

# BOOK WEEK OF THE WEEK

## Different encounter

IF a flying saucer manned by little green aliens landed in Leeds City Square on a busy Monday lunchtime and then took off again you can bet heavy odds that "experts" would tell us all we had been hallucinating.

Like ghosts, UFO's have their believers and their disbelievers. Yet why the concept of an alien space ship — so readily accepted by the millions who lap up cinema offerings on the subject — should be so outrageous I can never understand.

As has so often been pointed out with so many planets whirling about this vast universe why should earth arrogantly assume that it is the only one to be inhabited?

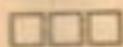
But the squelch has so often been applied by authorities to sightings which have been very well authenticated that few people now are prepared to risk being ridiculed.

And the paradox is that though many of us are ready to believe that others have seen UFO's, they are less eager to accept that anyone has had any sort of contact with the occupants.

Now, in "Alien Contact", by Jenny Randles and Paul Whetnall (Coronet Books, £1.75) the authors tell the strange tale of the Sunderland family of Wales.

Not only did they have close encounters of the third kind, but they lasted from 1976 until 1980 and included meetings not only with alien beings but with alien animals.

Just a very ordinary family from a Merseyside background, they have sought neither publicity nor financial reward from their amazing story.



Reading their accounts, it is remarkable they should have spoken about them at all except for the fact that to have bottled them up would have been too stressful.

How do you explain to your parents, friends and others that you have seen a spaceship in a field, seen the silver suited occupants and been taken on a mind trip to an alien world?

Nine-year-old Gaynor Sunderland and later her brother, Darren, eight, separately encountered the beings in a country lane near Flint, on the North Wales Border in July, 1976.

After the whole family were to become involved with Marion, the mother, also being introduced to the aliens in a field near their home.

Later her other two children were also to admit seeing the aliens at one time or another.

It is a fascinating story and one doubts the ability of young children, especially, to fabricate their detailed descriptions. Asimov and Bradbury would have been glad to claim them.

The authors give details of other similar cases both here and abroad, a lot of which have received little or scant publicity, in which contacts have been made with aliens.

Whether they come from another world, or another dimension or whether it is merely remarkably parallel hallucinations, it makes for intriguing reading.

One question the cynics always ask is why the aliens always contact ordinary folk rather than anyone in authority.

I would have thought the answer obvious — The E.T.'s are much more likely to learn what life on earth is really all about. — DEREK NAYLOR.