

# A Landing at Puits-d'Edme

Henry-Jean Besset

This contribution was first published in *Phénomènes Spatiaux*, the quarterly bulletin of *Groupeement d'Etude de Phénomènes Aériens (GEPA)*,\* No. 26 for December 1970. Translation by John C. Hugill.

THE *Yonne Republicaine* and the *Dépêches de Bourgogne* of August 20, 1970, reported that a mysterious machine had landed at Puits d'Edme in the commune of Joux-la-Ville, near Avallon (Yonne).

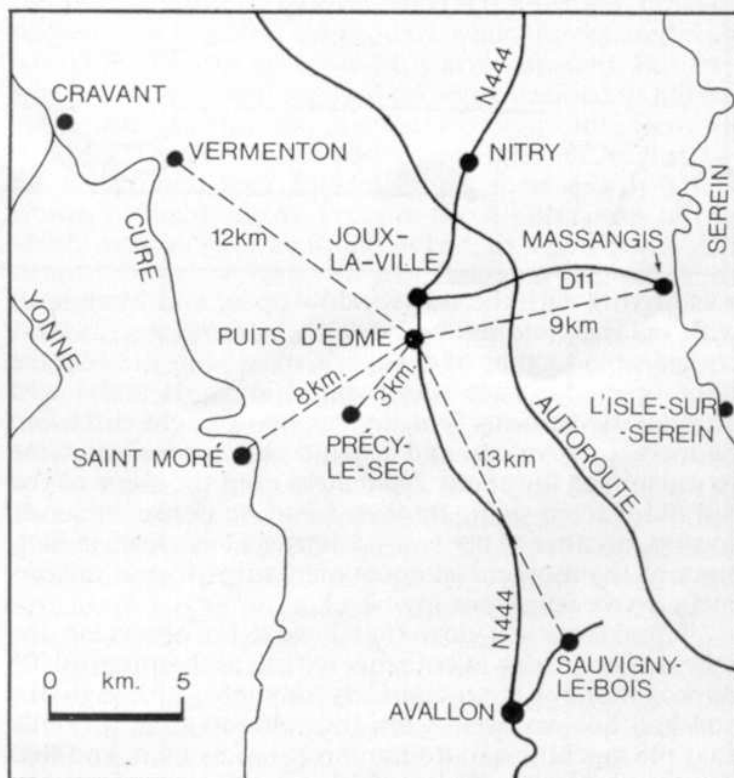
Next day, the same two papers, plus the *Bien Public*, denied the story and explained that the witness had been misled by the return to earth of a radio-sonde balloon, which had been recovered 6 kilometres from the presumed landing site.

On holiday not far away, Guy Quincy, the author of the well-known list of landings so often referred to by Jacques Vallée in *Passport to Magonia*, was in a position to visit the witness, inspect the site, and examine the remains of the balloon. Independently of him, I had also met the witness and had initiated enquiries with various bodies, notably the National Meteorological Office. When I learned of M. Quincy's work, I could only conclude that the official explanation was no more satisfactory to him than it was to me and that, on the contrary, there was reason to suppose that the witness had seen something very unusual resting there on the ground.

## The witness' story

Patrick Carré is 19. He lives with his parents at Joux-la-Ville but works 17 kilometres away at Avallon as a trainee pharmacist. Though he lives in the country, M. Carré looks and behaves more like a city-dweller. Here is what he told me about the events of the night of August 17, 1970:

"That Sunday evening I stayed in Avallon until late. After a nap of a couple of hours between 0100 and 0300, I still hadn't made up my mind to return to Joux, so I went round to see a friend of mine who is a pump attendant at an all-night filling station. I kept him company for maybe an hour and a half, and then at about 0445 got into my Citroen 2CV to drive back to Joux by way of the R.N.444.<sup>1</sup> Just before I got there I slowed down, partly to pass through the hamlet of Puits-d'Edme, and also because of the bends just before the final descent into Joux. So I was doing about 40 km/h (25 mph)—I had changed down to third gear—when I saw in my headlights, on the left of the road and a few metres from it, and about 300 metres from the village, a brilliant object partly masked by a walnut tree which grows at that spot. A few split seconds later I was right beside the machine, and I can state quite definitely that it was a machine. It consisted of two parts: the top

