

Something in the

The "Flying Saucer" mystery deepens as sightings over Britain reach a new peak.

by
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IT HAPPENED at London Airport on Friday, March 22, this year.

Sheila Manning, a dark-haired secretary in BOAC's Constellation Fleet Technical Officer's office, was looking out of the window in front of her desk. The office was on the southern edge of the airfield and Miss Manning was looking south, away from London Airport. She was puzzled by what she saw.

"What's that?" she asked of the others in the office. Pointing, she indicated a strange object which appeared to be floating above a bunch of cumulus cloud some three to five miles away towards the south. It seemed to be a shiny, metallic object. Its apparent size was not great but, if the distance estimation was correct, it would have been considerably larger than any aircraft now flying.

Its shape was that of a Yo-Yo seen from the side—two bowl shapes, the upper one inverted, joined by a short centre section. No one in the office had seen anything like it before.

"It's an aircraft catching the sunlight," said somebody at last. This was possible. Aircraft from the airport were taking off in that direction. The sun was slightly to one side and could be catching on and reflecting from the flying surfaces. But most people in the office were not satisfied. They were well aware of the strange atmospheric effects possible at times and this was unlike anything else they had experienced. And anyway, the object was not moving.

Not until almost ten minutes after Miss Manning had first seen it did the unidentified object vanish when obscured by a cumulus cloud. It had neither moved, nor diminished in size.

By this time about a dozen people had gathered in the office. They had all seen the phenomenon. A quick check revealed that radar had reported nothing in the area—nor had the control tower staff.

All the evidence seemed to point to a freak reflection of some type. But this did not satisfy those who had seen it. It was no reflection, they said. To them it was an Unidentified Flying Object—a UFO for short.

This strange event occurred at a time when there were many similar happenings. In April, a radar station at West Freugh, Scotland, reported a mysterious object which has remained unidentified. Mysterious explosions were heard over Epsom and Glasgow. Craters appeared but there was no sign of fragments or explosives. A little later, people living at Gravesend and Hendon, and many places in between, reported strange lights in the night sky performing strange antics. These are only a few of the reports which came in. All of them remain unexplained.

But some people had an explanation which fitted all these and many similar reports. They recalled a phenomenon which has been with us for the past ten years. These recent mysteries, said these people, could be explained away by Flying Saucers. Flying Saucers were back in the news again.

How it all started is, of course, a well-known story. In the year 1947, Kenneth Arnold, an American business man, was piloting his private aircraft in the region of Mount Rainier, Washington, when he saw a formation of strangely shaped objects. He estimated their speed as some 1,600 m.p.h.—fantastic at that time. Their motion he described as "saucers skipping across a pond." The press seized on this descrip-

tive phrase and so the Flying Saucer was born.

The fact that strange objects had been reported in the skies regularly ever since the turn of the century—and before—escaped most people's notice. 1947 became known, incorrectly, as the year when UFOs began.

Within weeks "saucers" had spread throughout the length and breadth of America. Reports came in from everywhere. The craze caught on in other countries—including Britain.

Now, in the short space of ten years, the saucer enigma has snowballed beyond expectation. Every known type of theorist has jumped on to the saucer bandwagon. Spiritualists, occultists, theosophists, professional forecasters of doom and many other mysterious persons have put forward their theories and explanations. Several have even claimed contact with beings from other worlds.

Between them these often well-meaning people have so be-fogged the UFO field with their astounding theories that it is small wonder that the general public is inclined to grin sceptically when Flying Saucers are mentioned.

This was the situation I found when I began an investigation into the UFO mystery for *RAF Flying Review*. My object was to discover whether the UFO was something peculiar to America or whether the same type of thing was happening in this country. I also wanted to find out whether the UFO was something which deserved to be laughed to scorn or whether it should be taken seriously.

It would be quite easy, I discovered, to pour ridicule on the whole proceed-

• This is an independent investigation into one of the greatest mysteries of our age. The views expressed are the personal conclusions of the writer after a long period of research.