

Mysteries old and new

*From CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS
in London*

WHILE Westminster has been debating the freezing of incomes and the rest of the world is concerned with its grave and depressing affairs, the west of England — always a little out of the current — has turned its attention to stranger and more curious interests.

CURIOUS INTERESTS.

At Cadbury they are beginning to dig in order to find what they are confident will be the real Camelot of King Arthur. The legends of King Arthur, kept alive by a string of writers from the mediaeval Malory down to T. H. White in our own day, have always had a strange fascination for west countrymen. That they will uncover an old British settlement seems almost certain from the preliminary reports. How they will be sure that it belonged to King Arthur is not quite so clear.

Meanwhile about the same short distance from where I write at Mells in the opposite direction the learned have given themselves to the unravelling of the mystery of the circle of Stonehenge.

Stonehenge, as everybody knows, is a gigantic circle of stones in the middle of Salisbury Plain. How our ancestors got those stones there and why they wanted to get them there are both unsolved mysteries. Professor Hoyle, the famous astronomer, has in the current issue of Nature given his support to the theory that Stonehenge was a gigantic and elaborate astronomical clock which was used for the prediction of eclipses.

The story had first been advocated by Professor

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Hawkins of the Harvard
Smithsonian Observatory in
America. Professor Hawkins'

theories were violently attacked by Mr Atkinson, a British authority on Stonehenge, who wrote the Pelican book on the subject. He condemned Professor Hawkins' theories as tendentious, arrogant, slipshod and unconvincing and asked whether a barbarous and illiterate community which has left us no other evidence of numeracy could have been capable of the elaborate mathematical calculations which Professor Hawkins ascribed to them.

At first sight this argument from ignorance appears powerful but, how much do we know about the people who erected Stonehenge? We take it for granted that they were barbarous but what do we know of them? As for their ignorance of mathematics, the one thing that we do know of them is that they were at least capable of transporting these enormous stones from some distant place to Stonehenge, which argues a certain capacity.

Professor Hoyle suggests that they were worshippers of

that they were worshippers of the sun and moon and therefore gave their first energies to what were to them religious exercises.

Only a few miles away from Stonehenge odder doings have been alleged. Warminster is a small marketing town in Wiltshire and a military depot. For more than a year now it has been alleged that strange objects, which the inhabitants call "the thing", have been fly-

ing in the sky over Warminster and strange hummings have been heard in the air.

A group who call themselves the British Unidentified Flying Objects Research Association has been formed and these enthusiasts are convinced that there is something strange going on that is of more than earthly origin. Nearby there is an artillery range at Larkhill and a biological warfare research station at Porton. The first and obvious temptation is to say that these objects are those that had been used and launched by the military; possible secret objects which the military do not care to talk about.

But the researchers will have nothing of it. They allege that a Mrs Annabelle Plow-

man definitely saw a circular object parked in the road on Shaw Bridge just outside Warminster last October. She saw the occupants who were wearing one-piece suits, glistening trousers and Balaclava helmets. What subsequently became of these gentlemen is not quite clear.

Dr Clearybaker, the head of the research association, thinks that there are two possible explanations of these bodies. Either they are from outer space or they are objects from some other dimension that have in some way jumped through time.

The first of these two suggestions is at any rate the more easily intelligible and

there is a lot of speculation these days as to whether there is life on other planets. There seems no inherent reason why there should not be and, if so, no inherent reason why just as we are discovering the moon they should not at almost the same time be discovering us. Strange stories about flying saucers have been coming in past years from every corner

past years from every corner
of the world.

But once the habit of these
stories started it would not
seem to me surprising that
people with vivid imaginations
in different parts of the world
should all persuade themselves
that they were seeing things.