

1972: near Mannum, So. Australia
CEI

31ST MAY 1972

NEAR MANNUM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

OVAL OBJECT SEEN AT CLOSE RANGE IN FOG

directly from
Keith Butechfield

Date: Wednesday, 31st May 1972

Time: 0635 Central Standard Time (2105, 30th May G.M.T.)

Location: Latitude: 34° 57' South

Longitude: 139° 14' East

Approximately 7½ miles South of Mannum, on the main Murray-Bridge to Mannum road, South Australia.

Witness: Mr. Peter Reeve, 145 Swanport Road, Murray-Bridge.

Investigated by: Mr. K. Basterfield, Mr. A. Colbert, 3rd June 1972

Discussed with investigations team.

Sequence of events:

The witness was driving alone, in his Toyota Corolla, at a speed of 35 m.p.h., in fairly thick fog (visibility estimated as 40 to 50 yards) travelling Northwards towards his place of work at Mannum.

He crested a slight rise in the road and in front of him, through the windscreen he saw lights, about three quarters of the way up the screen. His first thoughts were that it was another vehicle on a collision course, so he pulled to the side of the road. He moved off the bitumen and stopped the car, switched off the engine and the headlights, leaving his parkers and dashboard lights on. This action also took off the radio (on SAD at the time).

Now, at an estimated twenty seconds into the observation, he noted that there were in fact two lights of different colour. As he faced them there was a white one on the left and a red one on the right. These lights now appeared to be only halfway up the windscreen.

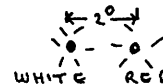
The witness stated that between the lights he observed a dark, oval shape (see below).

The object then appeared to gain elevation and was lost to sight from the top of the windscreen. At this moment a noise was heard which was described as a soft "swash" changing to a "schwoosh", which then diminished in intensity, taking only a few seconds to do so, and finally nothing was heard. The witness estimated that the whole observation took about sixty seconds.

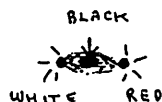
Looking in his rear mirror, anticipating seeing the object pass behind the car, he saw nothing. So, the witness slipped off his seat belt and got out of the car to look around. Nothing was visible of the object. He then proceeded the 7½ miles to work, passing no vehicles on the way. He arrived there at about 7.45.

Description of object:

Initially, two intensely bright lights.



Then:



The witness wrote: "The shape of the object: between the lights

2/

reminded me of a football, but there appeared to be a darker mass towards the centre fading to lighter—but still black—nearer the lights, thus giving me the impression of a gaping mouth..."

The lights were compared to looking at a searchlight in brightness, and their intensity did not fluctuate in any way. The witness estimated that their angular separation was in the order of 2° , which did not alter throughout the observation.

Environmental conditions:

Dark, sunrise was not until 0715 that morning. Along the road were patches of fog, and in this particular one, visibility was estimated by the witness to be about 40 to 50 yards.

Witness:

Mr. Reeve is 52 years of age, and a retired Army captain now working as an assistant works manager at Shearers a Mannum firm.

During an interview and correspondence he has been only too willing to assist investigations. He spent about an hour with us at the location indicated discussing his movements.

He appears to have tried to rationalise his experience but has reached no firm conclusions on the cause of it. He appears to have no reason for committing a hoax, and stated that before seeing the object he scoffed at the idea of UFOs.

He wears glasses for reading and does not wear them at any other time—he does not wear contact lenses.

Comments:

a. The car radio was on 5AD, an Adelaide station at the time, and the witness stated that there were no unusual effects noted about the radio at any time during or after the observation.

b. No unusual electrical effects were noted to any part of the vehicle.

c. No physiological or psychological after effects have been noted.

Analysis:

a. Initial—K. Easterfield

1. Movement: Initially when seen the elevation was said to be three-quarters of the way up the windscreen, then when the witness was stationary, it was only half way up the screen. Now, if the object was stationary, then as the witness went down slope the elevation should have increased not decreased. This appears to imply that the object either moved back or descended.

The object was lost due to its increase in elevation, implying that it moved upwards into the fog, becoming lost to view.

2. Size: The witness estimated that the angular separation of the lights with body or shape inbetween was about 2° . Calculations show:

Distance	50'	100'	150'	200'	away from witness gives diameter
Size	1.75'	3.5'	5.2'	7'	

Let us take the visibility range as 150 feet maximum and see if we can estimate the closest the object came on the assumption that according to the witness the angular ~~separ~~ size of belights remained the same.

