

Mustang's Vapour Trail Causes Near Panic

Thousands Believed "Flying Saucer" Was Object

BRISBANE, May 21.—Nineteen-year-old Sergeant Pilot Colin Ackland, of Townsville, at 2.15 p.m. to-day caused thousands of people in south-east Queensland to dash into the street with heads craned upwards and hundreds of others to frantically telephone newspaper offices, radio stations and R.A.A.F. bases with reports of flying saucers.

However, all they had seen was the vapour trail from Ackland's Air Force Mustang undergoing normal high altitude tests about six miles up.

Thousands of people in a 12,000 square mile area stretching from Caloundra to Toowoomba and Murwillumbah peered skywards as white patterns formed above.

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The switchboards in newspaper offices were jammed with calls for three-quarters of an hour. As late as 3.30 p.m., people were making trunk line calls from Southport, Caloundra and Tewesomba asking what was the object.

The Air Force station at Archerfield had more than 400 telephone inquiries and 150 more people rang Amberley.

One Sherwood woman said: "Everyone was terrified in my street. We all thought the flying saucer was going to land. I did not like the look of it at all. It made me feel the end of the world was coming."

"JUST NORMAL FLIGHT"

Sergeant Pilot Ackland said afterwards: "Fancy causing all that fuss. It was just a normal flight to test the plane at high altitudes

"I left Archerfield at 1.45 p.m., climbed to 35,000 feet over the city and started manoeuvring about. I looped the loop a few times and did a figure of eight. It was well nigh perfect visibility and I could see almost to Maryborough. My average speed was about 300 miles an hour."

Aviation officials said it was unusual for propeller-driven aircraft to leave a noticeable vapour trail in a warm climate. The trail was caused by the exhaust from the plane hitting cold air causing ice crystals in it to melt into cloud.

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Ackland said his gauges today showed outside air temperatures to be minus 50 degrees centigrade. The plane had not iced up because there was insufficient moisture in the air to freeze.