

LANDINGS AND HUMANOIDS REPORTED IN CAPE PROVINCE

Speculation on the cause of the damage to Rosmead Tennis court

Charles Bowen

THE wave of UFO reports which in the winter months of June, July and August 1972 had given the South African press unforeseen opportunities for weeks of lively writing, much speculation, and some investigation, had seemed to have fizzled out by September. Then, quite suddenly, the furore was building up again.

There were one or two "linking" reports, a little low-weight, between the main wave and the new outbreak. (The word "outbreak" is used somewhat guardedly, for at the time of writing there are no indications that the flap will be prolonged: the ingredients, nevertheless, are intriguing.)

Two Pretoria UFO reports

Typical of the "linking" reports were two that were published in the *Pretoria News* of October 23, 1972:

1. A Permanent Force soldier, Pte. M. A. Raubenheimer, was sitting on the verandah of his house in Pretoria Gardens. With him were five other people, and the time was 7.10 p.m. on Saturday, October 21. They saw a bright light in the sky shaped like a figure-of-eight. The light dimmed and grew brighter, and so on, and moved from east to west and back again. The party rushed to Pte. Raubenheimer's car and drove towards the object to get a better view. The object was soundless, and Pte. Raubenheimer says it was neither a flare nor a helicopter: he is well acquainted with these, and other devices used by the forces. After 15 minutes the object dimmed and disappeared.

It will be seen that a number of elementary points are

missing from this report, namely (i) the direction in which the witnesses were looking when they saw the object; (ii) estimates of size; (iii) estimates of altitude and speed; (iv) colours. (For the witnesses to have "driven towards" the object suggests it might have been close and sizeable.) Some attention to these details would have improved the report, and facilitated analysis.

2. Mr. Dick Richards, ex-Spitfire pilot and managing director of a motor firm, who lives in Hatfield, saw the second object over Pretoria at about 1.50 a.m. on October 23. Awakened by the noise of the wind, he and Mrs. Richards got up to close the windows: they saw a light, which they thought was a satellite, climbing slightly at an estimated distance of 4 km. and at a speed of about 800 km.p.h. It was moving north towards the centre of the city. Mr. Richards hurried to fetch his binoculars. He saw the light continue to burn for three seconds, then "blink off" for about a $\frac{1}{2}$ -second: it was then at an estimated altitude of between 300 and 450 metres. The object now slowed and stopped, then hovered for some 30 seconds before moving away to the North East.

These two reports were gentle heralds for what was to follow in mid-November.

Rosmead

Mr. J. du Plessis of Middelburg, Cape Province, claims to have seen a UFO "flying about" in the Karroo sky for some three months. The *Daily Dispatch* reported on November 18 that Mr. du Plessis said

THE LITTLE SINGING CREATURES (Continued from page 11)

From the fuller story now available, I think we can take it that there is no great resemblance to the Valensole case, where, so I believe, the facial colouring of the small creatures was described as being rather "white," or "European," and certainly not "black."

On the other hand, it strikes me very forcibly that there are at least two other cases with features that are much more in agreement with this one. The first one is the case of the small black beings seen (also by a party of children and in a country pasture) on the Cussac Plateau of South Central France on August 29, 1967 (the same year). This case was fully described in *Phénomènes Spatiaux* for June 1968, and John C. Hugill's translation of it appeared in FSR for September/October 1968. The original French account was by Joël Mesnard and Claude Pavy, and the title under which the case was given in FSR is *Encounter With 'Devils'*.

The second case—and here I think that in some respects the resemblances are more striking—was reported by our colleague Bryan Winder in *The Little Blue Man On Studham*

Common (in FSR for July/August 1967). This case, in a village in the Chiltern Hills lying to the North-West of London, also involves a party of children, a puff of smoke, shrubs and bushes (including brambles), an incomprehensible "foreign-sounding" babble or talk heard coming from inside the bushes, and a small being also described as being about one metre, i.e. about 3ft., in height.

As at Arc-sous-Cicon, so also at Studham, the children did not claim to have seen a "flying saucer" or UFO.

