

MARTIAN "SAUCERS" could just hop across?

IT is possible that Australia will now go through the same "flying saucer" phase that America went through a few years ago.

Thousands of strange, celestial objects were reported.

Committees, projects and individuals went into the business very thoroughly.

Donald Keyhoe, Chief of Information of the American Aeronautics Branch, after 12 months of investigation, declared, "I believe space ships are the only answer. The earth has been under periodic observation from another planet for at least two centuries."

The official Air Force Project "Saucer," after two years' work, reporting on "some form of penetration from another planet," went on to say that "astronomers are largely in agreement that only one member of the solar system besides earth is capable of supporting life, and that is Mars."

Nearest to us

On the assumption that anything is possible nowadays (a common belief) let us examine this business of flying objects for a moment.

Mars, of course, is one of our nearest neighbours and undoubtedly the planet about which we know most. Sometimes in its journey round

times in its journey round the sun, it comes relatively close to the earth (when "saucers" could hop across) and sometimes it is a very long way off.

This is shown in the accompanying diagram, where the elliptical orbit of the earth is seen, and further out, the orbit of Mars.

Suppose (to make the argument simple) that to-day the earth and Mars are at A in the diagram, that is, fairly close together—actually about 40 million miles apart.

In 12 months' time the earth will have completed one circuit of the sun and be back at A again. But not so Mars: it takes two years to go round so that at the end of 12 months it will be at B, as far as possible from A, actually about 230 million miles away. In another 12 months they will both be round at A and close together again.

More advanced

So that the super-intelligent Martians, with their space ships, would choose this special time (once every two years) to hop across, instead of bothering us at all hours of the day and night right through the year.

The inhabitants of Mars (if any) could easily be far more

any) could easily be far more advanced than we are. People there could be 50,000 years ahead of us.

Space ships would be nothing to them; they could jump the gap of 40m miles in a mere four minutes, flying with the speed of light.

Where will we be in another 50,000 years? I hate to think!

Guess work

Unfortunately, all this is guess work. We do not know whether living creatures exist at all on Mars.

All our information comes from telescopic observation when Earth and Mars are closest, from infra-red and ultra-violet measurements, from general astronomical knowledge.

The results show that the conditions on Mars are utterly different from those on the earth.

For instance, it never rains. There are no lakes or oceans or rivers. All water is frozen. The temperature at night goes down to 170deg below zero.

The famous "canals" are now known to be natural phenomena and not due to living beings, as once was thought.

The atmosphere is extraordinarily thin. What there was of air has largely escaped, because Mars is only one-tenth the weight of Earth and gravity is low. It cannot hold a heavy atmosphere like the earth's.

The oxygen on Mars is less than 1 pc of that on Earth.

than 1 pc of that on Earth. Martians couldn't walk or breathe on the surface of the earth; nor could we breathe on Mars.

If there are inhabitants there, they must have adapted themselves to these extraordinarily harsh conditions living underground with super air-conditioning; perhaps they are different creatures altogether, weird and repellant, as writers sometimes like to think.

But there is one thing about which there seems little doubt. Telescopes reveal green areas on Mars which show seasonable variations in colour and in size.

