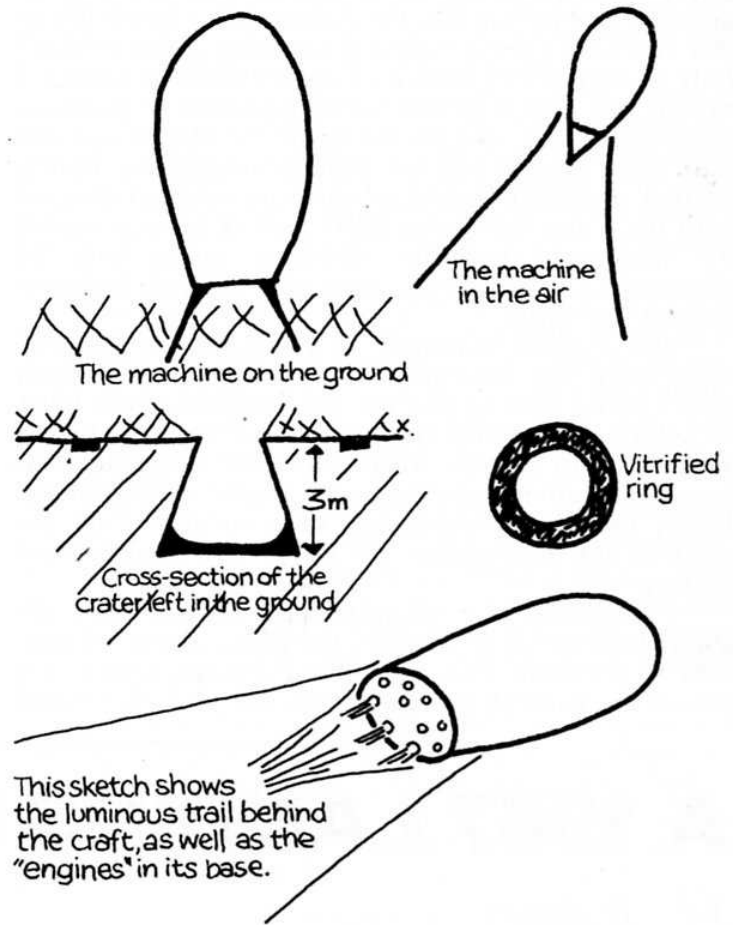


eight metres high. In its base it had several openings, of which we were able to get a good view as it took off. There were flames coming from them — not normal flames, nor comparable with anything known to us. These flames or lights were of various colours. One could have taken them for flames, but they must surely have been something else. Something like what you see when you use a welding machine to cut metal. Each of the openings emitted a “flame”, the whole thing producing one big thick short flame about one-twentieth of the length of the machine itself.

“It had legs. I did not see them, because of the vegetation, but on the ground there were three marks, set in a triangle, where it had stood. In the middle of the triangle there was a charred crater three metres deep — a crater which widened out towards its base. At the bottom of the crater there were some crystals of all colours, like bits of broken glass. The bottom of the crater was full of them, especially in the corners. It was like a vitrified ring.

“When the craft departed, it rose up slowly until it was above the trees. Then it vanished at a fantastic speed, as though sucked up into the sky. It left a sort of trail in the air behind it.

“Headquarters ordered us not to approach the landing site and not to discuss the matter among ourselves. Some specialists arrived by plane from Paris to interrogate us. We were made to swear on oath that we would keep it secret. We were visited by the doctors and we were made to undergo tests. For two days after the event we all had violent headaches, with a buzzing in the ears and a powerful beating in the area of the temples. We were not told the results of the tests made on us.”



## SWAMP GAS FROM THE PAST

*Luis Schönherr*

NOW and then you come across reports which sound very familiar to the student of our subject, although they were published long before UFOs began to make headlines in our newspapers. An article of this sort I have found recently in an old issue of a popular scientific periodical widely circulated in German speaking countries.<sup>1</sup> Its author tries at first to give a proper definition for the so-called will-o'-the-wisps. In view, apparently, of the phenomenological difference in the various reports he concludes "...that under the flag of the will-o'-the-wisp a number of completely different phenomena are sailing. These have nothing in common, except the fact that they are spreading a certain luminosity".

