

A TOUCH of mildew—and the spark of a row—entered into the curious case of the potato field crater yesterday.

A flying saucer enthusiast had claimed that a nearby hedge was burned by a 90ft.-tall spacecraft on a tripod.

Army men investigating the 8ft. diameter crater in the field at Charlton, near Shaftesbury, on the Dorset - Wiltshire border, came up with a counter-claim.

Not sinister

They say the blackening was caused by nothing more sinister than mildew.

The man with the spacecraft theory is 41-year-old Dr. Robert Randall, who told the Army he was a physicist who had worked at Woomera, Australia.

He showed bomb disposal experts a saucer-shaped mark in farmer Roy Blanchard's field and said it was caused by a 600-ton spacecraft from Uranus which landed after engine trouble.

And took off again.

Yesterday the Army issued a statement calling for "a note of sanity" into the whole business.

Not official

It said Dr. Randall's assistance had not been sought.

And that he had "no official standing."

Dr. Randall's marks showed "negative reaction and do not appear to be in any way

related to the hole under investigation."

And crystallised carbon in the hole was commonly found in chalk fields.

The Army asserted that there were strong indications of metal—today they got their highest readings in six days of digging—and concluded:—

"We are not concentrating large forces of helicopters, scientists, tanks and tracker dogs—simply a sergeant and four sappers with bricks and shovels and locating instruments."

Then came a vital, qualifying remark:—

"Of course, we shall look pretty silly if, after all, a squad of little green men pop up."

The doctor? I waited vainly for his promised arrival at the hole, now 6ft. deep.

At his semi-detached home in Tidworth, Wiltshire, his wife, the village midwife, said:—

"He is not here. Of course he is a doctor and knows what he is talking about."

Was he a doctor of medicine or physics? "Both," she said. The door closed.

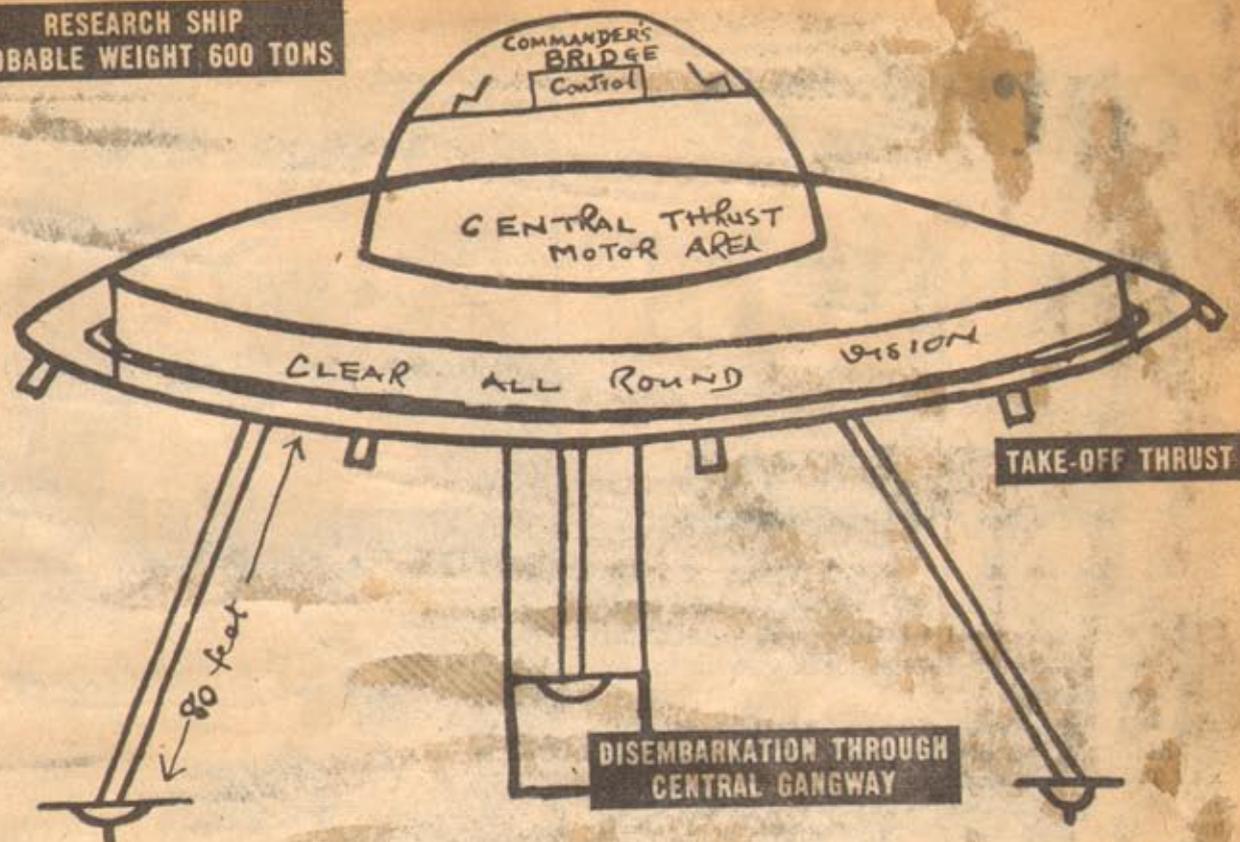
Absent

Back at the hole the Army waited for him. So did television cameras. And an official of the London Unidentified Flying Object Research Organisation.

Then Air Ministry officials appeared, they decided to wait for him too. An Army spotter plane circled overhead. But I don't think that was looking for him.

The doctor never arrived.

● Two 3ft.-deep craters have been discovered on hilly ground near Middle Monynut farm, 21 miles from Dunbar, East Lothian. An Army bomb disposal unit is investigating.



How Dr. Randall visualises the 600-ton spaceship—a drawing he did himself

Vain wait for doctor

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The Army knock that saucer

IT was not a flying saucer. That's official, as far as the Army are concerned.

They gave their verdict yesterday as bomb disposal men dug on around the crater that has caused all the bother at Charlton, Wilts.

Until then a Dr. Randall, describing himself as an expert, had acted as unofficial spokesman for the crater.

And he had declared that the dent was definitely caused by a ship from outer space. From Uranus, probably.

Yesterday Southern Command were equally definite.

They said: "Dr. Randall, who has no official status, was not called in by the Army."

GREEN MEN

"He reported that he had found marks similar to the crater in adjoining fields and volunteered to go to Charlton to lead the bomb disposal sergeant to the spot.

"These marks produced negative reaction and do not appear to be related to the hole under investigation."

Then, the spokesman shyly added a saver—"Of course, we shall look pretty silly if after all a squad of little green men do pop up!"

The mystery of the "metallic object giving strong reaction on detectors" (the Army description) remains.

Dr. Randall was silent. "A security close-down" he explained.

Today the probe reaches Parliament. Mr. Roy Mason (Lab., Barnsley) will ask the Air Minister to have an examination made at Charlton "to assess the possibility of its having been made by an unidentified flying object."