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EXTRATERRESTRIALS ON EARTH

SUMMARY

The presence or absence of extraterrestrials is a subject on which there is considerable empirical evidence. This evidence may not be considered decisive but it certainly exists. It is a body of about 100 000 reports of UFOs. While most of these have low reliability and low strangeness, the author believes that enough reports have come from people with sufficient training and credibility to warrant further investigation. Three important reports are summarized. The problems associated with further investigations are discussed.

Douglas (1), Hart (2) and others have discussed the question of whether Earth has been visited by extraterrestrials (intelligent beings from outer space) as though there were no observational evidence on the matter. However, during the past 30 years, over the whole world, there have been about 100 000 reports of UFO sightings. Many initial reports may be filtered out as being hoaxes or misidentifications of known phenomena. In Australian experience (3) approximately 20 per cent remain and are truly unidentified flying objects. Of these true UFOs, approximately 65 per cent have more than one witness (15 per cent have five or more witnesses), and about 10 per cent come from experienced people of high integrity such as Police Officers and Meteorological Officers. Moser (4) lists 68 sightings reported by Astronomers. Bearing in mind that it will only require one authentic report of an extraterrestrial visitation to refute the negative assumption of Hart, it is only necessary to consider those sightings which have high credibility and high strangeness (5). Thus it may be worthwhile to outline here the three sightings which the author considers, after an extensive survey of the literature, to be most significant:

- (1) 1957. Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico (6, 7)
- (2) 1959. Papua sighting by the Rev. B.Gill and companions (5, 8)
- (3) 1961. Betty and Barney Hill, map (9).

At Kirtland US, Air Force Base, two air-traffic controllers claim to have seen an object three metres wide and six metres tall fly onto the base and hover for tens of seconds at a height of a few metres. It then flew across the base and climbed into the clouds at a speed of about Mach 1. The object apparently was tracked on radar by other personnel during the visual sighting, and after visual contact was lost, was followed by radar when it performed more curious manoeuvres. Details of the radar observations are difficult to verify as they were not recorded at the time.

In Papua, the head of the Anglican Mission at Boainai, the Reverend Bruce Gill, with various mission staff and natives, watched several

illuminated discs for several hours on several evenings. The clouds and surrounding hills set limits on distances of the discs, and Venus was noted separately. The discs were seen very clearly, and Gill and his companions claim that the discs appeared to have on board some figures that moved about.

The Betty and Barney Hill case is especially interesting astronomically. In 1964, Betty Hill drew post-hypnotically a map which she claimed was a rough copy of a map inside a spaceship on which she and her husband were abducted, and which purported to show 12 trade route stars and 20 background stars. Subsequently, Marjorie Fish found a projection of the three-dimensional positions of our 12 nearest single dwarf stars in the spectral range F6–K1 which fits the Hill trade route stars remarkably well. Furthermore, on the same projection, other stars appear which correspond to some of Hill's background stars, whose accurate positions were not published until 1969 in Gliese's *Catalog of Nearby Stars*. The statistical likelihood of the coincidence of the Fish and Hill maps by chance is not clear.

Thus there is evidence that we are being visited, but the evidence is poor. The main problem with UFOs, is, that like quarks and total solar eclipses before they were understood, they are difficult to make into reproducible observations.

The size of the problem can be seen from the statistics of reported sightings. Taking the USAF project bluebook as an example: there, 10 000 reports were received from 10^7 km² in 20 years, with a mean sighting duration of ten minutes. If we assume that 10 per cent of all sightings were reported to the USAF and that only 10 per cent of all sightings were non-trivial misidentifications and hoaxes, this gives a density of true UFOs of 1 per 2×10^4 km² years. Consider then the problem of recording one of these sightings, say with an array of 2×10^3 cameras, each photographing an area of 10 km² once every ten minutes for a year. On the above figures, a UFO would appear on only one out of the 10^8 pictures produced. Searching these pictures would be a formidable problem.

It seems therefore that we are left with having to continue to investigate current and past reports. This requires the gathering of extra evidence and sifting out the irrelevant hoaxes and misidentifications. This is a demanding occupation requiring cross-disciplinary expertise with a strong grounding in astronomy. It is unfortunate that, on such a fundamental subject, work is currently left mainly to enthusiastic but untrained amateurs.

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An annual lecture has been founded under the auspices of Wadham College, Oxford, as a memorial to the late Professor E.A.Milne, FRS, Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics at Oxford, and Fellow of Wadham College.

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