

THE VANCOUVER ISLAND PHOTOGRAPH

Gordon Creighton

THIS photograph, which was reportedly taken in October 1981 on the north-eastern coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Western Canada, came to us in October 1982 in a letter from FSR reader and correspondent W. K. (Bill) Allan of Kelowna, B.C.

Details of the Occurrence and of the Photographer

Mrs Hannah McRoberts (aged 25) of 247 Wayne Road, Campbell River, British Columbia, was with her family at a rest-area some thirty miles to the north of Kelsey Bay on the east coast of Vancouver Island, from October 10 to 15, 1981. During this five-day period she says she took a number of pictures of her family and of the local scenery, using her 35 mm. Mamiya camera with a 50-55 mm. lens, 125 speed, and ASA 100 film.

At one point during the holiday they observed that one of the mountain-peaks was surmounted by a cloud somewhat suggestive, as they described it, of "a volcano issuing steam", so Mrs McRoberts snapped that as well. *None of the party noticed anything else in the air at the time*, and the presence of the UFO was therefore only discovered by them when the prints and negatives came back to them after processing.

The resulting photograph shows an object to the right of and above the peak and the plume of cloud. This photo came to the attention of Mr David A. C. Powell of Vancouver, who is on the staff of the MacMillan Planetarium in that city, who in turn contacted Bill Allan and provided him with an enlargement, and also got in contact with APRO of Tucson, Arizona, the respected American UFO investigation group who claim now to be the oldest in the world.

In the meantime, Mr W. K. Allan was able to speak with Mrs Hannah McRoberts, and to interview her on a CKOV Kelowna open line radio programme, in the course of which he formed the opinion that her story was entirely genuine and that what we have here is therefore a "legitimate classical-type UFO photo."

(The place where Mrs McRoberts says she took her photograph lies incidentally, some 450 kms. or so to the north-west of Mount Rainier in the U.S. State of Washington, where, as readers will recall, Kenneth Arnold claimed on June 24, 1947, to have seen his famous flight of nine saucers moving in formation at 1,200 m.p.h. and at an altitude of 10,000 ft. over the Cascade Range.)

The Examination of the Prints in U.K. and U.S.A.

Very wisely indeed, in view of past experience

(what a story there is to be told, one day, about the interceptions of UFO photos and UFO reports from the public mails — and all over the world!) Mr Allan had arranged that the negative of this photograph should remain very firmly in the hands of Mrs McRoberts herself.

APRO had meanwhile passed their prints of the picture to one of their most eminent specialist consultants, Dr James Harder, who is the Professor of Engineering in the University of California at Berkeley, and he and APRO agreed too that the negative should remain where it was.

Here in Britain we passed our copies of the prints to FSR's photographic consultant Mr Percy Hennel, who is generally regarded as the leading expert in this country in all matters where colour-photography is concerned.

The Verdict on the Prints

After careful scrutiny, Mr Hennel informs us that he would naturally have preferred to have the actual negative in hand for, as he warns, all kinds of hoaxes are possible, and do occur. Nevertheless, he says that he finds nothing dubious or suspicious about the picture, though he does warn us that, if the picture is indeed genuine, then the disc must have been of enormous size — several hundreds of feet wide — to have shown up so large at such a distance! (There have indeed been frequent reports, over the years, of discs estimated to be of such sizes — indeed in some cases of discs believed to be as much as 1,000 ft. in diameter, as for example in the confidential report which APRO published a good many years ago, and which they had received direct from the pilot and co-pilot of an American troop-carrying plane which, while en route from Tokyo to South Vietnam with a party of American soldiers, encountered two enormous metallic discs that flew on a parallel course with them for half an hour.)

The Verdict of Dr James Harder

We now see, from *APRO Bulletin*, Vol. 30, No. 12, that Dr James Harder submitted his report on the photo on November 4, 1982, and they give their own conclusion, which is as follows:—

"All this considered, the photo presented here appears to be an excellent and probably genuine photo of a classical disc photographed in daylight. Although unlikely, if further information and clarification is available, it will be presented in a future



The Vancouver Island photograph

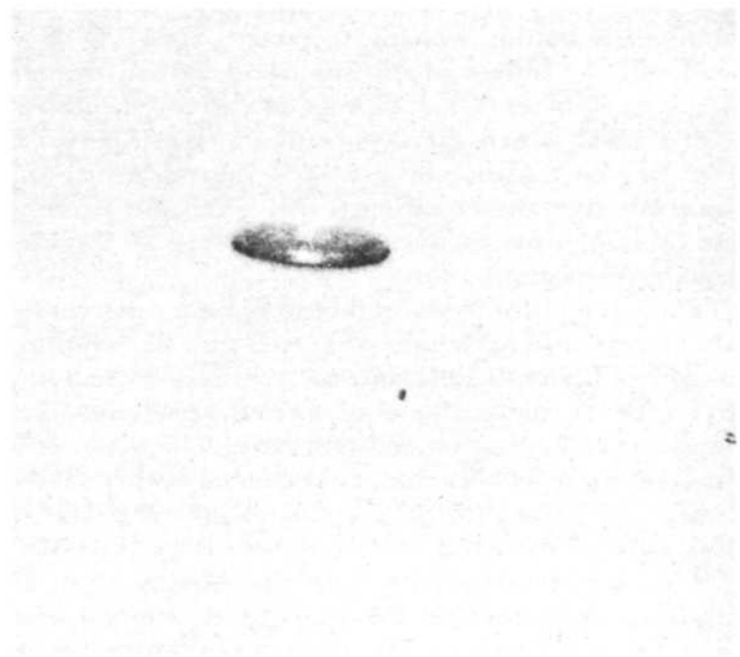
issue of the Bulletin."

