

"Flying Saucer" was only plane under test

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

And 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.

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 Toowoomba asking what the object was.

was.

The Air Force Station at Archerfield had more than 400 'phone 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."

Sergeant Pilot Ackland said afterwards: "Fuss by 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 35,000ft. over the city, and started manoeuvring about. I looped the loop a few times and did a figure 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 a propeller-driven aircraft to leave a noticeable vapour trail in a warm climate. The trail was caused by exhaust from the 'plane hitting cold air, causing ice crystals in it to melt into cloud.

Ackland said his gauges showed outside air temperatures to be minus 50 degrees centigrade. The 'plane had not iced up, because there

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was insufficient moisture in
the air to freeze.