

DIVERTISSEMENT

By Alan Fitzgerald

Pie in the sky

**FLYING SAUCERS
OVER AUSTRALIA.** By
James Holledge. Horwitz.
Price 5/-.

ALTHOUGH people
have claimed to have
seen them for thousands
of years, I do not be-
lieve in ghosts. I do be-
lieve in hallucinations,
therefore I can accept
that today people "see"
flying saucers.

To me the evidence of their

To me the evidence of their
existence — blurred photo-
graphs and statutory declara-
tions — is no more conclusive
than a misty photograph of
"something" at the foot of a
creaking staircase which is said
to prove the existence of a
restless spirit world.

But ghosts — unlike flying
saucers — appear to have gone
out of fashion because it is the
Man from Mars and not
hideous hobgoblins that com-
mand the headlines today.

James Holledge, in what is
essentially a scissors and paste
effort, has nonetheless pro-
duced a handy paperback on

duced a handy paperback on this contemporary phenomena, even if the prose is often execrable ("contactees with saucer crews claim").

The "startling, indisputable evidence" which the cover promises to disclose is not quite that, of course. The contents of the book are based apparently on newspaper interviews in Australia, and reports of some overseas sightings. The photographs — except for the Berina Pass "landing" — are of white blobs on dark prints.

The first flying saucer over Australia — a bronze-topped disc with a blue vapour trail — was sighted by one Fred Bepps at Geelong, Victoria in 1950 at 3.30pm. Before the year was out scores more sightings of "saucers", "flying poles", "torpedoes", "eggs" and even "tadpoles" in the sky were reported. They were dismissed as weather balloons, or vaguely put down to secret American and Russian weapons, while some people were uncharitable enough to suggest that the observers were undergoing delirium tremens.

When reports of flying objects continued to flow in, according to Holledge, the Australian Security Service drew on scientists from the radio-physics division of CSIRO to

physics division of CSIRO to investigate the sightings, while the RAAF conducted its own investigations, sending personnel along to interview people who claimed to have seen saucers. Neither body has ever published its findings.

In 1954, our present Governor General Lord Casey, then Mr Casey, Minister for External Affairs wrote to a daily newspaper and said that he had discovered a "noticeable relationship" between the dates on which people saw flying saucers in Australia and the dates on which the earth streams.

passes through the principal meteoric streams.

But the reports continued and when asked for an opinion the Australian Institute of Psychology described the UFO sightings as "not so much mass hysteria as collective illusion".

On July 5, 1954 two Yarrawlumla Shire Councillors saw "a big cigar," the size of a motor car with a vivid green flame belching from the tail travelling noiselessly about 20 miles south-east of Canberra.

Canberra district was in the news 11 years later on July 15 when two TAA pilots and six men in the airport control tower saw a mysterious, glowing object in the sky 10 miles north east of the airport at about 5,000 feet. They could find no satisfactory explanation for it although an unnamed Mt Stromlo astronomer put it down to an illusion or a mirage.

I find the most telling flaw in Holledge's "evidence" lies in that many of the sightings were made by people alone, or in the company of friends, in areas where the objects in the sky would have been simultaneously visible to thousands.

Admittedly the people who have formed themselves into UFO committees are sincere in their belief that some gigantic conspiracy of silence at government level is preventing us learning the truth about our

learning the truth about our inter-planetary visitors, but often their enthusiasm seems to outdistance the bounds of credulity. One "prominent Sydney ufologist" convinced himself that there was a flying saucer base in the Blue Mountains, while the vice president of another group went on to say how appalled Martians were at us poisoning ourselves with sodium fluoride in our drinking water!

Despite my resistance to the "evidence" contained in this book I appreciated its documentation until Chapter Nine when Mr George Adamski made his appearance. A Polish-born American, founder of a mystical cult in California, he claims not only to have seen flying saucers but to **have travelled in them.**

Another exotic person in this story is Mr George King, a former London taxi driver who propagates the teachings of the Cosmic Masters. He and his followers in the Aetherius Society (modest subscription) believe that Mars observation craft are circling the earth to radiate special spiritual energy to improve our character and disposition. This energy is picked up by Aetherius Members atop selected mountains and passed on to the rest of us. In 1960 Mr King "charged" Mount

Mr King "charged" Mount Kosciusko but knowing what I do of ski instructors and girls in chalets, I feel that Martian spiritual energy is of regrettably low voltage

But the question remains as to why the sightings of flying saucers — or unidentified flying objects (UFO) — has become such a world-wide phenomenon. That they have increased considerably over the last five years or so could be explained as a result of nuclear anxiety, coupled with the imaginative treatment of inter-planetary adventure in what has become, since the first Sputnik, a real space age.

The idea that Martians or Venusians are visiting us to prevent a nuclear holocaust could be put down to man's feeling of helplessness in a situation over which he has no control which, together with the lessening of God as a reality in the world, needs the substitution of some super race to act as an intermediary between man and his fate. This may sound too slick a hypothesis but it fits our time. In other times when subject to other pressures, man has seen hobgoblins, mermaids, monsters and even angels.

If one day you look up and see a flying saucer, I suggest you follow Professor Menzel's

YOU FOLLOW PROFESSOR MENZIES
advice: "turn your head from
side to side: nod it up and
down. Take off your glasses,
clean and replace them. Move
towards the saucer and see if it
attempts to evade: move away
and see if it follows you. Stoop
down: climb a tree. Note
carefully what happens and
then repeat your sequence".

Frankly if any rational
observer is watching your be-
haviour there is a good chance
that you will be carted off to
Kenmore, saucer or not.