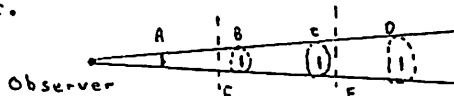
If D be the distance of the object from the witness and X is the angle subtended by the radius of the object then:-

D	20'	40'	60'	80'	100'	120'
X	$7\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$	3°	$2\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$	$1^{\circ}42'$	$1^{\circ}30'$	$1^{\circ}12'$

So, it may be seen that if the object is some 120 feet away, provided it approaches no nearer than say 80 feet there is little change in angular size.

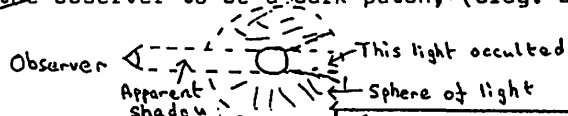
b. Comments- F. Gillespie

An effect, common in fog which can cause the apparent size of an object illuminated, to remain the same is halation. This is the diffusion of light from the source as it passes through the cloud of water droplets. This diffusion increases roughly as the square of the distance from the observer.

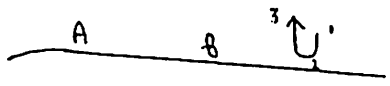


From the above diagram, it can be seen that the apparent size of this object remains virtually constant within the zone E to F, and grows larger outside this zone.

There is a second effect in fog which permits the outline of an illuminated object to be seen as a shadow while it is actually beyond the normal limit of visibility. This is caused by lights on the object illuminating a sphere of fog quite brightly. The object itself now occults nearly one half of the ~~light~~ ^{light} from the central portion of this sphere, and appears to the observer to be a dark patch, -(diag. below).



Taking both of these effects into account, the object is seen to be further from the observer than estimated above, at least for most of the sighting time. This would set its size somewhat larger than estimated (5.2'), and lessen the chances of any sound penetrating the fog. The diagram below illustrates the path which most fits the data. In particular it would account for the object's movements as observed first from a moving vehicle and then from a stationary one.



4.

c. Explanations:

On the data given by the witness the only conventional explanation, bar a deliberate hoax by the witness (which is considered unlikely), that was considered possible was that of a helicopter.

A helicopter can hover, move perpendicularly and could carry the necessary lights to explain the sighting, plus also the noise. However, it was wondered what a helicopter would be doing in this location, in the fog, whilst still dark.

To check this possibility, letters were sent to the Department of Civil Aviation who replied "in this particular instance the location you speak of is not in controlled airspace and we are fairly confident that no civil aircraft was involved. The location is, however, close to an army training area and a service helicopter may have been in the area," and the Department of Army who replied "I wish to advise that no Army helicopters were in the Mannum-Murray Bridge area on the 31st May 1972."

Therefore on the witness' description and the above statements, it appears that an explanation in terms of a conventional object cannot be assigned.

Attached:

1. Sketch of area.
2. Copy report form completed
3. Copy letters to and from U.C.A. and Department of Army
4. Copy correspondence with witness.
5. Photographs of the area concerned.

Keith Basterfield
Keith Basterfield
CO-ordinator
Investigations team.
9th July 1972.

Note:

Additional details may be obtained from Mr. Keith Basterfield, 2 Alexander Crescent, Christie Downs, South Australia 5164, if required.

This report is given in confidence.

Research Division.

June 18th 1972

Dear Mr. Reeve,

Thankyou once again for contacting us regarding an object seen by yourself on the 31st May 1972, on the Murray-Bridge to Mannum road, and the time spent with us on the 3rd June.

After carefully going through the details supplied by yourself and our look at the area concerned, there are a few points which we would like to check or clarify, if you do not mind. I have placed these on a separate sheet, so that you could perhaps return this in the enclosed s.a.e.

On first examination it appears that the object's path in the fog must have been a fairly sharp dip and incline, as illustrated.

Due to the fog dispersing the intense lights, the distance to the object cannot readily be ascertained, as at first might be thought.

Basically, the observation boils down to something hanging in the fog, descending then rising, in the space of some 60 seconds. If you could assist us with the points queried, we have two possibilities to explore as to a suggested explanation to your observation, before arriving at any definite conclusion.

(I must apologise for not having been able to include a magazine with this letter, but printers problems have delayed the issue).

I will write and let you know our suggested explanation once final details have been obtained, and send a copy of the ...2

magazine in with this letter.

