

Clive Harold, the man on the right of the picture, has a new and frightening book out today. It tells the story of the other five people with him, the Coombs family from Ripperstone Farm, St. Bride's Bay, Dyfed

PAUL JACKSON investigates



# Spaceship Farm

**S**OMETHING very strange has been going on at Ripperstone Farm, an isolated spot on the cliff-top overlooking St. Bride's Bay, Dyfed.

Either the farm has been the setting for some of the most amazing and fascinating unearthly encounters ever witnessed, or it has been the setting for one of the most amazing and fascinating hoaxes ever staged.

The story centres on Billy and Pauline Coombs and their five children, who live and work at the farm. They say they experienced the following phenomena, and, paradoxically, although their tales are incredible there is no reason to disbelieve them.

● A large saucer-shaped craft surveyed the farm, hovered above them, and flew around the area at fantastic speeds, materialising and dematerialising at will.

On two occasions it followed their car at close range for long distances, and when it appeared televisions burned out, electrical systems in the car were destroyed, and exceptionally large amounts of electricity were drained from the farmhouse.

● A silver-suited glowing figure stood at a window and made the lights and television flicker wildly, before vanishing as Billy and Pauline fearfully watched him.

● Several other sightings of giant silvery figures were made in the area around the same time — with descriptions tallying in remarkable detail. Witnesses from different farmhouses simultaneously saw one of the creatures walk through a sliding door that momentarily appeared in a rocky cliff face.

● Billy's herd of 86 cows dematerialised eight times. Somehow they vanished from locked pens, reappearing seconds later in distant fields or on a neighbouring farm. The animals were sufficiently disturbed by their experiences to suffer several

miscarriages. And when the family dog Blackie came into contact with one of the mysterious visitors he went mad and had to be destroyed.

● Pauline Coombs was transported one night to some sort of dazzlingly bright laboratory where she was observed by what appeared to her to be the female equivalents of the sleek, waxy, unblinking creatures they had previously seen. Suddenly she was back in bed, unharmed.

● Several members of the Coombs family developed rashes, and Pauline

That may not be too surprising a reaction when you consider that previous "UFOs" have been satisfactorily explained away as radio-controlled models, fluorescent chemical clouds ejected by meteorological research rockets, or straightforward student rag-week mock-ups.

But Mr. Harold argues, "It's Catch 22. Scientists say it could not possibly happen, so why bother to go and check it out."

Billy Coombs says the book accurately represents what happened. "The cows disappearing was the most unbelievable part," he said. He is not worried about a return from the creatures — "they certainly must be friendly or something would have happened to us long ago" — but fears instead another sort of uninvited visitor — people interested in seeing the family and farm, who could easily disturb his farming routines.

Otherwise the family will continue life as before, although their beliefs have radically altered.

Rosa Grenville, who runs the Haven Fort Hotel, St. Bride's Bay, with her husband, is another of the witnesses whose experiences are described in Mr. Harold's book.

She had yet to read it when she confirmed the stories recounted there — and added some fresh details of her own.

"I saw a huge balloon above our roof. It zoomed down at a speed like a thunderbolt falling, and I pulled a window open to see better. I saw a huge round machine, silvery and illuminated, and above it was something like a cigar — a platform shape with flashing lights like flames from a blow-lamp."

Mrs. Grenville's first thought was that someone was after her chickens, but she was soon scared for herself when she saw two creatures leave the craft. "They looked like men from the back, although they were at least seven feet tall. But when they turned round, their faces were like rubber. They were also very slim, with unusually long arms and legs."

Two further encounters with the same craft — which apparently has the ability to change shape in flight from columnar to round to conventional spaceship — were noted by Mrs. Grenville, her husband and several hotel guests.

"I'm convinced it cannot be a hoax," says Mrs. Grenville, who was formerly completely sceptical. "We still even have the scorch marks on the cottage roof."

In his book Clive Harold employs a racy, readable style, often allowing the family to describe what went on in their own words — and he deliberately avoids offering explanations.

