

Some Australian sightings

THIS is a sample of some of the more remarkable UFO sightings in Australia — taken from the Department of Air file — together with the comments of some independent scientists.

DATE	INCIDENT	DEPARTMENT OF AIR EXPLANATION	INDEPENDENT COMMENT
October 27, 1960.	Explosions heard in sky at Cressy, Tasmania, and orange-colored ball also described and cigar-shape hovering in sky.	Astronomical.	Hard to reconcile official explanation with the description of clergyman witness who saw cigar joined by round shapes.
January 18, 1961.	Apparently-controlled light, no sound, several sightings around Kerang, Victoria.	Astronomical.	Hard to see how an "astronomical" object moved in "apparently controlled fashion."
February 15, 1963.	Grey, rotating object descending and then moving away to the west. Gave off "swishing" sound. Moe, Victoria.	Tornado-like meteorological manifestation.	Independent scientist who investigated incident said this was "the least likely explanation." The scientist, a UFO sceptic, could not suggest any natural cause for incident.
January 23, 1964.	Large lights in sea seen by vessel NE of Point of Groote Eylandt, WA. Compass went "haywire." Shadow in centre of lights rotated clockwise, causing lights to pulsate.	Unknown.	
August 2, 1964.	Rocket-like object with windows in side, yellow/orange, above Wittenoom Gorge and Hamersley Ranges, WA.	Astronomical.	An odd explanation.
September 2, 1964.	Two silvery solid oval objects seen on flight between Melbourne and Canberra.	Light refraction.	The experienced pilot was sure they were solid.
May 25, 1965.	Blue light emanating from object colored red, wavering in sky. Light sufficient to illuminate beach. Sehulea, Papua-New Guinea.	Unknown.	
June 24, 1965.	Saucer-shaped with cone top and rows of lights across front and along side, with bluish-white and red trail. Daunia Station, near Nebo, Northern Territory.	Astronomical.	Explanation sounds hard to accept on the basis of this description.
July 3, 1965.	Loud humming, glowing object, emanating yellow-white light which illuminated herd of cattle. Kimberley, Tasmania.	Astronomical.	Again, the explanation stretches credibility. Does an astronomical object hum?
July 15, 1965.	White spherical object over Canberra, A.C.T.	Astronomical.	Seems to be another example of the "least likely explanation." The object was seen by airline pilots and control officers in the Canberra tower. They were certain it was neither a star nor a balloon, and they are used to looking at the sky.
September 15, 1965.	White object sighted west of Port Moresby, Papua-New Guinea. Moved westwards, slowed and then sped northwards.	Unknown.	

THE VAST MAJORITY OF UFO (UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS) REPORTS CAN EASILY BE EXPLAINED. BUT SOME, LIKE THE MANTELL INCIDENT, ARE CHILLINGLY INEXPLICABLE

SINCE American pilot Kenneth Arnold reported seeing "silvery-grey flying saucers" over the United States' Cascade Mountains in 1947, tens of thousands of people all over the world have claimed encounters with mysterious craft from outer space.

Some of the reports are merely hilarious. The vast majority can be explained simply, in terms of falling meteorites, man-made space satellites, weather balloons, cloud formations and other meteorological phenomena. A small minority appear chillingly inexplicable.

Perhaps the most famous is what is now known as the Mantell Incident, on January 7, 1948.

The incident began about 1.15 in the afternoon when the U.S. Air Force base at Godman, near Louisville, Kentucky, received a call from the State highway patrol inquiring if they knew anything about strange aircraft hovering in the area. Godman knew nothing — checks with the area flying control at another base also revealed nothing.

The highway patrol rang off. Twenty minutes later they were back on the phone. The first reports had come from Maysville, a small town 80 miles east of Louisville. Now there were more reports from two places west of the town. A flat, circular object about 300 feet in diameter had been seen travelling west at fairly high speed.