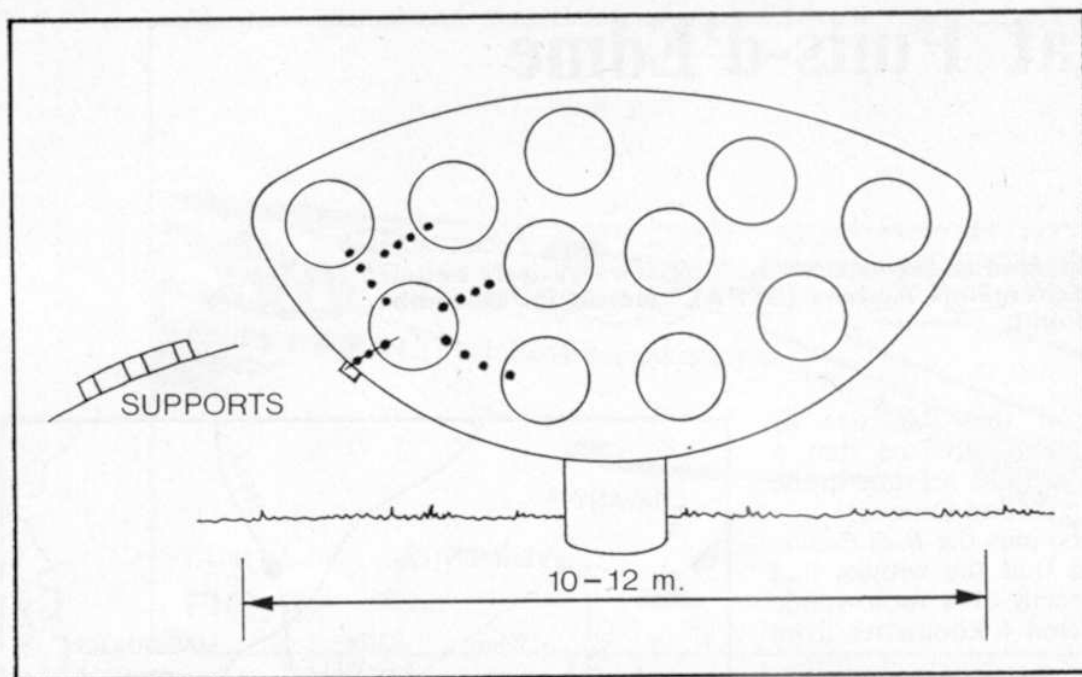


half, hemispherical and exactly the shape of a pudding basin, looked like metal, and had a metallic grey colour. Its greatest diameter was 10-12 metres, and it was 4 metres high.

"The lower part, on which the 'basin' rested, consisted of a perfectly cylindrical column about 80 cms. in diameter and 1 metre high (see sketch). This 'support' was rust coloured and looked like singed metal. However, the most curious detail of this machine was a series of round white discs about 40 centimetres in diameter, irregularly scattered around the sides of the 'basin'. I could not get a good view of the top of the machine because of its height and so could not be sure whether it too was furnished with these 'discs'. They stood away a good 10 centimetres from the main structure on which I could see the discs' shadows, and to which they were fixed by a network of 'hooks', or rather, supports, which seemed to be more regularly spaced. It was as if, on a regular network of supports, the discs had been placed at random, each disc occupying 4 or 5 supports, with others visible in between the discs.

"I had to take in all these details pretty quickly as I drew abreast of the machine, since my surprise, and above all the intense heat, made it impossible to stop. I

\* Edited by René Fouéré, 69 rue de la Tombe-Issoire, Paris 14e, France.



Based on M. Carré's sketch of the object. The insert ("supports") shows how the discs stood off from the body

was driving with the side window open, and when level with the machine the heat I felt was terrifying, at least comparable to that of a baker's oven with the furnace door open. My face was covered in sweat and I was particularly anxious that my car hood might catch fire or melt. I drove on, and I could still see the machine in my mirror for about 200 metres until the slope of the hill hid it from sight. By then I had no desire whatever to stop, because of my fear—a retrospective fear, in fact, since at the moment of encounter, surprise and amazement drove fear from my mind.

"I told you just now that I went on observing the machine in my driving mirror; in fact, at that hour (0505 approximately) it was already daylight, although the sun had not yet risen. I am thus able to state formally that the machine had no luminosity of its own, and that it was only my headlights which made it shine. I can say too that it appeared completely motionless, and apparently noiseless as far as I could judge, having regard to the high noise level which prevails inside a 2 CV.

