

the scene, leaving the field for a new and more open-minded younger generation.

So, at this unlikely time, we have chosen to launch our new *FSR Case Histories* as we are badly in need of space to carry the wealth of material which at present comes our way. This is our further

contribution to the task in hand, and we ask you all for your unstinted support.

#### NOTES

- 1) Editorial article, *FSR* Vol. 16, No. 3 (May-June).
- 2) *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects* (Bantam Books, New York, in association with the *New York Times*).

# THE AVEYRON ENQUIRY—1

By *F. Lagarde*

Investigated by **G. Canourges, J. Chasseigne, F. Dupin de la Guérivière and F. Lagarde** of the "Lumières dans la Nuit" organisation. Our contributor is one of the editors of the organisation's journal, in which this report is currently appearing. Translated by **John C. Hugill**.

**I**N November 1969 we received a long letter containing some rather remarkable information. Doctor Dupin de la Guérivière, one of our investigators, was detailed to make enquiries on the spot. He sent us his report, including numerous photographs, the ordnance survey map, and various supplementary details. After studying it, it seemed to us that while the original story was founded on fact, there were gaps in it which the report had been unable to fill. Further enquiries were needed which our investigator, a very busy man, was unable to undertake.

We told our expert adviser, M. Aimé Michel, about these unaccustomed facts. He judged them to be very important, if authenticated, and asked us to follow them up. Faced with this dilemma, we decided on personal intervention, and to speed matters still further asked two other investigators to join us. The story you are about to read is not a one-man enquiry, but one in which each investigator asked his own questions, made his own deductions and approved the way in which the facts were presented. It is the result of a combination of sighting reports, on the spot sketches, documents unearthed in the Town Hall, photographs, and above all—the bones of the whole thing — tape-recorded interviews lasting for 1½ hours.\*

We have also tried to stick as closely as possible to the dialogue, in an effort to re-create local colour, and keep the tale as natural as it can be.

As Aimé Michel wished, strict instructions were left with the witnesses, and with the two local investigators. At the express wish of the interested parties, their anonymity will be preserved. To our great regret, no names will be given which might betray the site; the witnesses wish to live in peace. Our readers will excuse this. Besides, the enquiry is still going on, in the investigation of other evidence which may confirm this story.

\*During a recent visit to France, I had the pleasure—with an expert translator by my side, which was as well, in view of the witnesses' accent of the South of France—of listening to these tape recordings—EDITOR.

Two of the illustrations accompanying this article were produced by us. All the others are the work of M. J. L. Boncoeur, Professor of Artistic Design, and taken from documents, photographs, sketches, and other details furnished by witnesses in the course of the enquiry.

It all happened somewhere in Aveyron, on the approaches to one of the many farms there are in the neighbourhood. This one is old, built in 1766, and its stone walls are thick. It has an upper storey where the living quarters are, and which commands an extensive view. The ten rooms are huge, the windows facing mainly south, with narrower ones looking west and north. To the south of the main building is a courtyard with outbuildings on three sides (barns and stables). To the east, a main entrance, leading to the road. To the west, a secondary entrance, also leading to the road by a cart track.

It is a modest holding, based mainly on raising veal calves, and also grass, maize, wheat, oats and barley, with a small patch of vines to produce wine for family use. In short, a farm like so many others in the Mid-Pyrénées region.

The sights witnessed by this agricultural family, who as M. Delphieux wrote, "know what they see, and know nothing of fear", follow one another in such numbers that they are the cause of confusion about the sequence of events which includes even the witnesses themselves, who had some difficulty in remembering the correct order in which things occurred, not having noted or dated them at the time.

#### The story begins

It is about 21.30 on June 15, 1966. The old grandmother it was, 76 years old and devoted to her grandchildren, who from the window of her room on the first floor was the first to give the alert. She told her story in a lively, well-expressed manner, in the French of our countryside, often

spiced with local patois as her emotions were roused by re-living her experience for us.

In order to let the reader share this, as far as was possible at this interview, we have preserved all the freshness of her replies (patois excepted). Italic type indicates the questions asked by one or other of us, or explanations supplied to others. The Midi accent, alas, cannot be reproduced, greatly as we regret it.

*"Granny, tell us what you saw that evening. . ."*

"I was at the window—just for a moment—because sometimes at my age you need a breath of air wherever you are. But never have I seen lights like that, nor things like that! They weren't just lights—they were fires! Fires! Fires!"

*"Did you see several of them at that moment?"*

"At that moment—well now . . . 'twere a bit bigger than three times a man's head."

