cadden looks on.

UFOs over Hampshire

by BOB PRICE

IN the early hours of a cold, January morning this year, a large, triangular shaped U.F.O. was reported over the Millbrook area of Southampton. It wasn't the first unearthly craft to be seen in the skies of Hampshire — and it wasn't to be the last!

Two days later, three teenagers got the shock of their lives in another part of the City. Fourteen year old Geoff McWilliams, with friends Matthew Cadden and Simon Cade, were enjoying a quiet chat at Riverside Park when a strange sphere of light shot across the football pitch in front of them.

"It was about the size of a football," recalled Geoff, "manoeuvring in a triangular pattern about 30ft in the air."

The object suddenly veered towards the bench they were sitting on, forcing the three youngsters to run for their lives.

Youthful fantasy? Practical joke? Geoff's Mum and Dad think not. "They were white as sheets when they came in," his Mum remembered.

Shrug it off if you will, but on the same day, a lady in Milton Keynes reported a sphere of light shooting past her bedroom window at rooftop height. It was the size of a football and heading south-west — towards Southampton perhaps!

These two recent encounters served to fuel speculation that another 'wave' of sightings, such as Hampshire experienced in the early to mid-seventies, was about to begin. Then, as now, it started off quietly enough, with one or two 'lights in the sky' reports, but moved rapidly on to a startling

encounter that still causes controversy in U.F.O. circle whenever it's mentioned.

A Winchester woman, driving home with a friend, found herself confronted by a large, cigar shaped U.F.O. Her car was brought to a halt by what they both described as, "a cushioned, invisible barrier."

A humanoid figure descended from the U.F.O. and approached the frightened couple who quickly locked all the car doors. After walking around, peering through the windows, the figure, and U.F.O. mysteriously disappeared.

A week later, an exact re-enactment took place at the same spot, in Chilcomb Lane, but this time, complete with car, they found themselves inside the U.F.O. One of the crew attempted to communicate in broken English, urging them not to be alarmed. Shortly after, they lost consciousness, waking to find themselves parked near a river on the far side of Winchester, miles from Chilcomb Lane!

This case became known as the 'Winchester Mystery', and, not surprisingly, became the butt of 'Little Green Men' jibes. There was, however, a remarkable sequel to this episode. . .

Almost a year later, while driving a female companion to visit relatives, the same lady received another visitation from these strange visitors. Again, her car was brought to a stop, and while both women

were checking the engine, they noticed a large oval object on the ground nearby.

In a now, all-too-familiar pattern, a silver suited figure approached them and spoke in the same fragmented English as before, but again had difficulty making himself understood. Before returning to the U.F.O. he said something similar to, "You are now one of us."

Not all U.F.O. sightings remain unidentified and it's worth relating one classic sighting that proved to be only too solid. Let's look at the way it was reported initially.

A Police patrol car, returning through the New Forest late one night, suddenly lost all power as its astonished crew watched a huge glowing U.F.O. streak low over Picket Plain and land silently in the depths of the landscape. Over eighty 999 calls were made to Hampshire Police, making this one of the best multiple-witness sightings of all.

For days after, it was acclaimed as a genuine U.F.O. experience, but all was revealed on a local T.V. show when an eminent astronomer showed how they'd tracked this U.F.O. half across the world. It was part of a huge meteorite that failed to burn out in the earth's atmosphere!

But what of the police car's engine failure — a well known symptom of close U.F.O. contact? P.C. John Forder reveals all.

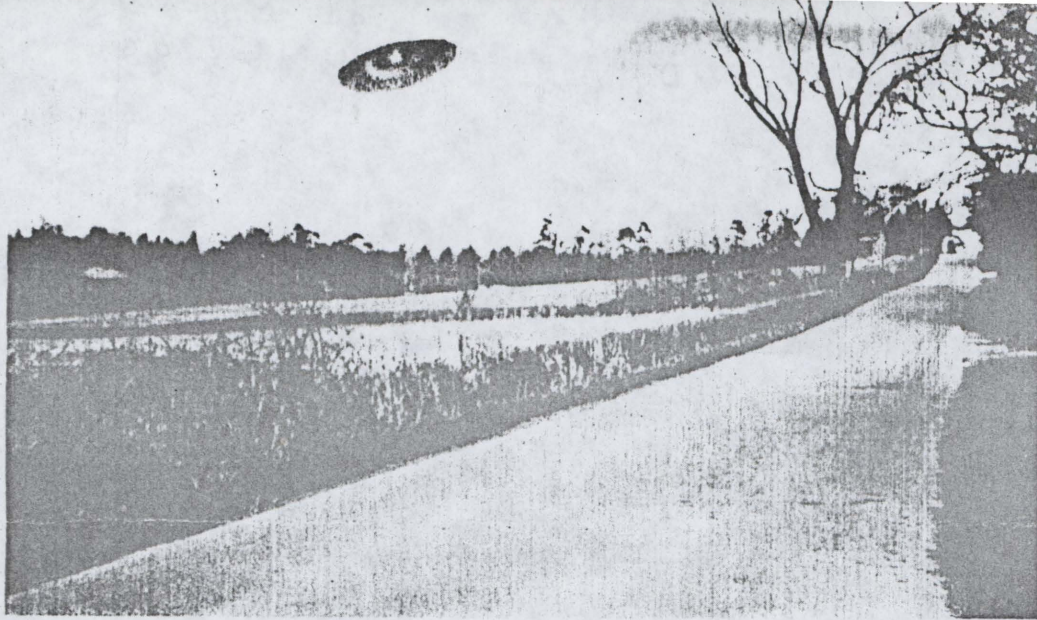
"It stopped all right, but only because I was so stunned at what I was seeing, that I stalled the engine." So what about its silent descent into the forest? Wrong

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Outlands Lane, Curdrige where the A. A. man saw an oval object in the sky. Fact or fiction?

again. Its angle of descent gave it the appearance of coming down, but, in fact, it roared on and came down with an almighty crash in the North Sea!

