



This object was photographed near Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Space invaders or hocus-pocus?

Nigel Gabriel reports on the latest UFO sightings in Gwent



This photograph was taken at Santa Ana, California, in 1965.



Unidentified flying object at Zanesville, Ohio, photographed in 1967.

In the same month, a strange flying object with red and white flashing lights was seen by two women above the Tredegar Arms pub in Cross Keys.

As soon as a sighting is made, it is reported to the UFO laboratory in North Wales. The laboratory has a computer which correlates information on sightings from all over the country.

Information is also sent to a group called Contact International UK, which has connections with groups all over the world.

The results of cross checking all this information are impressive. Ninety-one different shapes for UFOs have been isolated, and it has become much easier to eliminate hoaxes.

Of course, many thousands of UFOs are seen every year, and the problem for those who take the business seriously is to sort out the genuine sightings from wild flights of fancy.

Between 1947 and 1971, there have been 197 unidentified objects in Britain's skies for which the ministry of defence has said there is "insufficient information."

The attitude of bodies such as the ministry of

defence to groups such as UFO enthusiasts is fairly predictable.

"They haven't exactly gone out of their way to be helpful," says Frank Thomas.

"While they do not dismiss the possibility that intelligent life might exist on other planets, the

reports of UFOs that have reached them have provided plenty of evidence which they have chosen to ignore."

And of course it is not only the ministry of defence that is sceptical.

While most people do not dismiss the idea of

extra-terrestrial life, very few believe that aliens could be bothered to take an interest in our insignificant planet.

Frank Thomas believes that, deep down, the idea of life from other planets arouses a threat to our security.

"Just think what effect it would have if, as some authors have suggested, God turned out to have been a spaceman. It would destroy the basis of religion, and, without that life would be utter chaos for many people," says Frank. "People just don't like the idea of it. But there

is so much evidence it can't be that so many people are going round hallucinating all the time," he added.

So are Frank and his colleagues right? — Or is it only our pubs that have been taken over by space invaders?

HAVE you heard of The Three Men in Black? They drive a big black American limousine and resemble "olive skinned Orientals."

The car has no number plates, and it is not known whether the occupants are from this world or another.

If you have seen a UFO, these strange beings may come knocking on your door, and afterwards you will never breathe a word of your experience.

Stories like this, says Frank Thomas of the UFO Welsh Study Group, Caerleon, have done more to discredit the study of UFOs than anything else. "Lots of authors have

tried to cash in on stories like The Men in Black, and it has done a bad service to people who take UFOs seriously.

"I am very sceptical about these sort of tales — I'd be pretty surprised if I ever had them knocking on my door," he says.

Frank, who lives in Manor Way, Risca, certainly is one of the people who take UFOs seriously. He spends between 15 and twenty hours a week in Newport reference library researching the history of strange apparitions in Gwent.

He is in charge of research for the Caerleon group which started last September. The group has eight members and meets fortnightly on Friday nights at Caerleon Community College, Cold Bath Road. One of their aims is to

shake off the cranky image of UFO enthusiasts by taking a scientific approach to the question.

The organisation of the group is impressive. They are in constant touch with air traffic control at Cardiff (Wales) Airport to see if any mystery objects have been picked up on radar. They also liaise closely with the RAF and police.

Since the club started, they have reported 25 sightings in Gwent. But Frank admits these are probably about half a dozen UFOs seen by a number of people.

The past few months have been very fruitful for the club. In September, twenty workers at a Rogerstone factory saw a brilliant white object land on Twyn Barlwm mountain.