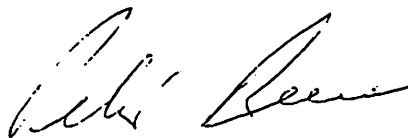
Yours faithfully,

Keith Basterfield
Co-ordinator

Additional items - 31.5.72

1. When my first thoughts were that the object was a truck or heavy vehicle bearing down on me and going to ram my car, I moved off the bitumen and cut my motor and put my lights on park. This also left my dashboard lights on.
2. I slipped my seat belt, which has a lightning catch, and was out of the car in about 5 seconds.
3. My car has a rear vision mirror only, none external.
4. I wear a lap-sash seat belt of the "LIGHTNING" type. I wear it at all times when I am in the car.
5. I wear glasses only for reading and do not wear them at any other time. I do not wear contact lenses.
6. The shape of the object between the lights reminded me of a football, but there appeared to be a darker mass towards the centre fading to lighter - but still black-nearer the lights, thus giving me the impression of a gaping mouth, sort of looking down a throat, if that is the expression.
7. The nearest approach to the sound of the craft would be to a carpet being swept with a broom. There was a kind of soft "shwish" gradually (or quickly) in the space of time, to a "schwoosh", and then diminishing, as the object disappeared.

I think that any other observations I may make have been covered in my letter to you. I will be very interested to hear your suggested explanation of this sighting, but can assure you that nothing will shake my belief that I saw something, that no logical explanation will convince me that there was a trick of light or that I had hallucinations.



Public Relations Officer,
Department of Army,
Central Command,
Keswick, Sth. Aust. 5035

Research Division
June 18th 1972

Dear Sir,

At 6.35 a.m. on the 31st May 1972, at a point some 7½ miles from Mannum on the main Murray-Bridge to Mannum road, a resident from Murray Bridge (an ex-Army captain) encountered what was to him, an unusual object.

The description given to us was of an oval, uniformly shaped, black body, with an intense red light on its right hand side and an intense white light on its left side. This object appeared to descend then rise out of sight, producing a "swishing noise".

As the incident occurred in fairly dense fog, visibility was not the best. However, I would like to enquire whether or not it would be possible to ascertain whether there were any Army helicopters in the location at the time and on the date mentioned. Also, to enquire as to the navigational lights standard layout on such a helicopter.

Any assistance which you may be able to give, regarding this matter would be gratefully received.

Yours faithfully,

Keith Easterfield
Co-ordinator,
Investigations team

Enc. s.a.e.

Research Division

27th June 1972

Supervisor,
Adelaide Flight Service Centre,
Civil Aviation Department,
Adelaide Airport,
Sth. Aust. 5000

Dear Sir,

At 6.35 a.m. on the 31st May, 1972, at a point some 7½ miles from Mannum, on the main Murray-Erlice to Mannum road, a resident of Murray Bridge (an ex-Army captain) encountered what was to him an unusual object.

The description given to us was of an oval, uniformly shaped black body, with an intense red light on its right hand side and an intense white light on its left side. This object appeared to descend, then rise out of sight, producing a "swishing noise".

Due to the nature of the object seen, would it be possible to check via flight plans filed with you, if any aircraft/rotorcraft were in the area indicated on the day at the time stated, with specific reference to helicopters?

Any assistance that you may be able to give will be gratefully received. Thankyou.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Basterfield

Co-ordinator,

Investigations team.

Enclosed: s.a.e.

1. Once you were stationary at the side of the road, did you retain parking lights and/or dashboard lights on ?.....
..See separate answer sheet.....
2. Once the sound occurred, approximately how long was it before you got out of the car to look in the sky ? ...5 seconds.....
3. (We are interested in trying to establish angle of vision)
If the car has a side mirror, did you look in this as well as the rear vision mirror ?..Rear vision mirror only.....
4. (Your angle of vision would be restricted by the use of a seat belt). Were you wearing a seat belt at the time? .Yes.....
5. Do you ever wear glasses or contact lenses at all ? (This is to check the possibility of internal dispersion of light, to do with an estimate of the distance of the object).No..See separate answer sheet
If so, were you wearing them at the time ?..No.....
6. You mentioned the space in between the lights as a "uniformly black oval shape". Is there any specific reason for referring to it as a "sharks mouth"-i.e. did you notice a difference in tone towards the centre, darker, lighter which could suggest this ?
..See separate answer sheet.....
7. Back to the noise again, although fog tends to distort noise is there anything similar to the noise you heard that is commonly heard elsewhere . E.g. train, car, aircraft, helicopter etc. ?
A broom sweeping a carpet-back and forth.....
If so, was pitch constant or variable ?..Variable..from a soft swish to a soft swoosh
8. Any additional comments or details recalled since ?..Yes,.....
added to additional answer sheet.