Not so clear cut, though, was the experience of an A.A. Patrolman. He had just finished his shift at 1.00a.m., pulling in to the drive of his home in Outlands Lane, Curdrige near Southampton, when he became aware of a bright glow behind a clump of trees off to his left. Jumping onto the bonnet of his van for a better view, he witnessed a sight that will remain with him for the rest of his life. . .

Very slowly, a brilliant white oval object rose above the trees, hovered momentarily, then, quite deliberately, executed a half turn to the east.

"It definitely appeared to be under some form of control," remembered the Patrolman. "It began to pick up speed as it drew level with my house and suddenly accelerated at a tremendous rate, climbing rapidly as it did so, before finally disappearing out of sight towards Portsmouth." He admitted to being "a little bit scared," at the time and fervently hoped he wasn't the only witness. He wasn't!

The U.F.O. streaked over Portsdown Hill near Portsmouth, where it was seen by a group of friends returning from a late meal, before curving away over the Isle of Wight, where it was seen again. No logical explanation has ever been put forward for this sighting — authorities simply marked it "unidentified".

Over on the Isle of Wight, a nurse and several other resident of the Pan estate at Newport were badly frightened by two huge oval white discs that hovered silently before zooming off at high speed with a sound like thunder. As they roared on, another witness, rushed out of his house to find out what the noise was. He saw a formation of five, silver-grey, oval discs moving away at a phenomenal speed, pausing briefly over Godshill before finally shooting skywards and out of sight.

To say that most U.F.O. reports are greeted with scepticism is a definite understatement, but even the Ministry of Defence were forced to take notice of a report submitted by a Trinity House Pilot concerning a sighting at Ryde on the Isle of Wight.

With his wife, he watched a bright light slowly approach their house and hang suspended at an altitude of 300ft. As it drew closer, it materialised into a rectangular craft, closely resembling a hovercraft without windows. The U.F.O. remained stationary for a few moments before streaking off into space. The results of the Ministry of Defence investigation were never made public! Why?

There's a curious, low-key approach to the U.F.O. phenomenon by most of the World's Governments and ours is no exception. They all seem to have a nonchalant disinterest in the subject, but it's widely believed that all are carrying out serious research.

In 1979 a debate on the subject in the House of Lords was given serious consideration when Lord Clanorby provided proof of the 'cover-up' regarding U.F.O. investigations. He sought to get the Minister of Defence to state publicly his knowledge of U.F.O. activity, as had the French Minister previously. The French Government were the first to admit the existence of U.F.Os and confirmed that serious scientific investigations were under way.

Unfortunately, the official line taken by the Ministry of Defence was not encouraging. They referred to the unlikelihood of spacecraft being able to travel the vast distance between planets, and sought to explain them away as natural phenomena or cases of 'mistaken identity'. In other words, aeroplanes, planets, clouds and that old favourite, ball lightning. So much for the official viewpoint!

It takes courage and self confidence to report a U.F.O. sighting. Witnesses are

usually ridiculed, or worse, misquoted. The A.A. Patrolman from Curdrige, during an interview with an over-enthusiastic investigator, was practically told that he'd seen figures inside the U.F.O. as it flew past. Thanks only to his strong will, an accurate report appeared in the newspapers.

Through this fear of ridicule, a very important encounter in Hampshire nearly went unrecorded. Only a promise not to use the real name of the man involved prompted him to relate the details.

In the early hours of the morning, he was driving along the A32 at Hook, near Basingstoke, when the engine of his van faltered and cut-out. Finding no fault under the bonnet he climbed back into the cab and found, to his relief, that the engine turned over straight away. A few hundred yards further on the van stopped again. This time, as he climbed out, he became aware of a strong smell, similar to burning electricity and noticed a change of pressure on his eardrums. As he walked forward to check the engine again, he saw, motionless in the sky over the road ahead, a dark metallic U.F.O.

As it hovered silently in front of him, the witness took note of its flat, conical shape and estimated its size as approximately 60ft. wide by 30ft. high. For several minutes man and machine remained still, each observing the other, when, without warning, or any noise whatsoever, the U.F.O. began to move off horizontally. Slowly gathering speed, with the moon glinting off its dull surface, it sailed peacefully off towards the west.

Whatever your views on the subject of U.F.Os, there's no denying the possibility of interplanetary travel. Our space exploration programme is moving forward at a tremendous rate, and maybe some startled inhabitant of a distant planet could be filing one of these U.F.O. reports right now as our own 'Voyager' probe sails serenely overhead!

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