

Extract from
South Wales Evening Post, Swansea

-2 NOV 1967

A lot of trouble with Venus . . .

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WELL, is there anyone up there? After a week of reading reports of cigar shapes and Crosses of Lorraine, members of Swansea Astronomical Society think not.

What they do think is that the unidentified flying object people have seen all over the country is the planet Venus, currently 12 times more brilliant than the brightest star.

Venus, even at a distance of 24,600,000 miles, is always leading people astray. "We had a lot of trouble with Venus in the last war," one of the members said resignedly.

"People saw it and thought it was Germany's latest invention coming at them."

The idea of super intelligent beings from outer space circling earth is one they dismiss with scepticism.

"These stories recur from time to time," they said. "People see things in the sky that they don't know about and immediately think they're flying saucers. Well there are a lot of celestial phenomena up there. They're not of this world, but they're not of any other, either."

Flying teacup

AND reports of different shapes don't make for a change of mind. In 1950, a bolide—a large meteorite

—was seen travelling up the Bristol Channel. "I had more than 100 letters from people who'd seen it," said a member. "And every description was different."

"One person said it looked like a teacup. Someone else thought it was pencil-shaped. Some people even saw two or three of them."

To understand how they can be so sure needs a better grasp than mine of chemistry and physics. But I go along with their parting shot: "If there's anyone up there capable of getting a craft through space and coming to have a look, do you think they'd be afraid to land?"

The 'Post' Man