"So I went on my way, and as I covered the last kilometre into Joux, I came to realise the strangeness of what I had seen, and also that, without a witness to corroborate my story, no one would ever believe me. So I parked by the roadside and waited for another car to come from the same direction. After a quarter of an hour, I saw a Peugeot 204 and waved to it to stop, but the driver was going as if the devil himself were after him (maybe he was getting away from that spot, like me!): he didn't stop, and unfortunately I couldn't get his number. So I went and woke up my grandmother to tell her the story, still keeping my ears open for another car, but, during the quarter of an hour we were talking I didn't hear one. When I finished my story, I went to bed and to sleep.

#### Suggested explanations and a criticism thereof

"Next morning my grandmother told the mayor, and in the afternoon we revisited the site. We saw traces of burning and, most important, about 10 metres from the

road, a circle of flattened and withered grass 80-100 centimetres in diameter.<sup>2</sup> This circle was at the exact spot where I had calculated the base of the machine had been. Later on, I met Christian Hivard. During the same night he had been walking back from Saint Moré<sup>3</sup> to Précy-le-Sec where he was on holiday, and about 0515, just before reaching this spot, he saw an orange ball moving through the sky. We discussed this together, and the ball he saw in the sky may have been the same object I saw on the ground. Later still, the police showed me some fragments of the balloon which was found at Massangis, and there was absolutely no resemblance to what I had seen."

If Patrick Carré's story was believed by his family, and, it should be added, taken seriously by his boss, it was on the other hand the target of much incredulous laughter in the village, and, to begin with, among those to whom it meant, if not actual worry, at least the upsetting of daily routine. These latter included the mayor, the owner of the field, and the police.

The mayor, on that Monday afternoon, accompanied Patrick Carré to the site and had to admit the traces left—the burned plastic bags and the circle of withered grass. As his wife said to me: "He couldn't argue with the young man", but he refused from the first to see in these traces anything at all unnatural. He went and fetched M. Leblanc, the owner of the field; the latter, furious at all the publicity about his land, soon settled the question of the marks. He himself had burned some empty nitrate sacks, since these being plastic do not disintegrate naturally like the old paper ones. Patrick Carré does not contest his explanation, particularly as the burning of such sacks is normal practice. It should be noted that plastic does not burn, properly speaking, but melts, hardens, or shrivels up. The sacks in question, however, were burned to ashes.

Where M. Carré does not see eye to eye with M. Leblanc is in the latter's explanation of the circle of withered grass, whereby he accounts for it as follows: when the spreader, into which had just been emptied the sacks referred to earlier, was set in motion, a heavy

concentration fell on that particular spot, before the movement of the machine made the distribution lighter and more even. It was this heavy concentration of fertiliser which would have burned the grass at that spot. Unfortunately M. Carré does not mention *burned* grass, but speaks only of *withered* grass; again, such a regular circle is unlikely to have been made by accident.

Finally, if, in certain cases, excess nitrate of soda is capable of burning grass, it needs a certain amount of time to take effect. However, it appears that the fertiliser spreading only took place a few days before.

As for the police, they have two arguments for explaining M. Carré's sighting as a partially deflated radio-sonde balloon. These are RN 444 and the Massangis balloon.

RN 444 is a busy road, they say, and it is very surprising that no one else should have reported seeing what M. Carré saw. However, RN 444 between Avallon and Tonnerre is primarily used by local traffic which is by definition daytime traffic. For through traffic, it competes with RN 6, ten kilometres to the west, and Autoroute A 6, five kilometres to the east. Under these circumstances, there is nothing astonishing about its being deserted by night, especially as the Nitry branch road, with which it connects, and which might have produced some more traffic for it, is closed from midnight to 0700!

We should also note that, if no one else saw the object described by Patrick Carré, no more did anyone report having seen a semi-deflated radio-sonde balloon.

#### Attitude of the witness and assessment of material evidence

It is therefore plain that the arguments advanced by the local authorities to reduce M. Carré's sighting to an encounter with a semi-deflated radio-sonde balloon are not convincing. However, if we are to accept his evidence, we have to assess the material and psychological elements which together make up his story. Let us start with the latter.

I have met Patrick Carré, and it would be superfluous and even slightly insulting to say that I found him to be normal. He told me he had never previously experienced anything like this, neither had any of his family and friends. He had never read a UFO book or magazine, nor even any science fiction. He freely admits that he reads very little. These days, there is nothing extraordinary in someone of his age staying up so late, particularly in summer in Avallon where A 6 makes things nearly as lively at night as it is during the day. Further, M. Carré was alone in the house at that time, and knew that as a pharmacist he did not have to work on a Monday, and would have plenty of time to recover from an almost sleepless night.