At 1.45 the Godman flying control tower saw the object for themselves. Two USAF men on duty and the base commander inspected the object through 6x50 binoculars but could not identify the UFO. Forty-five minutes later a training flight of four F-51 fighters came into the Godman area. The Godman base commander asked flight leader Captain Mantell to investigate.

Gaining

Mantell and two other pilots went off to look for the UFO. By the time they got to 10,000 feet, Mantell's plane was barely visible to the others. He called to the tower: "I see something ahead of me and I'm still climbing." The last call he made to the tower was "It's above me and I'm gaining on it. I'm going to 20,000 feet." Minutes later Mantell's plane crashed. He was dead.

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scientists cannot to this day suggest an explanation, and the Air Ministry took the incident so seriously at the time it

Government's attitude to security.

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several seconds later. The pilot described it as being 30 feet thick at the centre, with a diameter three times the

Navy pilot William J. Meyer's December 13, 1961 sighting of a 20-foot diamond shape pulsating light at 1200 feet which he

countries there are fewer investigating agencies, less money to spend on investigation, and a lower population

country than the Department of Air is prepared to admit.

The second of the two scientists, a sceptical Victorian working in the atmospheric sciences who has written papers on UFO phenomena, says:

"The vast majority of so-called UFO sightings can unquestionably be put down to natural and man-made causes. For example, you can throw away all the sightings which are seen within 10 degrees elevation from the horizon because these will normally be light refractions in the atmosphere. Then there are peculiar cloud formations or unusually bright stars which people can often mistake for UFOs.

"But there are incidents which we cannot explain, and it seems to me that official agencies are damaging the chances of proper scientific inquiry by their anxiety to write them off as natural happenings.

"They may well be natural, in a way we don't understand as yet. But we need to find out, and it seems to me that many of the Department of Air's Australian investigations come to unacceptable answers in this hunt for any old natural explanation that will do.

Conceal

"In one incident at Moe, Victoria, which I also investigated myself, the official inquirers plumped arbitrarily for a natural explanation which was in fact — and this is in my field — the least likely of all.

"Other incidents are simply not mentioned at all officially. Schoolchildren in Moorabbin, Victoria, some time ago saw a silvery object descending behind a clump of trees nearby and later taking off again.

"It was an interesting report. The children were familiar enough with aircraft — there is a light plane airfield nearby — not to confuse a crop-dusting plane, or a helicopter, with a UFO.

"But nothing more has ever been heard of it because the Department of Air people went down and persuaded everyone it had been the children's imagination. Sometimes I wonder if they have some experimental plane whose existence they want to conceal.

"Of course, I am not suggesting that because we cannot explain a UFO in natural terms we must necessarily believe it comes from outer space; we know far too little about freak effects in our atmosphere, on our radar, and on meteorology to say that.

"Before I believe they are extra-terrestrial I would want hard evidence — have the air force shoot one down, for example. I don't see why it shouldn't be possible, if they are really there. We can always apologise later, if there turn out to be little men from outer space inside.

"I should want evidence from our own space satellites

What to do if you see a UFO

it. I'm going to 20,000 feet." Minutes later Mantell's plane crashed. He was dead.

The Mantell incident is intriguing, but it proves nothing. Mantell might have been chasing a weather balloon, a light refraction, or simply a strange cloud. He should never have gone to 20,000 feet in a plane unequipped with oxygen: he most probably died because he blacked out for lack of an oxygen mask, went into a dive and lost a wing through excessive speed.

But it's a strange story — despite all the explanations it remains an extraordinary thing that an experienced pilot, well aware of the hazards, should have been tempted to fly into danger.

A year after Mantell's death, another pilot reported a brush with a UFO. He was George Gorman, a 25-year-old second-lieutenant in the North Dakota Air National Guard, who was flying a small, single-engined plane into Fargo, North Dakota.

Gorman, just about to land, saw a light passing him on his right. He complained to the control tower that another aircraft was in his vicinity, only to be told that his was the only plane in the area apart from another which was just touching down. Gorman saw the light again, and gave chase, determined to prove the tower wrong.

