

Extract from
Western Mail, Cardiff

25 SEP 1967

THE SCENE

HAS everyone noticed how respectable flying saucers have now become? Distinguished scientists are discussing seriously their feasibility or otherwise in terms of strict physics. 3404

British newspapers are printing straightforward accounts of "sightings." A book about some fantastic events at Warminster has been soberly reviewed.

The astronomer, J. Allen Hynek, who is the official consultant on the subject to the United States government, has lashed conservative scientists for their scepticism, and has written a solemn article in *The Times* describing some cases of "unidentified flying objects" (their proper name) that turned out to be perfectly explicable—and one or two eerie ones that did not.

Time magazine has devoted one of its excellent weekly essays to a serious treatment of the question Clement Freud's witty attention has turned to them as something even higher than *haute cuisine*.

Even the Soviet Union, which once laughed the whole thing off as a typical outburst of capitalist Western hysteria, with war-mongering undertones, has now changed its mind and is asking for evidence and information.

Well, like so many other strange things, it all started in Wales. And not with one of your vague "sightings" either, but with a phenomenon almost as common and even more difficult to believe; it was an alleged case of actual contact with unidentified beings who quickly got into a machine that flew off in a way and at a rate that no known flying machine of the day could equal.

It happened on a May night in 1909, and a *Western Mail* article of the time tells the story. We had interviewed a Mr. C. Lethbridge, a dock worker who ran a travelling Punch and Judy show as a sideline.

At about 11 p.m. on May 18, while trundling his little cart on Caerphilly Mountain, he claimed to have come upon a large tube-shaped object lying on the hillside, with near it two "men" who seemed to be doing work of some kind. They were wearing heavy fur coats and tight-fitting fur caps.

Wheels

In Mr. Lethbridge's own words, "I was rather frightened but I continued to go on until I was within 20 yards of them.

"The noise of my little spring cart seemed to attract them and when they saw me they jumped up and jabbered furiously in a strange lingo."

As Mr. Lethbridge watched the two "men" ran towards the machine, which began to rise slowly off the ground, and they jumped into a small carriage suspended beneath it. He described wheels on the under side of the carriage and a whirling fan at the tail.

The whole contrivance, machine, carriage, creatures and all, rose clear of some telegraph wires, and then, with two great lights suddenly shining out, flew off in the direction of Cardiff.

The following morning Mr. Lethbridge's breathless account brought investigators to the spot. The list of what they found includes torn newspapers, a red substance resembling papier mache, a chain-and-pin mechanism which an engineer said looked like a pump-valve from an airship, and on it, of all things, a label in French.

This is a mystery that can have only a strictly limited number of explanations: 1. It was all a lie; 2. It was all an hallucination; 3. It was all a hoax. These theories apart, if there really was something out of the ordinary on Caerphilly Mountain that night, then it was of course either extra-terrestrial or terrestrial.

The terrestrial theory is a hot favourite with those interested

Flying saucers are no laughing matter

By GRAHAM SAMUEL

in the UFO question who dismiss spacemen as a subject for cranks.

Their idea is of some super Earth power or powers experimenting with advanced flying techniques unknown to the general public.

This is a widespread belief in the Americas, and especially in the United States, where "sightings" far outnumber any claimed anywhere else in the world. Saucer aficionados over there allege that the official USAF investigation into UFO's is really an administrative device for suppressing facts and evidence about them.

If they are right, the terrestrial school of thought argues, then the U.S. Government is trying to cover up some incredibly advanced secret experimentation in aerodynamics. The Russians, they claim, may be doing the same.

Fantastic, but the remaining possibility is even more so. Dr. William Markowitz, an astronomer who is a professor of physics in Milwaukee, writing in the American journal *Science*, actually agrees that UFO's exist, but says that if they came from other solar systems then all earthly laws of physics must be suspended.

Earthly

He goes on to say that if anti-matter were used, the power needed to take off would be 30 times the electrical generating capacity of the whole world.

He estimates that to travel from the very nearest star, Alpha Centauri, even at 12 times the speed of the Gemini spacecraft, would take 12,500 years. At half the speed of light it would take eight years, but "there is no known propulsion that could achieve this."

Mmm yes. But what if our rules of earthly physics *do* have to be suspended? Dr. Allen Hynek, orthodoxly trained scientist as he is, has said that we are prone to forget, proud as we are of our 20th century science, that one day there will be a 21st century science and even a 30th century one that will make our nuclear and astro-physicists look like a bunch of alchemists looking for the Philosopher's Stone.

"We suffer," he says, "from a temporal provincialism, a form of arrogance that has always irritated posterity."

A whole lot of his fellow-Americans could not agree more. Pollsters have recorded



An early flying saucer photograph (1950) published in a Spanish newspaper. It was taken off the Balearic Islands by a newsreel cameraman.

that 46 per cent. of American adults firmly believe in UFOs.

Dozens of flying saucer clubs have been formed, including some serious students, others somewhat more extreme who claim to have spoken to spacemen and to have been taken on space flights to Venus, and even some religious fanatics who are moulding a new creed around space visitors.

The furthest out confidently expect Earth to be forcibly colonised by conquistadores from space within the next few years.

They believe that creatures from some other solar system have already established a jumping-off station on Mars for this purpose, and they quote the Russian astronomer Schlosky's theory that the two satellites of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, which were suddenly discovered in 1877, are artificial constructions — manned space stations, so to speak.

Naturally, like everything else under the sun, there is nothing really new in all this. "Ezekiel saw the wheel way up in the middle of the air," says the Negro spiritual.

In fact the Bible (Ezekiel, Chapter 1) has a graphic description:

"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself and a brightness was about it. . . Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. . . And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

That was by the River Chebur in Chaldaea, and there were phenomena curiously like UFO sightings related by Livy in ancient Rome over 200 B.C.

A local artist drew weird aircraft over Nuremberg in 1561, and a "flaming dragon" was seen by hundreds of sober Scots to cross the sky during Queen Mary Stuart's reign.

It may all amount to "the No. 1 problem of world science today," as James E. McDonald, a physicist of the University of Arizona, recently said. Or it may be mass hysteria, brought on by living in a hypertensive age.

Whatever it is, in its most recent manifestation it started in Wales with a Punch and Judy man on Caerphilly Mountain in May 1909.