U.F.O. RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

Publishers of "Australian UFO Report" and
Incorporating SPACELOG BOOKS

P.O. BOX 51, GLENSIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 5065 ☐ TEL. 79 2595

RESEARCH DIVISION ☐
P.O. BOX 114, CHRISTIES BEACH, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 5165 ☐ TEL. 82 3532

P.O. Box 114,
Christies Beach,
Sth. Aust. 5165

5th August 1972

Dear Mr. Reeve,

Thankyou for the further details supplied, regarding
an object seen on the 31st May, 1972, on the Murray Bridge to
Hannum road.

After discussions with various persons and checking of
aircraft movements with the Department of Civil Aviation and
the Department of Army (which is why it has taken so long for
me to write) we are unable to offer any conventional explanation
which could identify the stimulus of the report.

So, on the information supplied by yourself, we can only
suggest that what in fact was seen, was indeed an "unidentified
flying object" with whatever implications may be placed on this
term.

Surprisingly, out of the hundreds of reports which we receive
per year, there are only two or three which we can pin this same
conclusion on, contrary to popular opinion.

Please find enclosed a copy of the magazine I mentioned, for
your information. Should you wish to persue the subject any
furt er, might I suggest a subscription to this magazine ?

Thankyou very much for your co-operation in this matter,
and please do not hesitâte to contact us again if there is
anything further we may do.

Yours faithfully,

Keith Easterfield
Co-ordinator

145 Swanport Road,
MURRAY BRIDGE S.A 5253
20 June 1972.

Dear Mr. Basterfield,

I was pleased to receive your letter today and will try to assist you in your investigations as far as I am able.

I am enclosing a separate answer sheet to your questions, also your sheet, as I feel I might have more to add than space is provided for.

I have discussed the phenomenon with several people since I saw you and have had some very interesting conversations. It would appear from these, that quite a number of persons do not report strange sightings because of the fear of being ridiculed. I must admit that until I experienced a sighting, I would have been one of the first to scoff at the idea of sighting unidentified objects because I felt there had to be a logical explanation.

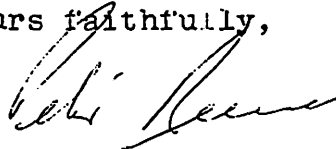
Having had considerable time to review my first thoughts and impressions, and having again travelled the same route in fog similar to that in which I saw the unidentified object ABOVE me, I have come to the (almost) conclusion that it was indeed hovering, or descending through the fog and not approaching me as I at first thought, because of the similarity in distance between the lights. They appeared to be the same distance apart from when I first saw them to when they disappeared.

When I said ABOVE in the previous paragraph, I meant at horizon level and in front, not directly above. Perhaps I should have clarified this!

My friend, Ron Morris of Mannum, was pleased to receive your letter and will look forward to reading your magazine and I would go so far as to suggest that he too, will subscribe to this publication.

I look forward to hearing from you again,

Yours faithfully,



(Peter Reeve)

P.S. Ron Morris asked me to tell you that he will forward his reply to you as soon as he has checked dates and times.



93 9911
TELEPHONE - 332311

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

CENTRAL COMMAND

Quote in Reply

KESWICK BARRACKS,
KESWICK, 5035
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

3 July 1972

Mr Keith Basterfield
U.F.O. Research and Investigation
P O Box 51
GLENSIDE S A 5065

Dear Sir,

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

In response to your letter of 18th June, 1972, I wish to advise that no Army Helicopters were in the Mannum-Murray Bridge area on the 31st May, 1972.

Yours faithfully,

(S.G. KINGWELL)
Lieutenant Colonel (RL)
Acting Public Relations Officer

Telephone : 57 8071



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

In reply quote 60/312

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION

ADELAIDE AIRPORT,
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Mr. K. Basterfield,
P.O. Box 114,
CHRISTIES BEACH. 5165

3 July, 1972

Dear Sir,

I refer to your letter of 27 June, 1972, addressed to the Supervisor, Adelaide Flight Service Centre, in which you seek information concerning an aircraft in the vicinity of the Murray Bridge to Mannum road at 6.35 a.m. on the 31 May, 1972.

2. Aircraft movements at Adelaide and Parafield aerodromes together with those passing through the Adelaide Control Zone are, at the present time averaging about 550 to 600 daily.

3. You will therefore appreciate that the research required to identify a particular aircraft would be a task of some magnitude, apart from which our written records would not enable us to provide any information as to the heading or altitude, at a particular time, of the majority of the aircraft involved.

4. In this particular instance the location you speak of is not in controlled airspace and we are fairly confident that no civil aircraft was involved. The location is, however, close to an Army training area and a Service helicopter may have been in the area.

Yours faithfully,


(W.M. THOMAS)
Airport Manager