In view of the obviously very great interest which this photo will evoke, I take the liberty of quoting in full Dr Harder's opinion as given in *APRO Bulletin* Vol. 30, No. 12:—

"Generally I feel that the best test of authenticity is in the good reputation of the photographer, insofar as it is impossible to prove a negative — in this case that there is no possibility of a fraud. However, some of the indicators of an authentic photograph can help establish likelihood of an authentic photo. These are:—

1. That the negative involved is one of a sequence of outdoor pictures and that the frame in question is not an isolated one. One way of producing a hoax is to re-photograph a positive print onto which has been pasted an addition. To do a good job of hoaxing then one would have to re-photograph an entire roll of negative film.
2. That there are no inconsistencies in the lighting of the strange object and the rest of the scene. In the subject photo, I note that the shadows in the lower left of the scene indicate a Sun position nearly behind the camera. There is a reflection on the forward face

of the UFO that is consistent with this Sun position. There also seems to be a bright spot under the UFO not connected with external lighting — maybe a light on the UFO.



The Vancouver Island UFO enlarged

3. With the right equipment, it is possible to make certain measurements of negative density of the UFO image and of other images of objects at estimated distances from the lens. Here the object is to show that the unknown is not nearby — and thus not a hubcap or other such object thrown into the air. The idea is to measure, from the image of the object at a known distance, the atmospheric 'extinction coefficient'. On a clear day, with a low value, contrasts between dark shadowed areas and brightly lit areas retain their distinction over greater distances. On hazy days, the light and dark areas blend towards a mid-range shade, giving the appearance that distant mountains have of being one shade of grey. Nearby shadows can show their true darkness, as opposed to the lighter shade of distant shadows. But in this picture there are no nearby shadows to serve as a standard, only shadows of trees in the lower left bottom.

It has been alleged that edges become fuzzy at greater distances and that this can help distinguish nearby objects from those far away. I know of no theoretical reason for this based on the optical properties of the atmosphere, but will ask Jim Lorenzen if we have a consultant who could be more sure of this. After all, we do take remarkably clear

pictures from space with no trouble from edge-blurring of objects on the ground, and that is through 14.7 lbs. per square inch of air in the path.

So proving authenticity is likely to be elusive, insofar as there is only the evidence of internal consistency to go on. I wish I could be more positive, but then there is so much evidence of other sorts for the reality of UFOs that we shouldn't have to add to it excepting for those who are beyond believing anyway."

POSTSCRIPT

In a further letter from Mr W. K. Allan, he comments on Dr Harder's reference to the fact that Mrs McRoberts' photo is one of a sequence of outdoor pictures, and says: "It is unfortunate that the importance of keeping the individual exposures on the roll unseparated was not fully realized, *but when I saw the negative it was still unseparated from one of the family snaps.*"

With regard to the lady who took the photograph of this UFO, Mr Allan goes on to say: "*What is of great importance to me is the fact that Hannah McRoberts is the niece of one of Canada's leading nuclear engineers, a man in charge of a multi-billion dollar electrical generating complex, whom I have known continuously since his attendance in my class at Western Canada High School in Calgary, Alberta.*"

ANOTHER BRITISH "CLOSE ENCOUNTER" NEAR READING

JUST a few days ago, as she was driving along a country road in Berkshire, not many miles from London, a young woman secretary, aged 26, who works in the offices of an important British firm in Reading, had the "classic" type of "close encounter" with a UFO which she says came down and hovered over her car. Although her own impression at the time was that the experience was brief and fleeting, she subsequently discovered that some 15-20 minutes remain unaccounted for.

The young lady, who wishes to remain anonymous (the names and addresses of herself and her employers are on file with FSR) has no recollection of having gone aboard the craft, or of having seen any occupants, or of having indeed seen any door open. It is however most curious that, as she noted on her sketch of the UFO, she "thinks she knows how the door of the craft opened."

This strange impression, plus the missing 15 or 20 minutes, may possibly be thought to suggest that there are good grounds for suspecting that the young lady was indeed aboard the UFO.

EDITOR

The young lady's report

"At 6.15 a.m. on Friday, October 14, 1983, I was driving in a north-westerly direction, towards Reading, along the 327. It was still dark and misty. There were fields on both sides. No houses in sight.

"When between Arborfield and Shinfield, I became aware of a bright light in the sky, first on the left hand side of the road and then on the right. My first thought was that it must be an aeroplane or a helicopter. However, after it had moved over on to my right hand side, it appeared to be standing quite still. I looked at the car clock. It was 6.15 a.m. exactly. Just after I had done this, *the car lights and car radio went off (reception on the radio had been very bad that morning — which was quite unusual). The object then got lower in the sky — coming towards the car in circular motions. The car stopped, but I cannot remember whether I stopped it or not.*

"When the object got nearer, I realised that it was not an aeroplane or helicopter. The light was incredible — it lit up the road. The object had a large green light on the left side and a purple light on the right.