"I was in no way pre-occupied, I wasn't thinking of anything in particular, and I assure you I was perfectly sober," he told me.

The route he chose was the best one to his home. Equally, to slow down through Puits-d'Edme and the series of corners is absolutely natural, and there is nothing more plausible than that Patrick Carré, even at 40 kilometres per hour, should have driven briskly past the point where the landing occurred.

As to the traces of the occurrence, these corresponded

perfectly with his previous statements. The mayor, the police, and several others were able to bear this out. Equally, Patrick Carré stated that it was light, although the sun had not yet risen. This we find to be perfectly correct. The P.T.T. almanac gives the time of sunrise on August 17, 1970, as 0547, French time, thus 35-40 minutes after the incident, so that one may well suppose that it was already fairly light at 0505. This also effectively disposes of any tentative solutions involving the disc or the rays of the sun.

As to the balloon, this was really providential, and its acrobatic and touristic behaviour something to marvel at. Aerobatic it certainly was, for it obstinately disobeyed the normal laws of nature, since the normally inflated portion was touching the ground, while the deflated part fell limply on top of it (see M. Carré's sketch). But this was not all: this balloon had certainly decided to have a good look round the Yonne! Was it not seen on August 10 at St. Moré,<sup>4</sup> and a week later on August 17, on the ground near Puits-d'Edme, then shortly afterwards, in flight, above Précy-le-Sec 4 kilometres to the south-west, only to be found at last, at death's door, on August 20 in the forest of Massangis, 6 kilometres to the east?

The course attributed to the balloon is even more odd, since on the night in question the National Meteorological Office recorded the wind, feeble enough in all conscience (5 kilometres per hour), as blowing generally from the south-west! That is to say, as much opposed to the direction Joux-Massangis as to that from Joux to Précy . . . As to the size of the balloon, the Met. Office gives a diameter of 2.7-3.0 metres, figures which are hard to reconcile. Further, this is very much a standard article; this type of balloon, often seen, has no sort of provision for automatically deflating it when it comes to earth, contrary to what the Isle-Sérain police pretended. Designed for one trip only, its envelope—which Mr. Quincy recovered a sample—is very easily torn, and once punctured, the balloon is inescapably grounded and certainly could not travel a further 6 kilometres.

\* \* \*

There has apparently been no sequel to the incident. M. Carré's car is working normally and shows no sign of burning.<sup>5</sup> His watch works perfectly. As for the man himself, he was a little nervy next day, but since then has slept well. He has felt no ill effects of any kind whatsoever. He has had no importunate telephone calls or letters.

#### NOTES

1. Route Nationale 444 (Michelin map 65, fold 6) is both the most direct and the only convenient main road connecting Avallon and Joux. It passes through two market towns, Lucy and Thory. Its course is a succession of very long straights and very sharp zig-zags crossing the undulations of this hilly region.

2. Diameter of the circle 80-100 cms. Distance between the centre of the circle and the edge of the road 10 metres. According to Patrick Carré the machine's radius was 5-6 metres, which places it just about where he said he saw it.

3. Saint Moré, which is on Route Nationale 6, with its late-opening bars and lively atmosphere, is a natural attraction to a young city-dweller on holiday at Précy-le-Sec (pop.

(continued on page 12)

# Unusual Sky Phenomena in 1852-53

Alan R. Warwick

SOME time ago I was searching through a collection of ancient copies of the *Illustrated London News* when I chanced upon a number of items which could be of interest to readers of *Flying Saucer Review*.

The reports are of observations of unusual sky phenomena. Not for a moment do I claim that they were of UFOs, but there is just a possibility that they could have been in that category. I do suggest, however, that in view of the existence of these reports, some attention should be devoted by UFO researchers to the years 1852 and 1853. It is just possible that there could have been a minor UFO wave at that time.

The first item appeared in a letter to the Editor of the *Illustrated London News*, and was signed by a Mr. G.F.L. of Holyhead, Anglesey, on August 13, 1852. The letter appeared in page 150 of the issue for August 21, 1852. It ran:

"I beg to call your attention to an extraordinary meteoric appearance in the heavens which occurred in this neighbourhood on the evening of the 12th instant. At 9.20 p.m. (Greenwich Time), my attention was suddenly attracted by what appeared to be a peculiarly vivid flash of lightning, and on turning towards the S.S.W., the direction whence it came, I saw a magnificent body of meteoric light, of the form shown in Fig. 1a, the colour being a most beautiful and intense blue.

