

EXTRA TERRESTRIAL *Style*

Experiences of the 'untoward'

SOMETHING very strange is going on. Thousands of people every year see mysterious flying objects which may or may not be interplanetary space ships with little green men on board.

Some witnesses will end their days convinced that they have experienced a fairly Close Encounter with extra-terrestrials; others are merely puzzled and intrigued, and thus it was that there were true believers and doubters among the 70 or so people who gathered together in a room at the Bradford Central Library on Saturday to hear what the ufologists had to say.

There were, in the audience, a boy hugging a skateboard, a mother with a very little baby and a self-confessed eccentric with his hair done up in a pony tail. Reference by a speaker to a sighting of three lights, close together, with a smoke-like trail elicited from him the knowing response "plasma!"

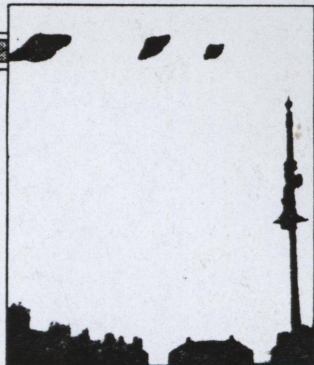
Organisers of the meeting were the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) and the Independent UFO Network, both representing the cool-headed end of ufology. There was, though, one maverick among the organisers: David Barclay, bearded and bespectacled, who has had so many "untoward experiences" that he can be excused a certain off-handedness.

He has, for instance, seen the Blue Lady who haunts Temple Newsam, near Leeds and the Black Monk who lurks around the city's Kirkstall Abbey, and when he was living in Shipley a large ball of orange light, as big as a Mini, came down the drive and settled in the middle of the lawn, just a few feet away from him. No, he was not frightened; he went in doors to make a cup of tea. He thinks UFOs and ghosts are related phenomena.

There are, of course, rational explanations for some so-called phenomena. Andy Roberts, a BUFORA investigator and publisher of the UFO magazine *Brigantia*, demonstrated how several Yorkshire UFOs have lost their credibility. There is, for instance, the case of the brilliant light photographed against a cliff face by a policeman. After exhaustive inquiries, it proved to be a band of highly reflective quartz. There was also a mundane explanation for the three saucer-shaped objects photographed by a Sheffield schoolboy through his window: they were paper cut-outs stuck on the glass. And so on and so forth.

Mr Roberts' revelations were met by a stolid, if disappointed silence.

The most extraordinary story came last. Peter Hough, author and chairman of the Manchester UFO Research Association, is investigating a report by Mr Peter Spencer, a retired police officer, that on December 1,



1987, he "lost" one and three quarter hours after seeing a little green man with spindly legs, very long arms, Mr Spock-like ears and big eyes, on Ilkley Moor. The one photo Mr Spencer took is, as always with UFO pictures, blurred and poorly exposed.

Under "regressive hypnosis" Mr Spencer was to describe following the creature to a strange craft where other little green men examined him on a table and, among other things, showed him a film depicting man's wanton damage to the environment. He then found himself on the moors again.

Mr Hough is keeping an open mind on the Spencer case, but meanwhile, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire will continue to have a disproportionate number of UFO sightings. Next year, if another meeting is held in Bradford, you yourself might be there.

In the meantime, UFO sightings can be reported on Batley 444049, a 24-hour hot line.

Stephen Biscoe