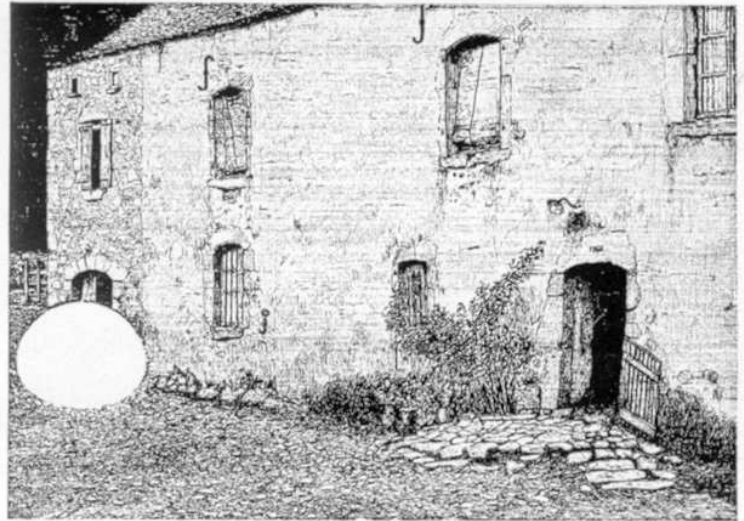
*"You saw three?"* asked another. *"But wasn't it far away at that moment?"*

"Oh yes, they were over by X at that moment," (*X on the map is 1 km away; at first the objects were further away, about 1200 m., then they came closer, over X . . . to Y . . . which is 800 m. away. X is due west from the farm on a nearby hill*). The witness continued: "Then they went over towards Y . . . I said to myself, look they've got a fire over at Y! I dunno—it was moving off . . . I didn't lose sight of it. I didn't notice any change, but one could see this light, and finally it came a bit closer . . . over by the little brook at . . ." (*the spheres were coming lower, distance verified on the map at 600 m.*).

"But then I said 'We shan't see anything more.' Then all of a sudden it came a bit higher . . . there . . . over by A, like you said (addressing her son-in-law). Then we said 'Where's it going to go next? Over towards B?' I know those people over there, I do! Then after a moment it came a bit nearer here . . . then I said 'What are all those fires then? It isn't thundering, there's no storm, what's it all about?' Then I called out . . . 'All these fires—I'm too old, I don't want to see things like that. If this thing's going to move about like that, what's to become of us all?' Afterwards it moved again, over by the corner of the vineyard—you remember, that's when I called you (*turning towards her son-in-law*)—that's when I was frightened (*the spheres were 90 metres away*)—but if that comes any closer, that's going to go in the barn, and everything will go up in smoke, the house and us with it—so I called him—I called him."

#### Comments on the account so far

Let us put ourselves in the place of the witness, in a peaceful landscape, in the heart of the countryside. It is dark. In front of her there is a hill about 1,200 metres away, 450 metres high at its highest point. There is nothing in between but fields, cultivated plots, and a valley with a stream at the bottom, 130 metres below. From the stream, the slope climbs upward to the farm, which is on the crest of another hill, also about 400 metres high.



Fiery ball in the yard. Drawing by F. Largarde based on a photograph of the house

In the darkness of a countryside which she had known, day in, day out, for 30 years, she sees what she calls "fires." They disappeared and reappeared, and she followed their progress as they drew ever closer. They dropped into the valley, climbed up the slope, moving inexorably nearer to the farm, and soon they appeared to her as a threat. She was not aware of an unknown phenomenon, and so tried to find an explanation: "There isn't a storm," she said. She wasn't frightened of anything supernatural or beyond reason—how could she think of such things? But the haunting thought of fire frightens all country people, and so distracted and scared, she calls her son-in-law to help, and later she will tell us that she went to bed fully clothed, for fear of what might be to come. This is a story with all the ring of truth about it.

Not less remarkable is the progress of these luminous "balls" from such a distance away, crossing obstacles like hedges, woods and fields, and heading towards this farm for some unexplained purpose. How can we deny them some sort of volition, of instinct, even of intelligence? We shall see later what they were like—having no substance, luminous only, neither machine nor plasma, a sort of wildfire, irrational and spontaneous in its behaviour.

The son-in-law's story follows. He is the father of the family, he works the farm, and he, in his turn, will re-live this memorable evening for us.

*"When Granny called you, you were in the next room, on the upper floor. Tell us what you saw, what happened?"*

"Yes, well, I was at the window, and I didn't see anything at the moment . . . nothing . . . nothing . . . I waited two or three minutes . . . then I saw a ball over there, 15 metres from the house! I said, she was right, my mother—mother-in-law I mean—she was right!"

*"It was near the house, by the wall?"*

"Yes, 15 metres away."

*"What was it doing there?"*

'Ah well . . . I dunno . . . it wasn't moving at that moment . . . it stayed there for two or three minutes . . . about that . . . then nothing more . . . flick, like turning off a light . . . I saw nothing more."

