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The search goes on for the elusive little green men

MEMBERS of the Cheshire UFO Studies Centre have just set up a 24-hour phone hotline to help speed up their investigation. TIM BEVINGTON and photographer CHRIS RUSHTON journey forth to investigate the new phenomenon.

UFO buff's down to earth view of spacemen

For someone who spends most of his time investigating reports of UFOs, Eric Moss certainly has his feet planted firmly on the ground.

He readily dismisses his only sighting 11 years ago — a cigar-shaped object with lights at both ends — as "almost certainly an aircraft."

And, after sifting through countless reports of a variety of strange craft, the 35-year-old father of two believes there is "very little chance" that beings from another planet have actually touched down on earth.

"I suppose it is true to say that I am sceptic myself," says Eric, a psychiatric nurse at Nantwich's Barony Hospital.

Surprised

"Many people expect us to be eccentric cranks who believe in little green men. They always seem very surprised when they realise that we approach the whole issue in a rational and scientific way.

"By restricting ourselves to a small number of trusted investigators, we can make sure all sightings are researched thoroughly.

Ninety five per cent can usually be dismissed after checking civil and military flights through the area and weather balloon positions.

"Even those cases where there is no clear explanation can sometimes be traced to natural occurrences like ball lightning," he adds.

Eric's terraced house in Earle Street, Crewe serves as the centre for much of the work carried out by the South Cheshire group which covers a vast area including Staffordshire, Derbyshire, and parts of Wales.

Magazine

The quarterly magazine is typed and duplicated there with the help of his wife Cornelia, while the new ansafone has also been installed in the home.

"The new hotline has already been quite successful and we believe it will greatly increase the number of reports we get," says Eric.

When people report seeing a UFO and contact the group they are sent a standard form to fill in which calls for times and details of the sighting.

The group have close links with local airports, which

often helps to discount many of the reports.

Sightings

"We also get considerable help from the RAF who will help to confirm if they have had any flights in areas where there have been sightings.

"The meteorology office also give us information about weather balloons and we can even get some help from the Ministry of Defence as we have some contacts in Whitehall.

"We are affiliated to the British UFO Research Association which collates reports from all over the country and means we have access to their records," adds Eric.

Crash

But despite his personal scepticism, there is still one case which the former Navy nurse encountered when he was based in Plymouth which he finds completely baffling.

A woman motorist in St. Mawgan, Cornwall, reported

seeing an object crash nearby and then take off again.

"No satisfactory explanation has been forthcoming, but there were American air force personnel stationed nearby at the time and we believe there may be some connection," says Eric. We have already managed to contact some of those who have gone back to the USA and we are hoping for more success in the future."

Hoaxes

But the world of UFOs still remains a grey area, even for the experienced researchers of the South Cheshire group.

Although they frequently give lectures to organisations around the area, there are few genuine photographs to illustrate their talks. "Most UFO pictures turn out to be hoaxes — often quite elaborate ones.

"Fortunately, there are now quite advanced computer-aided techniques which can help to determine if a



● Eric and Cornelia prepare another out-of-this-world newsletter.

photograph is fake or not," says Eric.

Despite the caution with which they treat all sightings, members of the Cheshire group are still keen to hear as many reports of UFOs as possible — even those which may have happened several years ago.

"If people can still give us

fairly accurate details about times and places then we can use our access to national records to check if they coincide with other sightings," adds Eric.

So if anyone feels they have seen a genuine 'flying saucer' they should contact the local UFO-busters on Crewe 582378.