His own pet theory though, is that the uninvited guests were descendants of the Coombs family travelling back in time to observe their heritage.

Another explanation, favoured by local expert Randall Pugh-Jones,

whose own book on *The Dyfed Enigma* comes out in October, is that Ripperstone Farm was a focal point for visitors from another dimension, an H. G. Wellsian parallel universe.

Others would say that the Coombs and their neighbours merely saw men and craft from the nearby RAF base at Brawdy — perhaps adding that the RAF get up to some pretty mysterious things themselves, which could account for the stranger stories.

But a spokesman for the RAF at Brawdy said any theories that the weird objects were anything to do with them could be discounted. "We are just a straightforward training station," he said.

Reports of UFOs had come in to Brawdy station, and one officer had himself seen a craft he could not account for, but the drill was always to pass on the reports to the Ministry of Defence and carry out no investigations from the station.

The spokesman said there was no doubt that some people had mistaken aircraft for unusual happenings in the sky, and that pilots in wet immersion suits and flying helmets could look



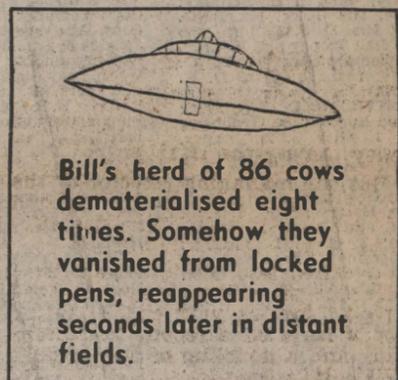
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herself found her arm almost paralysed one morning and her eyes painfully inflamed. They were the sort of injuries consistent with contacting radioactive substances, and radiation traces have been measured around the farmhouse.

● The night before the rashes appeared, Pauline's daughter Layann had slept with her parents because she had been terrified by the latest ghost-like apparition. She woke during the night, hearing a noise like rustling paper, and saw a silver hand drifting alone through the bedroom. The hand touched Pauline on the arm and drifted out through the door. Layann could not wake her mother until the morning.

The *Western Mail* reported several of these incidents, as described by various witnesses, when they happened during 1977. Now a freelance journalist, Clive Harold, has written a book telling the complete story as related to him by the Coombs family and some of their neighbours. *The Uninvited* is published today, in paperback only, by Star, price 95p.

The evidence collected by Clive Harold from characters of unimpeachable integrity should be convincing enough to launch a fresh bout of academic *Star Wars*. But Mr. Harold, who was a sceptic himself when he first took on the assignment to write a magazine feature on the subject of UFOs and suchlike phenomena, expects his book to suffer a close encounter with disbelief, and total neglect from scientists.



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"But those uniforms are khaki or yellow, and would not square with the reports of what people have seen, if they are being accurate. Some people have seen things around here which they cannot explain and neither can we. However, we threw away all our correspondence on the subject more than a year ago, and it seems that we have had no reports since."

That leaves a final old favourite theory — visitors from outer space. And if that is the case, we can only speculate that they chose Pembrokeshire, not because they wanted to be taken to our leader, but because it was such a splendid place for their holiday.

★ The line sketch of the flying saucers used on this page was drawn by a 10-year-old Broad Haven, Dyfed, boy after his class sighted a mysterious object in a field 300 yards from their school in February 1977.