"Did they reappear farther away?"

"Ah well . . . yes . . . about 1 kilometer off maybe 500 metres . . . it depends. One minute we saw them . . . then flick, flick. . ."

"Was it long between their going out and their reappearance?"

"Oh no, a few seconds . . . two or three seconds, no more."

"They were round in shape, did you say?"

"Yes, round . . . yes . . . more rounded on top than underneath . . . the underside was more flattened . . . the top was rounder than on your drawing". (We amended the sketch on his instructions.)

"Did you go out at this time?"

"Yes, I went out then . . . went to have a look . . . over there," (he will lead us later to where he stood watching in his vineyard—a point about 50 metres west of the farm.)

"What happened?"

"I watched there a minute . . . a minute . . . they were turning . . . there were six of them at that time."

"You say there were six balls?"

"Yes — about 1 kilometer away — 1,200 metres maybe . . . they turned into a field . . . well into a bit of land . . . I don't know how to put it quite . . . well, a field, a field."

(M. Chasseigne having asked the question in more precise terms, he was able to fix the spot exactly on the side of a slope, with a lone tree in the distance, and the bit of land, which looked like a pasture from where we stood.)

"They were turning some way off . . . how to tell you from here . . . I couldn't rightly see . . . maybe 50 metres from one another . . . perhaps not, I dunno, but I saw them move away."

(His son told us in a letter that they were 10 metres apart. He intervened in the questioning, but his father could not agree. It seems they were more than 10 metres apart, and less than 50 metres.)

"Suddenly . . . ha! They moved off at walking pace . . . maybe at the speed of a tractor . . . when I say tractor, I mean in bottom gear."

"One behind another?"

"Yes, one behind another."

"Six balls, one behind another?"

"Yes, one behind another—they were outlined over there."

"In line?"

"Yes, in line, one behind another—one behind another."

"Did they remain lit when they moved off over there?"

"Yes—yes."

"Or perhaps, did they go out and then come on again?"

"No . . . they were outlined over there, all lighted up, see?"

"They stayed luminous as they moved away?"

"As they moved away, yes . . . they stayed luminous as they moved away. I said it's a tractor, a tractor, but there wasn't any sound. I would have heard it, because at night you can hear an engine a long way off . . . but I didn't hear a thing."

"It wasn't a tractor—its funny—but there wouldn't have been so many, anyhow—so many lights!"

"Then they circled around over there for . . . I dunno . . . half an hour . . . so many lights! I couldn't understand what it was. . . ."

"Then, at a given moment . . . that linked up . . . that disappeared (his son whispered the word to him) into the shell."

"You did not see the 'shell' again?"

"Oh yes, yes, yes . . . I'd already seen that!"

"But at what moment?" (We knew this, but had not wished to interrupt the thread of the narrative, or lessen the interest.)

"Just as I went out."

"Still in the same direction?"

"Yes, down there."

"And what did it look like?"

"Well, it was lit up . . . lit up it was . . . me, I thought it was a tree on fire . . . but I saw no flames . . . no smoke, and no flames."

"It was white?"

"It was lit up, see."

"The same colour as the balls?"

"Yes, same colour as the balls . . . similar . . . well, the same colour."

"And then the balls rejoined the . . ."

"Yes, that there 'machine'."

Everything seemed to be normal again — near enough. The "balls" having been swallowed up in the "machine", the witness, puzzled, but tired of watching, reassured that there was no risk of fire, and astonished at the spectacle he had just witnessed, returned to the farm and went to bed.