"It occupied at least a fourth part of the visible heavens, inclining towards the earth at an angle of 45 degrees, and lasted for thirty or forty seconds, gradually diminishing in width to a narrow streak of light, the length remaining the same as when I first saw it (Fig. 1b).

Just previous to its fading away it became fluttering and wavy (Fig. 1c). The sky at that time was clear and cloudless, and a fresh breeze blowing from the N.N.W. I am, etc., G.F.L."

There followed an editorial footnote to the above letter:

"Mr. Glaisher, F.R.S. would be glad if observers of this meteor would furnish him with their accounts—particularly noting its path among the stars, its elevation at the time of its appearance and disappearance, etc.—directed to 13 Dartmouth Terrace, Lewisham, Kent."

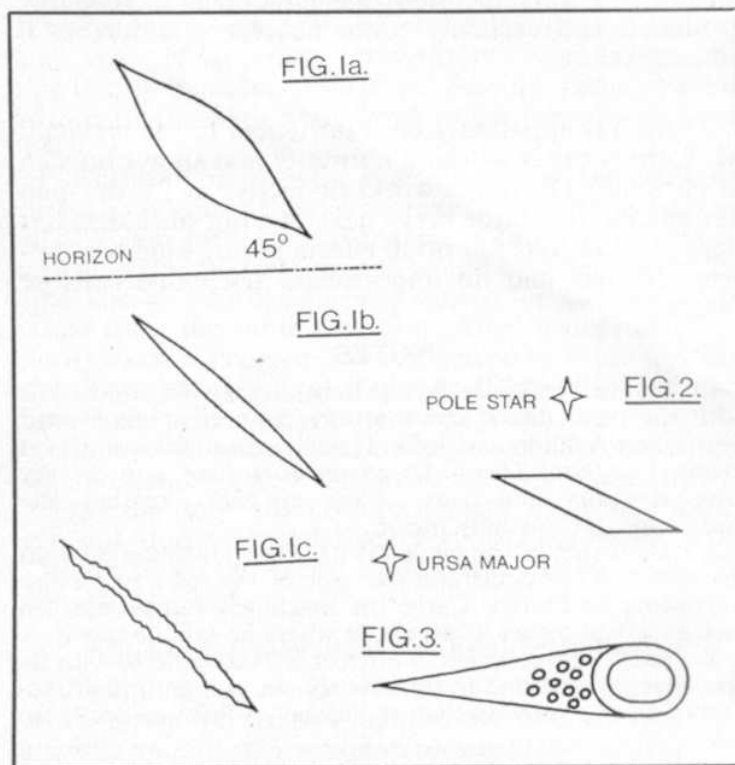
A second letter containing a report of what may well have been the same "object", was published on the same page of the *Illustrated London News* for August 21, 1852. It appeared under the heading **Extraordinary Meteor**. It was signed by a Mr. R.W. of Stoke, Sub-Hamdon, Near Yeovil, Somerset, on August 13, 1852:

"A meteor of an extraordinary appearance was seen here last night (August 12) at about 9.20 Greenwich time, to which my attention was directed by a very brilliant flash, as of lightning; and immediately turning my eyes to the north, the body of the meteor (if any) had disappeared, having left a brilliant mass of light about 15 degrees in length, of which I send you a Diagram. This continued visible for nearly ten minutes, gradually fading but (what I consider most remarkable) it resolved into two or more distinct bodies nearly of the apparent magnitude of the planet Saturn, which remained so long visible that I almost doubted if they were not stars in that precise spot which I had not noticed. They, however, became less and less visible and had disappeared in about 10 minutes after. I hope to find that this meteor has been noticed by other observers in distant parts of the world, and its place correctly marked, which may lead to a calculation of its distance, etc.,—R.W." (See Fig. 2).

The heading "Extraordinary meteor" was quite popular in 1852-1853, for it was also given to our third report which was published in *Illustrated London News* for November 12, 1853 (page 410):

"One of those beautiful and extraordinary wonders of the heavens—a large and brilliant Meteor—passed over the northern parts of the county of Nottingham, on the afternoon of Friday the 28th October, and was witnessed by a great number of the inhabitants; had it not been for the broad daylight, it would have appeared one of the most luminous meteors that has been witnessed for many years.

"When first seen at Retford about four minutes past four p.m. it was somewhat to the westward and moving at an immense velocity from the S.W. into the N.E. Its course was not altogether direct, but somewhat serpentine; in size it was nearly that of the horizontal full moon, and considerably brighter than the moon appears whilst the sun is above the horizon. The general appearance was that of a luminous ball, nearly globular,



(Continued on page 14)