A number of possible scientific explanations for at least part of the phenomena is mentioned. It turns out that the author is a bit sceptical about the most popular view, according to which the decomposition of organic matter and the accompanying production of hydrogen, carbon dioxide and methane (swamp

gas) may be responsible for those lights. In his opinion the general content of inflammable swamp gas is so low and the content of carbon dioxide is so high, that it was difficult to imagine how such a mixture could burn at all, the more so as nothing was known about the process of ignition.<sup>2</sup>

As an alternative explanation he mentions the idea of a 'cold' light produced by bacteria, which hypothesis is ascribed to the Englishman Sanford. An observation by the German physicist Knorr is quoted, according to which no warmth was noted although the observer held his brass mounted walking stick into such a light for a quarter of an hour.

After having considered a possible combination of both of the above explanations — that gas from the swamp carries with it luminosity producing bacteria, which luminosity would increase on contact with atmospheric oxygen — the author cautions the reader against a premature conclusion: this may be so, he says, but conclusive proof is still lacking.

It is further admitted that St. Elmo's fire would be a reasonable explanation in some cases. But here too the writer is very cautious, for he observes that this explanation would have to be ruled out if there had been trees in the vicinity which had shown no such glow. The possibility that glow worms and fire flies may be mistaken for a far bigger light on dark nights,

*(continued on page iii of cover)*

# MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

## Carlo Rossi: sketch correction

Dear Sir,—I notice that you have recently published (FSR, Vol. 21, No. 5) an account of the very important case of Carlo Rossi at San Pietro a Vico. I find however that the accompanying sketch given in Mary Boyd's article is not the correct one. The sketch which you have published is one that was issued at the time by the local newspaper. However, it was very different from the original drawing which had been made by Carlo Rossi himself.

This case is one that I am very well acquainted with. It is one of the few really "strong" Italian cases which I investigated personally for my book about UFOs, and I am therefore enclosing herewith a copy of the sketch giving the correct shape of the UFO, as supplied by the son (Sergio Rossi) and grandson (Maurizio Rossi) of the witness, who as Mrs. Boyd correctly reported, died about ten years ago.

As can be seen, this sketch has no sort of "rotor blades" on top. That roto-like effect was simply a piece of imagination supplied by the local newspaper's journalist!

The correct sketch shows the very important feature of the tube beneath the craft which — as was stated in your report — was apparently taking up water from the river Serchio. (We all know how important this relationship between UFOs and water is!)

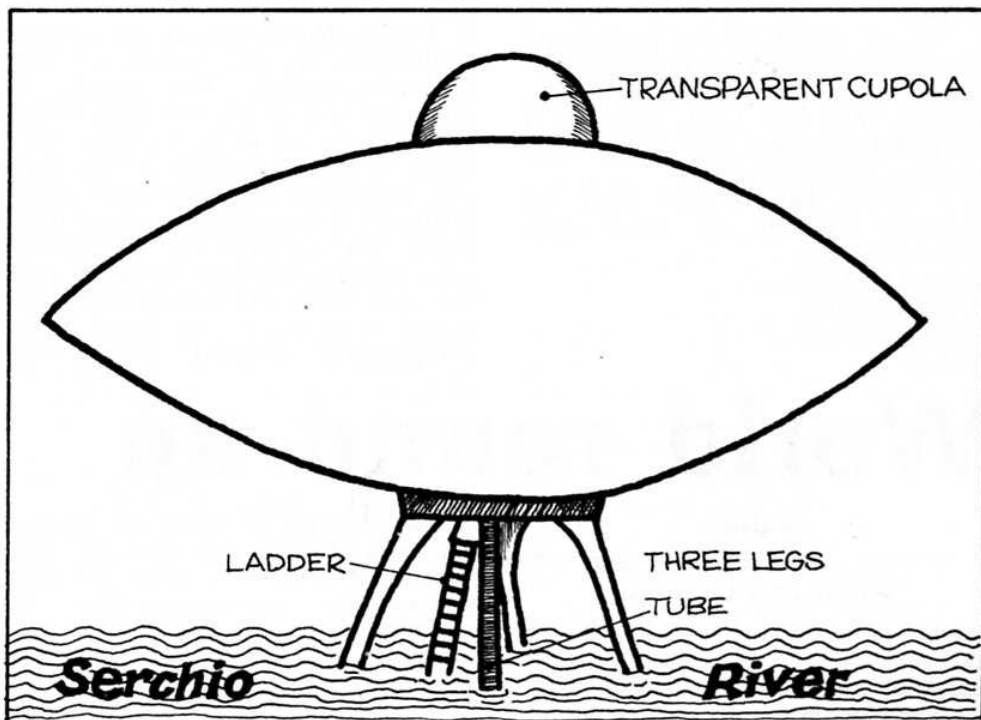
Although Carlo Rossi was certainly quite shaken by the spectacle of the UFO, the thing that upset him far more was the episode, some weeks later, when a mysterious "stranger" offered him a "bad" cigarette. Carlo Rossi was pretty worried about it all, and he used to say: "I wonder if they want to do me harm, maybe, because I saw the thing in the river?"