When he got to within 1000 yards of the strange light he saw the tower had been right. It was no plane but what he later described as a sharply outlined disc about eight inches in diameter, blinking on and off. The disc turned left. Then it began evading Gorman's efforts to get a closer look.

Dived

Finally the disc headed directly at Gorman, who had to dive to avoid a collision. The saucer skimmed over his cockpit, turned, and closed again head on. Gorman dived once more, and the disc moved off out of sight.

The pilot of an aircraft which had landed immediately before Gorman partially confirmed his story. He too, with two members of the ground staff, had seen the light flashing across the airfield. Gorman's report expressed certainty that the disc had been "controlled by thought or reason."

There have been many other reported aerial sightings of small discs (which UFO believers interpret as robot reconnaissance probes). Two entire squadrons of RAF Lincoln bombers tracked something of the sort on a training flight off the west coast of Ireland in 1951.

The RAF planes saw something small on their radar, flying underneath and between the two flights, in the opposite direction, at an estimated speed of 1500 miles an hour. Radar

scientists cannot to this day suggest an explanation, and the Air Ministry took the incident so seriously at the time it clamped an Official Secrets Act screen over the entire incident.

Early this year in Australia, Airlines of NSW pilot Alex Garriock reported an incident which might qualify for this category.

Garriock saw a "green streak" zipping past his cockpit at 14,000 feet up. The streak was level with his wingtip. He could not suggest any explanation, and had the streak been the distant met balloon that springs to mind he would have expected to recognise it.

But pilots have spotted large objects, too, which defy rational explanation.

One of the most interesting of these stories is reported in Howard V. Chambers' new book, UFOs, on the evidence of former U.S. Marine Corps Major Donald E. Keyhoe, now a convinced believer in UFOs and a writer on the subject.

The story, it must be admitted, is not well-documented, but the lack of names and published evidence is not surprising in view of the U.S.

Government's attitude to security.

Keyhoe claims that an American Navy four-engine Constellation encountered a very large UFO on a trans-Atlantic flight to Maryland, which included a refuelling stop at Gander, Newfoundland.

Outside Gander the pilot saw a cluster of strange lights below him and banked closer to inspect them, alerting his passengers, all Navy airmen, to be on the lookout. Just as the navy plane approached the lights dimmed and several coloured rings appeared in their place. One of the rings began to move closer to the navy plane.

Larger

The pilot moved into a full-power climb but the ring climbed faster, catching up with him. As it got nearer the pilot made it out as a huge disc, larger than his own plane. The UFO slowed and took up a station abreast of the plane and about 100 yards away.

The pilot and the crew were able to inspect the UFO before it moved off and vanished

several seconds later. The pilot described it as being 30 feet thick at the centre, with a diameter three times the Constellation's wing span. There was a blurred glow along the rim of the disc.

As soon as the disc vanished the navy pilot radioed Gander Airport and was told that the control tower there had also spotted something on the radar screen, close to the Constellation.

The pilot was examined by an air force team on landing, but no conclusions were reached.

According to Major Keyhoe, the pilot was later examined by a U.S. Government agency scientist who showed him a file of UFO photographs and asked him to identify the craft which nearly rammed him. The pilot is reported to have picked out one of the photographs — whereupon the scientist said thank you, politely, packed up the pictures and left, refusing to answer further questions.

In view of the attention lavished on UFOs in the United States it is not surprising that most of the impressive reports originate there. Such as ex-

Navy pilot William J. Meyer's December 13, 1961 sighting of a 20-foot diamond shape pulsating light at 1200 feet which he was "convinced could not have been any conventional heavier or lighter than air craft... temperature inversion mirage or sun refraction." Or the cone-shaped object reported by a Californian naval station in February 1950.

Pictures

(It should be remembered that these impressive sightings represent only a minute proportion of the U.S. total: and a very small proportion even of the 3 per cent which USAF investigators classify as inexplicable. Most sightings in the U.S., as in the rest of the world, are capable of simple natural or psychological explanations.)