As I pointed out long ago (see page 83 of the hard-cover edition of *The Humanoids*), there is a vast accumulation already, from every part of our globe, and for centuries past, of reports of similar experiences, involving similar types of small creatures. One of the sad myths of our time is that in some fashion or other we are "better educated" than our forebears were. Such, alas, is certainly not the case. Previous generations, in all cultures and in all parts of the world, would have recognized these creatures for what they are. There would have been less silly talk about "Martians."

he watched it fly upwards, downwards and backwards, to go quite "crazy" at times, and to disappear. It shone with varying colours—green, blue and red—and it "shot off rockets."

Mr. du Plessis had seen the object approach Middelburg from differing directions, from Graaff-Reinet, Cradock and Rosmead. It may or may not be significant that this witness volunteered his information after a flurry of sensational headlines had hit the news stands on November 13 and 14 . . .

"UFO LANDS IN SCHOOL GROUNDS" (*The Argus*, Cape Town evening newspaper of November 13, 1972); "UFO RIPS UP TENNIS COURT" (*Cape Times* of November 14, 1972); "FOUR EYE-WITNESSES TO ROSMEAD UFO" (*The Argus*, November 16), and so on.

Rosmead is a small town in the Eastern Cape Province, about 15-20 km. to the east of Middelburg. The tennis court which was so heinously treated is in the grounds of Rosmead Primary School (described in some reports as a "High School") where it adjoins the residence of the School Principal, Mr. Harold Truter.

We are indebted to Mr. Philipp J. Human for sending us a translation (from the Afrikaans) of a report published in the Johannesburg Sunday newspaper *Rapport* of November 19, 1972, and to the Editor of that newspaper for so kindly sending photographs of the site of the alleged landing:

"The Light at Rosmead"

"As silently as it had happened, just as silently the tennis court at the little town of Rosmead hugs its secret. A young bluegum tree close by used to be lush and green, but now it is dying; its fellows are as green as ever.

"The C.S.I.R. scientists in Pretoria are busy analysing twigs from the tree and pieces of tar from the tennis

court. They hope to solve the mystery of the 'Light' at Rosmead and what had churned up the tennis court.

"There are many theories, but each one has holes as large as those on the tennis court. Few residents are willing to admit it, but many believe that a strange flying object had landed there.

On Sunday night (November 12) three army trainees were lying on the lawn at the military base. They were Gerrie Buitendag, Fanie Rosseau and Petrus Nel. Massive petrol storage tanks were being guarded there. Shortly after 8 o'clock Gerrie pointed in the direction of the tennis court a few hundred metres away where a red light, similar to that on the rear of a motor car, was circling. They were surprised but took no further notice.

"At the same time Sergeant John Goosen and Constable Koos Brazelle of Middelburg police station, reached for their binoculars. They focused towards Rosmead, 18 km. away, where a strange light was hanging in the sky. It was changing colour all the time. Other people saw it too.

"'Actually, we had already noticed this light on Friday night,' Miss Betsie Coetzee explained to *Rapport*. 'We were travelling to Rosmead. We stopped and watched for a full 15 minutes.'

"Mr. Harold Truter, the school principal at Rosmead, arrived home at 8.30 on Sunday night. He was speechless when he saw the tennis court next to his residence. There were large holes in the tar, but the gate was still secure, and the wire fencing was not buckled or torn in any way. He then noticed a long vertical light in the sky and then it suddenly vanished. He rushed to the telephone and dialled the police at Middelburg.

"Sgt. Goosen and Const. Brazelle were still watching the light through their binoculars when the telephone rang. When they heard what had happened, they rushed to Rosmead. The area was searched. There was nothing except another long light which hung horizon-



Colonel B. J. Van Heerden tries to simulate the damage with a spade

[Our cover picture shows Mr. Harold Truter inspecting the damage.]

Photos by courtesy of *Rapport*

tally in the sky; it then moved vertically and suddenly disappeared.

"There are five large holes in the tennis court which form a distinct pattern. At the bottom end of the court there are two almost oval-shaped holes of about 3 metres in diameter with a tail and a smaller hole. In the centre of the court is a circular hole about two metres wide. At the top end again there are two near-oval-shaped holes with a tail and smaller holes. There are also two small holes that seemed to have been caused by a spike.

"One of these holes was carefully 'lifted', and, together with pieces of tar and twigs from the tree, was sent to the C.S.I.R. for analysis.

"Only the layer of tar about 10 cms. thick was ripped up. The layer of ash on which the court was built was not disturbed in any way. Pieces of tar were also picked up some 50 metres away in the direction of a nearby hill, but none was found on the wire fence itself.