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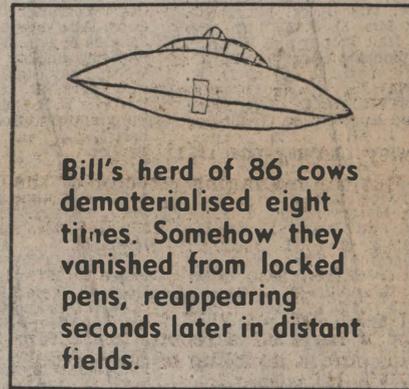
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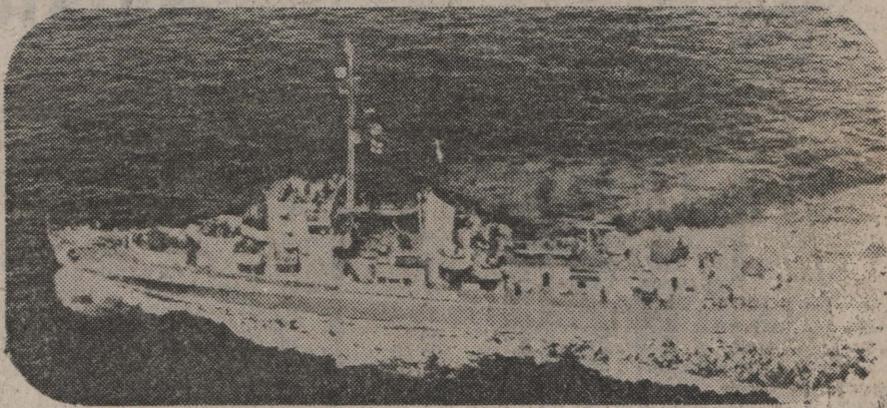
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## AND FROM AMERICA, THE CASE OF THE INVISIBLE WARSHIP

# On the trail of a mystery



● The USS Eldridge... now serves with the Greek Navy.

IT was a day in the summer of 1943 when the switches were turned and the motors hummed as man stepped across the threshold of the impossible. He made a ship — a destroyer called USS Eldridge — and its crew invisible.

It was pure Merlin magic, a page from *Comic Cuts*, a crazy dream.

The ship faded from view at its berth at the American Philadelphia Navy yard. Minutes later, it materialised hundreds of miles away at the Norfolk Navy yard in Virginia, and then slowly faded from view again and once more appeared at Philadelphia.

It was a fantastic experiment which used Einstein's unified field theory involving magnetism, gravity and pulsed power. It is a theory so dangerous that it is said Einstein decided it was too hot to handle and did not finish doing his sums. It was an experiment that sent the crew of that disappearing destroyer stark-staring, gibbering mad.

Or was it? Did it ever really happen? Is it just a crazy, hazy, mousy, silly science fiction yarn that somehow has taken on the mantle of credibility across three-and-a-half decades?

Certainly the American Government says it is all a load of baloney. It has spent possibly millions of dollars

denying the whole thing and it is likely to go on doing so. Because the mystery surrounding the Philadelphia Experiment as the Case of the Disappearing Destroyer is known, is being aired again in a new book by Charles Berlitz and William Moore.

Called *The Philadelphia Experiment — Project Invisibility* (Souvenir Press, £4.95) it delves into every known — and unknown — facet of the mystery, every tiny, tenuous lead that just might at last clear up this super-mystery.

The authors — Berlitz's previous book include *The Bermuda Triangle* — in their efforts to present a credible aspect to the experiment, do sink often into the incredible, the unlikely and even the just plain silly.

They quote letters of an extraordinary character called Carlos Allende who allegedly saw the destroyer disappear. A man who wrote of crew members going mad, going into a "deep freeze" state or even catching fire and burning for days.

And they hint that during that period of "teleportation," when the Eldridge was in mysterious transit from one base to another, there may have been an encounter with beings of another world.

But the evidence in the book is, to say the least, thin. There is little in the way of hard fact, and mystery seems to surround almost everyone who is referred to. Anonymity and pseudonyms abound. It is all very frustrating.

But there are some extraordinary and apparently inexplicable facets to the story of the Eldridge. The authors say that the official Navy history has conveniently got some of its dates and facts wrong. Could that be a cover-up?

And there is one intriguing possibility aired — that the Americans have in fact continued unified field experiments and that many of the UFO sightings now are in fact U.S. flying saucers. So the official denials of the Philadelphia Experiment would be a framework of total secrecy the like of which the world has never experienced before.

And what of the Eldridge? She was sold in 1951 to the Greek Navy with which she still serves as the *Leon* — the *Lion* — with absolutely nothing about her to hint at the mystery and intrigue of which she is the centre.

But perhaps at her advanced age she really will disappear soon — to the scrapyard.

Stuart Birch