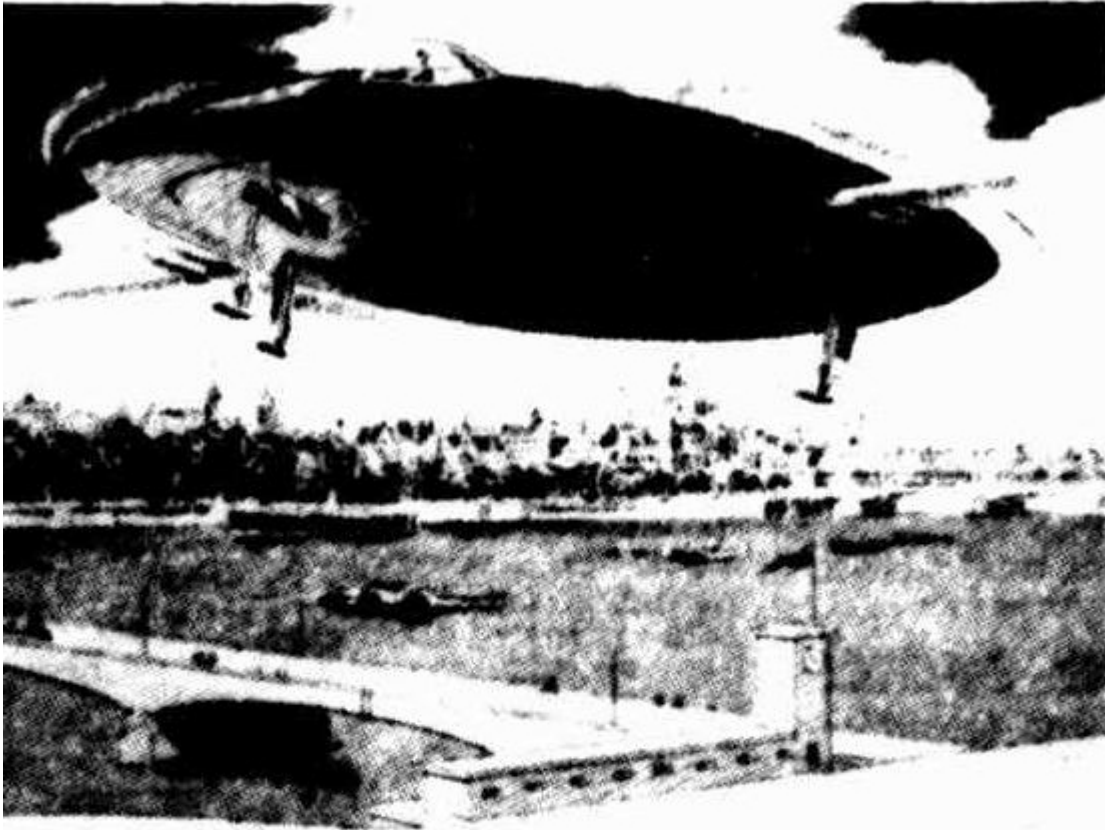
Hardy plants

They have been examined most carefully, and there is good reason to believe that there are hardy little plants, lichens, that can exist in the cold, and that manage to live from year to year on the small amounts of oxygen, water vapour, and carbon dioxide that are known to be present in the atmosphere of Mars.

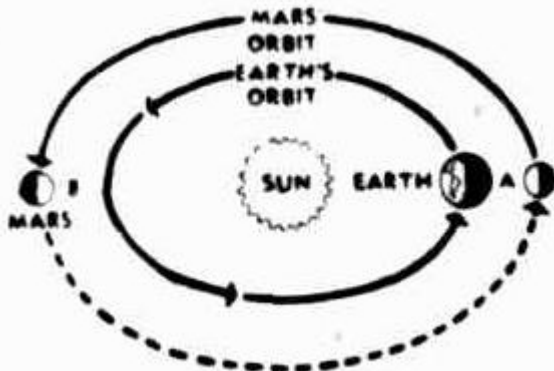
This is very important: for it shows that life (living plants) can start up on other worlds.

And if plants, why not higher forms of life, like animals, and even super-creatures that gaze across the Heavens and wonder what goes on on other worlds?

WRITER on popular science, **DR. S. W. PENNYCUICK**, to-day discusses Mars on the assumption that anything is possible nowadays, and says there is a special time, once every two years, when . . .



HAVE MARTIANS space ships like this English-designed "Flying Saucer" which experts describe as the aircraft of the future? It is designed to autorotate and come down vertically like a falling leaf should engine trouble develop, and dispenses with runways.



EARTH AND MARS