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## RETRO REPORT

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How we covered...

Edited by Tony Woolway

# Hale-Bopp comet mistaken for UFO

A STRANGE sight over West Wales last week was probably one of the first appearances in the British sky of what is said to be the most spectacular comet to approach earth for nearly 100 years.

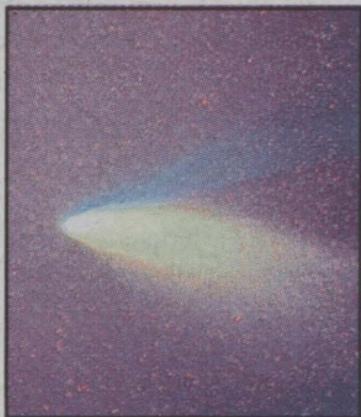
The object, described as a big sun or hazy ball with a tail, appeared in the early morning sky and seemed to some to be a UFO but was almost certainly the Hale-Bopp Comet.

From next week it will be visible in the evening, rising high above the horizon and burning more brightly as March progresses. The comet is expected to be at its most glorious at the end of the month.

Several people at Goodwick in Pembrokeshire reported seeing a round object in the clear early morning sky above Dinas Mountain last week.

Nigel Davies said he first spotted the unusual object as he was getting ready to go to work at Fishguard Fruit Company.

"Where I live we have a panoramic view overlooking the Preseli Mountains and when I leave the house in the early morning I always look up to see the stars," he said. "This object in particular caught my eye as it was immediately big-



ger and brighter than the surrounding stars, with a long trail coming from it.

"It was like a big, hazy, round ball with no definite sides and very high up in the sky. Yet it could not have been a plane as it remained absolutely stationary in the sky."

Vice-president of the Society for Popular Astronomy, Robin Scagell, said, "As the comet gets closer to the sun it will heat up and become brighter and brighter."

Hale-Bopp was first seen in 1995, by Alan Hale a New Mexico space scientist and Thomas Bopp, an amateur astronomer in Arizona. It's the third brightest comet seen since 1400.