When he died subsequently, the circumstances of the case were mysterious and very suspicious. He was returning home on his bicycle when he was knocked down by a car. The car and driver were never identified.

Here is the correct description of the appearance of the UFO, as given by Rossi's grandson:—

"The cupola was completely transparent, while the rest of the disc, including its legs and the ladder, were of a shining white metal.

"When the people aboard the craft caught sight of my grandfather, a red light came on in the cupola, and at once beams of light were flashed at



him, but he managed to avoid them by throwing himself down into the ditch at the foot of the embankment on which he was standing and observing the UFO.

"Immediately after the UFO had risen up from the river, where it seemed to be drawing in water, the ladder, and the legs, which were standing on the bed of the river, were at once taken in and, spinning at immense speed on its own axis, it shot up into the sky and vanished.

"As the disc was rising, my grandfather noticed that either the transparent cupola or the upper part of the disc, made of darker metal, seemed to be motionless, while on the other hand the rest of the disc was spinning extremely fast, as though around a central pivot."

All these details are from my forthcoming book (not yet finished)  
Yours sincerely,  
Marco Marianti (Dr.)  
Via Cino da Pistoia 7  
40136 Bologna, Italy.

Note: As we all know, the "traffic accident" is an extremely handy way of liquidating people, and those who have made a study of the "MIB problem" are aware of a number of cases of this sort which seem extremely suspicious. We are most grateful to Dr. Marco Marianti for these important further details.

The sketch accompanying Mary Boyd's article was of course the one given in the book *UFO In Italia* whose publishers (Corrado Tedeschi, of Firenze, 1974) evidently did not realise that the drawing used in the local newspaper was only a journalist's imaginative contribution and not the work of the eyewitness himself.

There is also one other important point of variance between the version given in that book and Dr. Marianti's version. The book gave the date of the encounter with the UFO (Carlo Rossi's first experience) as 3.00 a.m. on July 25, 1952. Dr. Marianti says that it was not July 25, but April 25.

Gordon Creighton

## Moon spires

Dear Sir,—While looking through a book I bought recently, *Astronomy Today* by Fred Hoyle (Heinemann, 1976), I came across a very interesting photograph on page 43.

The caption reads, "An object at left center has rolled downhill on the Moon, leaving a series of marks like prints in a snowfield." The unusual thing about this "object" is that it is casting a very noticeable long, triangular shadow. This immediately jogged my memory and sure enough on p. 32 of FSR Sept/Oct 1968 was a photograph showing similar "spires"

on the Moon. According to the article accompanying the photograph scientists agree that the shadows are unusual "...but feel that the protuberances casting the shadows are naturally-occurring features of the lunar surface."

If the object in the photograph mentioned is indeed a naturally-formed spire, which its shadow seems to suggest, then may I ask: *how can a spike-shaped object roll down a hill and land perfectly upright?*

I would like to hear what the scientists have to say about that. Yours sincerely,  
**Ronald G. Twine,**  
 11 Milton Road,  
 Cowley, Oxford  
 Oxford.

### Time Travel

Dear Sir,—On reading an article, from your magazine, "Ufonauts as Time Travellers" by S.E. Priest, I read a section that confused me, and I will tell it to you as I see it (Vol 21 No. 6).

I would like to refer to the section in brackets at the bottom of the second paragraph; "In passing, I think it is true to say that Time-travel can only be travel in the past. The future at any given point in time is as yet unformed and therefore non-existent." I would like to argue this point. Let us take for instance a time traveller, the year 2578, to visit the year 1976. On leaving this time period, according to Mr. Priest, he is automatically doomed, because he

leaves his time period of the year 2578 to enter the time period of the year 1976. On doing this he becomes a member of the same time period as us. Therefore he is stuck for life in the year 1976 because, according to Mr. Priest, "the future at any given point in time is as yet unformed and therefore non-existent, so the future for the Time-travellers and us on earth is non-existent. Therefore how can the time traveller return to his own time period."

Could you please explain this?

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

**S. Suddell**

Yew Tree Cottage, St. Brides Major  
 Nr. Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan.

Over to you, Mr. Priest — EDITOR.

# World round-up

*of news and comment about recent sightings*

## England

### UFO, with possible physical effects, over Gateshead

We are indebted to Jenny Randles for this account from the North East of an incident investigated by William Muir.