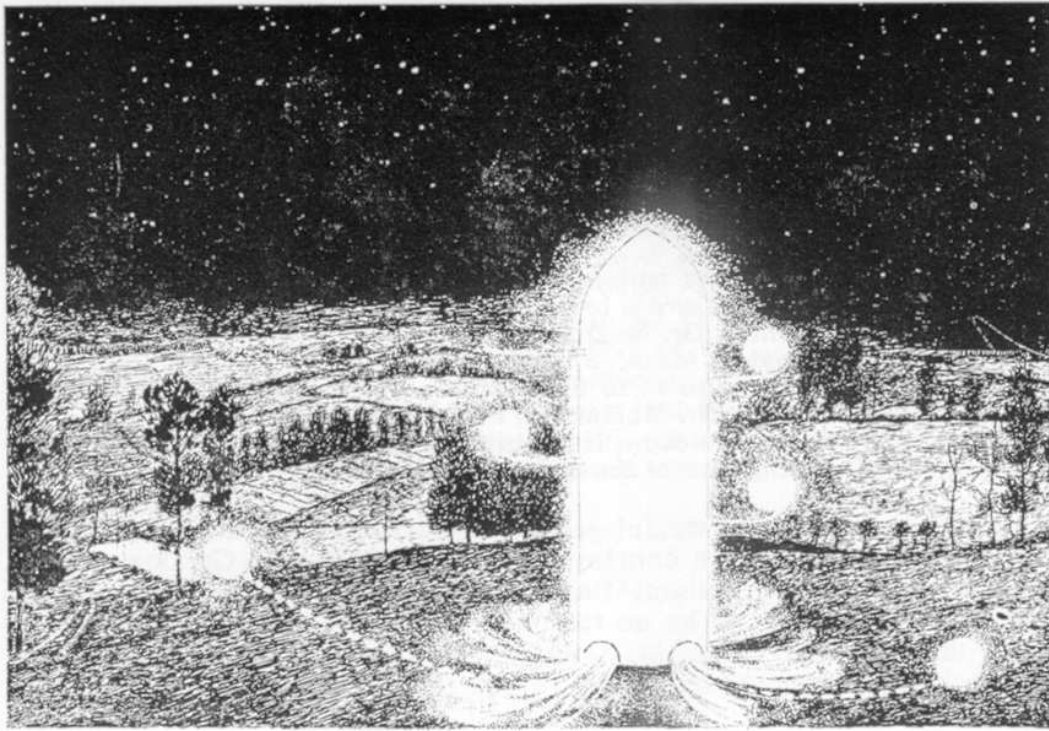
### Further Comments

Like the grandmother, this witness intensely relived all he had seen, and made us share in it.

Let us not forget that it was June 15. The countryside was green, the vegetation was full of sap, and as fields and meadows made up nine tenths of the area, fire was unlikely. Our witness, even if he does not express it precisely, does not believe in the likelihood. He is utterly astonished at the sight of these luminous balls; this inexplicable fact is announced by the thrice-repeated remark "She was right!"—and he has no comprehension of what he saw.

The "ball" goes farther away, and, more curious than frightened, he sees far away what he takes to be a tree on fire. The subjective, reasonable explanation he makes for it does not tie in with what he sees: there is no flame, no smoke! So then it isn't a burning tree, so he will call it "the machine". It doesn't occur to him that it might be a spacecraft—how could he think of such a thing?

Then he sees the procession of the six lighted balls. Their alignment, the regularity of their progress make him think of tractors, forgetting for an



The "shell" with fiery balls. Drawing based on witness's description, by M. J. L. Boncoeur

instant the balls he saw from his window. He tells himself that here again the comparison is faulty, and then they link up with "the machine". We shall see in another sequence what exactly is meant by the term "link up".

Everything is disconcerting and irrational. These balls which come close to the farm, which go out (flick!) and come on again, the "machine", the patrol of the balls—all this in the calm night, without a sound, unreal and dreamlike.

What could he think? "I couldn't understand what it was" he will say.

After these pieces of evidence, a general discussion followed to try and establish the chronology of events, which was utterly confused. We shall also hear that various other manifestations took place on unspecified dates. M. Chasseigne tried to put them down on paper, but found it impossible. The

son summed it up for us: "We had lots of 'em later on."

We shall be able to establish, however, that nothing much happened until the beginning of January, 1967, and that from then until Wednesday, January 11, 1967, a series of remarkable and precisely described events took place.

Up until 1969, further facts, but vague and undated, have come to light. MM. Chasseigne and Canourges are busy trying to find outside witnesses who may doubtless help in probing these manifestations.

(To be continued)

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## Dr. Hynek's Visit

In August, Dr. J. Allen Hynek visited England to attend the international astronomers' conference at Sussex University: he also extended his visit to enable him to meet people prominently involved in UFO research.

Members of the *Flying Saucer Review* team had a number of private meetings, and useful discussions with the former Civilian Scientific Consultant on UFOs to the United States Air Force. The highlight of his visit, however, was a reception given by the Directors of *Flying Saucer Review* in the Kensington Library lecture hall on Friday, August 28. Dr. Hynek was able to meet more than 100 guests, most of whom have been active in our field for several years. Dr. Hynek delivered a short address and answered questions, and after refreshments, joined in a general discussion with members of the audience.

As there was a possibility that matters of a controversial nature might have been discussed, Dr. Hynek had requested that the proceedings should not be reported. However, in spite of prods from one or two speakers, nobody seemed prepared to take the plunge and, for example, shift the discussion to "alternatives to the extra-terrestrial hypothesis." Nevertheless, during an interesting discussion, Dr. Hynek took the opportunity to stress the need for specialisation on various aspects of the subject: he also emphasised the need for careful classification of cases.

In the chair: the Editor of *Flying Saucer Review*.

In charge of the most excellent arrangements: Mr. R. H. B. Winder.