"There was no indication that spades or shovels had been used, nor that the tar had been melted or scorched in any way. Also, the gate and wire fencing had not been tampered with.

"One theory is that the court had been damaged by an explosion and it sounds very plausible, but only the tar had been shattered; the layer of ash was intact. No explosion had been heard.

"At one end of the court, and facing a small hole, it seems that a tree is slowly dying from the top end. Similar trees in close proximity are undamaged. The man who constructed the tennis court says that if gas had built up until it inevitably exploded, large and deep gaps would have been torn everywhere. But he has never heard of such an eventuality."

Further information gleaned from the *Daily Dispatch* of November 18, 1972, is that . . .

(a) Col. B. J. van Heerden, District Commandant of Police at Middelburg, stated that the dying bluegum tree showed signs of scorching;

(b) a theory that a whirlwind had caused the damage to the tennis court was discounted because none of the pieces of tar was overturned;

(c) soldiers guarding the petrol tanks 400 metres away had reported to the police that they saw red lights (like car tail lights, but illuminated independently, for no lights from headlights were visible) moving in circles on the tennis court;

(d) the red lights then "disappeared, and the whole petrol dump was illuminated with a strange incandescent light";

(e) Riflemen P. K. Nel and S. J. Rosseau (see the *Rapport* account) said the lights were on the court, and not next to it;

(f) No tyre marks were found on or near the tennis court.

Landing, with "occupants", reported near Middelburg

The *Daily Dispatch* of November 18 carried a "Stop Press" item close to its Rosmead report with a heading "MEN FROM MARS?" It seemed that a Mr. Gert Pretorius had seen two "little red men" emerge from a glowing object.

The East London *Evening Post* of the same date told

how police chief Col. van Heerden and the Middelburg Postmaster, Mr. George Anderson, had searched for an hour on Ouberg a mountain on the outskirts of Middelburg, after receiving the report. They found nothing.

"The colonel and I were quite prepared to talk to anyone in the object, whether earthling or from outer space," said Mr. Anderson. "I would not be scared for I do not think they would harm us. We would not shoot at the object like they did at Fort Beaufort," he added.

There were other witnesses besides Mr. Pretorius, including a Mr. and Mrs. Coetzee, and Mrs. Nola van Deventer, who told how a child called to her to see "the thing on the mountain." The boy was very frightened.

For amplified detail we again have recourse to an account from *Rapport* of November 18, translated by Philipp Human:

"A saucer lands at Middelburg"

"Two little men, a metre tall, glowing red and wearing rucksacks on their shoulders, stepped out of a flying saucer at Middelburg, Cape. A few people watched wide-eyed and terrified, and then ran for the police. Nothing was found.

"Mr. G. Pretorius, senior Post Office official at Middelburg, together with his wife and baby son went for a drive at about 8 o'clock on Friday night (November 17). That very day he had teased Miss Betsie Coetzee, also from the Post Office, who had told *Rapport* how she had seen a light above Rosmead on the night their school's tennis court had been ripped into shreds.

"Mr. Pretorius said: 'It was my wife who first drew my attention to a brilliant light—a circular one—which lit up the mountain above which it was hanging. Suddenly it just disappeared and I raced to the police station.'

" 'This brought us closer to where the light had been seen. Suddenly it flashed again barely a kilometre from us. It was then that we saw two glowing red little men alight from an object. They wore something like rucksacks on their backs, and it seemed as if each carried a small torch in his hand. Then everything vanished as if a light had suddenly been switched off.'

"His wife, Anna, said she was paralyzed from shock. She had seen everything precisely as her husband had described it. Whilst the two were still seated in their car, scared and shaking, Mr. Koos Coetzee arrived on the scene. All at once the one asked the other if he had seen 'it' too. Mrs. Pretorius could not utter a sound. She sat there wide-eyed and biting her fingers.

" 'The thing lit up the whole area like daylight, but to me it didn't appear to be little men who emerged. It seemed like legs on which this 'thing' had landed. Underneath the legs were little lights,' said Mr. Coetzee.

"Shortly after that Col. van Heerden, district commandant, climbed the mountain himself to have a look around. He and other curious persons found nothing. And yesterday the police and hundreds of others fine-combed the mountain. There was no sign of anything unusual.

"Mr. and Mrs. Pretorius, and Mr. and Mrs. Coetzee