There are fewer well documented "inexplicables" from outside the U.S. — although the Brazilian Navy survey ship Almirante Saldanha took one of the best-authenticated "saucer" pictures off an Atlantic island in 1958 — because in other

countries there are fewer investigating agencies, less money to spend on investigation, and a lower population density, which means the likelihood of fewer witnesses.

The first reported UFO sighting in Australia was as far back as 1893. (The age of the report is not surprising — one of the oldest flying saucer descriptions, according to Chambers, is in records from Byland Abbey, Yorkshire, where monks saw "a large round silver thing like a disc" flying around their buildings, to their vast distress, in 1290.)

American scientist Professor James McDonald, senior physicist in the Arizona Institute of Atmospheric Physics, who is now carrying out his own UFO investigation, visited Australia last year and collected some 70 sightings which he interpreted as evidence of intelligently directed UFOs.

Australian scientists do not go as far as this view of McDonald's — whom they describe as a "cautious and able scientist who has, however, a missionary glint in his eye on the UFO question."

Three of the incidents which impressed him might strike any impartial observer as remarkable:

Remarkable

In 1959 a clergyman named Father Dill, together with 30 other witnesses, saw what appeared to be a saucer hovering over the sea off a beach in Papua-New Guinea;

On October 7, 1960, another clergyman at Cressy, Tasmania, saw a cigar-shaped object joined by domed discs about three miles from him. Independent commentators find the Department of Air's explanation of this — "astronomical sighting" — hard to accept;

On April 9, 1966, near Ballarat, Victoria, car driver Ron Sullivan reported that the beam of his headlights was bent by a ray of light coming from a "very bright source of light, disc-shaped, with a cone of multi-colored light projecting upwards."

Other interesting Australian sightings that are hard to explain are described in the accompanying table of the incidents taken from the official Department of Air summary of UFO investigations in this country.

There are no stories in Australia as impressive as the Meyer sighting or the Gorman and Mantell incidents. But both the two Australian scientists now working on the UFO question, who were referred to yesterday, believed there are a higher proportion of truly inexplicable sightings in this

are really there. We can always apologise later, if there turn out to be little men from outer space inside.

"I should want evidence from our own space satellites, which are after all constantly photographing the earth and the lower atmosphere on meteorological projects.

Evidence

"So far there is only one UFO sighting from a satellite — an unexplained dot on one weather satellite photograph out of literally millions that have been processed since they first went up.

"Until then, if you ask me whether I can credit the suggestion that UFOs are intelligently directed objects from space I would have to say: I don't know. There is no evidence that they are, and equally there is no evidence that they are not.

"All we can say is that something unusual and inexplicable seems to happen quite frequently. We need to get far more evidence about this, to collect detailed information about more sightings, before we can even come to a hypothesis."

If you do happen to see a UFO, there are three useful things you can do to help scientific inquirers later. Firstly, if the object is less than 10 degrees above the horizon, forget all about it unless it is spitting green fire and burning up the garden. It is likely to be a light refraction, and the scientists will certainly assume so.

Secondly, take some small object with which to compare its size and note some kind of bearing. So: the object may be as big as a two cent piece at arm's length, and moved between a point over the neighbor's chimney pot as seen from your kitchen window, and another over the apple tree seen from the same point.

Thirdly, try to take a photograph and have it developed by someone who knows what you were trying to do, so he can guarantee later that the film was untouched. Night-time lights in the sky may need as much as 30 seconds to one minute's exposure at full aperture.

The great disadvantage of having an open mind on the UFO question is that once you admit even the faint possibility of intelligently-directed probes from outer space you find it harder to dismiss entirely the incredible stories of personal contact.

Some of them are extraordinary. And so — I can't resist it — tomorrow's article will take a look at a few of the amazing claims made by people who swear they have seen the flying saucers land.

Tomorrow: 'I saw two people in white...'

petty's comment



"Although we don't have the divine right of succession, we've got the A.L.P."