The story was told by Mrs. M. the mother of 15-year-old Thomas. Thomas is afraid of discussing the story in detail, because he believes that he would be thought of as mad. On October 24, 1976, at 6.10 p.m., he was called to the door of his home in Low Fell, Gateshead, by a twelve-year-old friend, Andrew.

A few minutes after going outside he came back in and told his mother that he had just been watching a UFO. As he did so he switched on his battery-operated cassette tape recorder. This had been working perfectly a few moments before, but now it began to malfunction. The tape which was on it was replayed, but the speech was all speeded up and garbled, and the tape itself spilled out of the machine, splitting into little pieces. It was thrown away. Mrs. M. attests to this event, and says that the machine has otherwise worked normally.

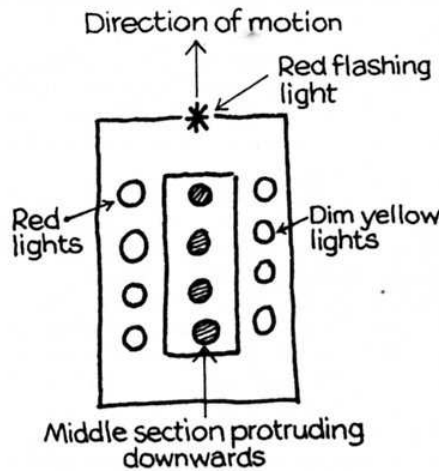
Intrigued by this she immediately called Andrew in to relate his story. He did so, and confirmed all the details which Thomas had given, plus a few additional ones (which is only to be expected as he in fact had been watching the object for about one and a half minutes before he called for his friend). Both had watched the object together for a further 20-30 seconds.

Mrs. M. also got the two boys to draw the object, independently, and their drawings do appear to agree to a considerable extent.

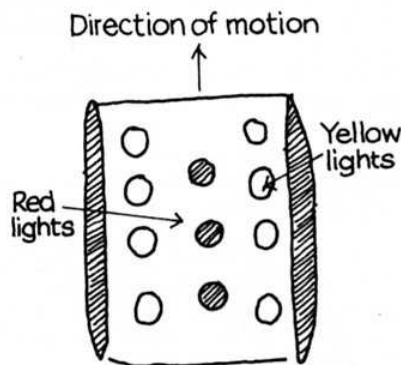
Basically the object was described

as looking like a square or oblong platform, which was glowing and which had centre red lights and dim yellow lights surrounding these. It appeared to have a projection underneath.

Andrew's sketch:



Thomas' sketch:



It was travelling quite slowly at a height estimated to be about 1000 feet. At first it came from the south,

but then turned northwestwards and accelerated suddenly speeding away into the distance. Thomas said that it was completely silent, but Andrew had heard a noise which he described as like a 'sucking' sound (as if air were being displaced).

The weather was dry, and the sky was clear, although it was just dark. It was, however, light enough for an aircraft to have been recognised immediately, and there appears to be little reason to doubt that the boys concerned did indeed see something unusual.

## Wales

### Lorry driver scared by UFO

From the *County Times & Express & Gazette* of November 27, 1976 we learn how,—“A young Rhayader lorry driver admitted he was 'scared to death,' early one morning, this week, when a 'flying saucer' appeared above his steel-filled lorry.

“It happened about 4.15 a.m. on Tuesday, at Marteg, a few miles north of Rhayader and only minutes after 24-year-old Mr. Michael Bufton of Green Gardens, Rhayader, had started out on his drive to Shotton steelworks.

“He was leaning forward in the driving cab adjusting the station finder on his radio, when he glanced up and saw the object hovering a few hundred feet above his vehicle.

“It was almost cigar shaped and a fair sized thing, belching orange and red flame. After a short time it veered off and over the top of the mountain in the direction of the top of the Elan Valley,” said Mr. Bufton.

“He stopped the lorry and got out, but only in time to see the object moving away.

"Mr. Bufton who admitted he was scared to death by the sighting said he had never seen anything like it before. He also admitted he was reluctant at first to tell anyone about the incident when he returned home.

" 'I thought they might think I was trying a leg pull and they wouldn't believe me, but it was no joke, I was really frightened' he said.

"The police said they had not received any other reports of any such sightings, but were keeping an open mind on the incident."

Credit: Peter Liss of Shrewsbury

## Spain

### UFO blacks out lighthouse

According to a report received from the UFO investigator Senor I. Benvenuty Cabral of Sevilla, a case which he followed up in 1976 involved the unusual feature that the light of a lighthouse was extinguished.

