



Shining discs (in left-hand top corner) seen by Scandinavian scientists in 1954. Still from a colour film taken by a member of the party

group of Scandinavian scientists were returning by air after observing an eclipse of the sun from the polar regions. They were on their way back, but still taking photographs of the sun, when their attention was taken by something else. Several shining disc-like objects appeared to be shadowing their aircraft. What they were, none of the scientists knew. They were no aircraft such as we know them and none of the scientists on the trip had ever seen anything like them.

And this year there have been a whole spate of sighting reports. One private researcher has collected 149 reports from Great Britain for the months of April and March alone. No doubt many of these could be discounted if a thorough investigation were made. But others remain a mystery.

Before any of these can be truly labelled "unidentified," however, a very thorough investigation must be made. The would-be investigator would have to know, among other things, the movements of all aircraft or balloons likely to have been in the area at the time. He would have to have a very sound knowledge of weather phenomena and astronomy—and of human nature.

But there are people willing to undertake this task. To find out who they are and how they go about the job, it is necessary once more to dip briefly back into saucer history.

In the early years soon after 1947, "saucer" clubs began to spring up all over the country. Their objects were not always well defined but generally it was to investigate saucer sightings.

Since this time there has been a general movement towards amalgamation and most clubs now regularly exchange views with others in this country and abroad. At the hub of all saucer activities in this country is the magazine, *Flying Saucer Review*.

### Inside a Saucer

This is a small, well-produced magazine which sells about 1,300 copies. It attempts to cater for all degrees of saucer fans and so it is not surprising to read in a recent issue, an article by a "high ranking Tibetan Lama" telling how he went for a ride in a Flying Saucer!

But it would be quite wrong to dismiss all readers and contributors of this magazine as cranks. The editor is the Hon. Brinsley le Poer Trench and he is far from the general public's idea of a Flying Saucer crank. Tall and amiable, Trench is, by an odd chance, a space salesman by profession. When he is not selling advertising space for another magazine,

he sells interplanetary space through *Flying Saucer Review*.

Trench admits that he is working on a "sticky wicket." He realises that many of his readers want to see "astounding saucer news" but, at the same time, he tries to keep reports of actual sightings as objective as possible.

Among his readers are some who act as investigators. These men Trench entrusts with the task of looking into sightings. Two such men are Jack Ibson, a Yorkshire business man, and Wilfred Daniels, a technical writer from Stafford.

These two, like most other of Trench's investigators, are enthusiastic about their task and believe implicitly in Flying Saucers. They also believe that they have an interplanetary origin. How far is this theory justified? Let Trench explain:

"UFOs have been timed," he says, "travelling at fantastic speeds, far in excess of anything earthmade. And, again, many UFOs have been seen performing manoeuvres, such as a right-angled turn at high speed, which would cause any normal material or crew to disintegrate under the excessive loads."

Prominent experts, such as Professor Hermann Oberth, the guided missiles expert, have also expressed these views. Oberth says: "My own explanation of UFOs is that they are machines built in some place other than on the Earth. I believe that they originate exclusively from outside the Earth because observations suggest that Flying Saucers are able to suppress the force of gravity, and I do not think that anyone on Earth has yet found the means to do so."

*But, if we grant the reality of these objects, then it seems to me that the interplanetary idea is only a theory. Admittedly, it seems the most likely one, but nowhere during my investigation did I come across evidence proving that Flying Saucers were interplanetary.*

One failing which appears to be general among the most enthusiastic of saucer fans, is lack of a critical approach to their subject. Bear in mind the deceptive nature of human observation and the many atmospheric freaks that are possible, and it is easier to see how important it is to be critical.

A typical report received by Trench is that which came from Miss K. Connor, a member of the Royal Observer Corps, who lives at Truro, Cornwall. Last October, while on a ROC exercise, Miss Connor and her crew saw a UFO.

"The object appeared as a small, silver round one like a ball," said Miss Connor in her report. "Then it turned sideways and was seen to be oblong. The side away from the sun glowed pink and a sort of translucent blue." Estimated height was 45-50,000 feet. The UFO appeared to be "standing still against the wind" and disappeared when it rose into the upper haze.

Trench regards this as a good and reliable sighting. Admittedly Miss Connor should be a reliable observer and

I have no doubt that she reported exactly what she saw. But the great question of what this was remains unanswered. It could have been a weather balloon. *Flying Saucer Review* made no attempt to investigate this possibility. But, without official co-operation it would have been difficult to do so.

But not all UFO investigators lack criticism. There are many people investigating the mystery who prefer to remain in the background. They feel that the subject tends to be ridiculed by the general public and prefer to carry out their work on their own without publicity. Some of these people are scientists.

Men like Doctor Clifford Thornton, a 37-year-old doctor of philosophy who works as a scientific and statistical consultant. He also runs a business which specialises in developing special equipment for mineral prospecting. Dr. Thornton, of Hampstead, London, is a short, perky man who walks with a limp acquired while serving with the Armoured Corps during the war. One of his great interests is gravity. Through this he was brought into touch with Flying Saucers, although he is one of the many who abhor this term for UFOs.

### Gravity Theory

In 1950 Thornton wrote a thesis entitled "The Unified Field Theory" which dealt with many aspects of gravity which had never before been examined. This had a great success and is still used in many universities all over the world by students in this field of research. It was in 1950, too, that he first became interested in UFOs. "Many aspects of this phenomenon," he says, "have a very close bearing to my work on gravity."

His first delving into the literature written on the subject of UFOs was not encouraging. He still has no hesitation in describing all of it as "science fiction." He makes one exception. This is the book "The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects," by Edward Ruppelt, one-time head of the USAF "Project Blue-Book" investigation into the mystery. This book is, indeed, one reliable volume on the subject. It does not state that UFOs are interplanetary, but it is the most convincing book ever written to prove that they exist.

Since 1950 Thornton has himself reached the conclusion that UFOs exist. He has done more. Helped by many friends, some of them scientists like himself, he has been able to classify these objects into fourteen different categories. They range from small "saucers" only ten inches in diameter, to huge, cigar-shaped objects up to a mile in length. These never descend lower than the very fringes of our atmosphere.

Dr. Thornton has also found out that UFOs have a periodic frequency and that sightings reach a peak every 24 years. It was in early March that he told me that we could expect a crop of sightings towards the end of May. The recent spate of reports has shown how right he was.

"There is no positive evidence that UFOs come from outer space," says Thornton, "but all the available evidence seems to indicate that they do not come from this earth."

If pressed, he will advance the theory that UFOs may come from a solar system other than our own. "Our sun is a very

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