

---

**FROM CROSBIE**

---

**MORRISON**

# Not a "flying saucer"

**No fears need be felt about the new asteroid, 1950DA, which astronomers in California have found.**

It has nothing to do with "flying saucers," atomic fission, the Iron Curtain, or the tram strike.

It is merely one of many thousands of spherical or odd-shaped lumps of matter that have been whirling in space since almost the beginning of time, and only its small size has enabled it to

gaining of time, and only its small size has enabled it to escape detection until now.

**Nine major planets move perpetually round the sun at various distances, in more or less circular orbits.**

Nearest the sun is Mercury, which from our vantage point 93 million miles from the centre of things is usually too close to the sun to be seen with advantage; even in its most favorable positions we see it only just after sunset or just before sunrise.

Next comes Venus, shining brightly at present as the Morning Star, seen well up off the eastern horizon before sunrise.

Our own Earth comes next, and then, in order, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and the recently discovered Pluto.

## **Another planet**

But there is some evidence there used to be another major planet between Jupiter and Mars, for in that broad band now we find not merely hundreds, but thousands of smaller objects, the asteroids or minor planets, which may well have been formed by the disruption of a much larger body

Some of them have suf-

Some of them have suffered such perturbations of their orbits that now, instead of keeping on their own side of the white line, as it were, they have strayed across other traffic lanes in the sky, so that their orbits bring them close to the earth or even to Venus.

The largest of them, Ceres, has a diameter of about 480 miles: the smallest yet observed was merely a jagged mass of rock a mile across, but there are undoubtedly many that are smaller still.

Improved telescopes, and improved photographic materials, are gradually bringing them into our ken, as witness the news report.

### **Is it new one?**

One may be excused though, for wondering whether 1950DA is indeed a "new" asteroid

Its characteristics as cabled from America are very similar to those of the "Reinmuth object" discovered in May, 1932—a minor planet about a mile in diameter, with a very eccentric orbit capable of bringing it inside the orbit of Venus, and a period of revolution of about two years

In 1932 it came within 65 million miles of the earth

million miles of the earth,  
but it is capable of ap-  
proaching within two mil-  
lion miles. The distance of  
1950DA, five million miles,  
is thus well within its capa-  
bilities.

It may well be that the  
two are identical