On August 11, 1976, at 11.00 p.m. on the La Linea beach, at Cadiz, two boys aged about 13 or 14 were standing chatting together and facing towards the western entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar when they observed a UFO approaching from over the sea. They were unable to describe a precise

shape, but said it glowed with a yellowish-white light and that it had a sort of "axis" which went right through it from one side to the other. They watched it as it climbed rapidly, changing colour the while, from a pale yellow to whitish and then to a vivid yellow. As it travelled on a curving course they saw it approach what they took to be a "mother ship". It passed once around the "mother ship" and then entered it. They noticed that, while they were watching it, the light of a lighthouse opposite where they were standing was temporarily extinguished. After taking on board the smaller object, the "mother ship" remained there where it was.

The boys are quoted as having said the apparent size of the small UFO was no more than the size of the head of a pin, from which it seems that the operation must have been conducted at a great height.

Credit: I. Benvenuty Cabral, and Ignacio Darnaude, both of Sevilla. Translation: Gordon Creighton.

### Cape Trafalgar sighting

At 10.30 p.m. one night, between August 4 and 10 of 1974, a party of

five campers and their children observed a whitish-orange, cone-shaped UFO over the sea. The observers were in a small cove called Canos de Meca, slightly to the east of Cape Trafalgar. The UFO performed a triangular flight out over the Strait of Gibraltar and the witnesses thought it went as far as Tangiers, which is 40 km. distant, but the investigators who examined the case felt it improbable that the witnesses could have been sure how far it went out over the sea before returning. When first sighted by the party, the UFO was stationary above a partly submerged group of rocks some 500 m. or so out in the sea.

The UFO appeared to be silent, and was emitting whitish-orange flashes of light. They thought its diameter might be in the neighbourhood of 30-50 cms. and its height above the rocks likewise only about 50 cms. It was there for some time before flying off and they were able to observe it at leisure through binoculars.

After returning to its position above the rocks, the UFO remained there a while again and then departed.

Credit: Sr. Ignacio Darnaude of Sevilla, and Srs. Miguel Peyro Enrique Nogueira of the C.I.E.F.E. UFO Investigation Group, Sevilla. Translation: Gordon Creighton.

## SWAMP GAS FROM THE PAST (continued from page 30)

when it is difficult to estimate distances correctly, is also considered.

But lastly the authors have to admit that there are observations that cannot easily be associated with any known phenomena.

A certain Dr. Filopanti visited a place near Bologna (Italy) where such phenomena were alleged to occur repeatedly. He could actually see a light appear, which moved and ascended to a height of five metres where it went out. Before this the observer was able to ignite a bunch of oakum fastened to a stick by holding it into the light.

The German ornithologist von Homeyer reported a classic case of the mysterious will-o'the-wisp. First the light moved beside the road approaching the observer up to 200 metres, then receding again and so on, but without ever coming within reach. It could not be chased, nor was it possible to seize it cunningly. This observation lasted two hours during which the light covered a distance of approximately two kilometres. Finally it stopped above a completely inaccessible swamp.

In another case another observer saw a luminosity, five metres high, behind some trees which appeared distinctly as silhouettes in front of the light. When the observer approached, the light became more and more blurred and was finally no more than a

luminous, fluctuating mass. Allegedly the observer then jumped into its midst, but he felt no heat. The luminosity persisted only for a moment and suddenly it was completely dark.

Our author closes his article with the remark: "What does it help if we are told, in connection with this last observation, that it was no will-o'the-wisp, but an 'Erdlicht'<sup>3</sup>! This is as if saying that the lights are 'spontaneous odd-lights,' the cause of which is on a 'higher plane of existence.' Surely many observations can be reduced to known facts, but also there is many an unambiguous description which cannot at present be explained."

## Notes

1. Dr. Fritz Möller: "Was sind Irrlichter?" in: Kosmos, *Handweiser für Naturfreunde*, Frankh'sche Verlangshandlung, Stuttgart, 30, Jahrgang, 1933, page 337.
2. Phosphine (PH<sub>3</sub>) is spontaneously inflammable when hydrogen phosphide (P<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub>) is present. Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) could in turn be ignited by this. See Raymond Fowler, MUFON Field Investigator's Manual, 2nd Edition, June 1975, page 70.
3. I am unable to translate the German term 'Erdlicht' adequately. Literally this means 'earth-light' but this is probably the question of an occult term which was in use in that era.

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