

Mick Hanson reports on

I DOUBT VERY MUCH IF ANY OF OUR READERS FAILED TO READ ANY OF THE PRESS REPORTS REGARDING THE ASTONISHING INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED IN AUSTRALIA ON THE 20th JANUARY 1988. OBVIOUSLY INTEREST HAS BEEN GENERATED ON AN INTERNATIONAL SCALE AND WORLD UFO RESEARCH AWAITS WITH MUCH ANTICIPATION THE INVESTIGATION WHICH IS CURRENTLY TAKING PLACE 'DOWN UNDER'. FOR THE BENEFIT OF QUEST READERS, WE HAVE GATHERED ALL AVAILABLE DATA ON THE ENCOUNTER, AND EXAMINE THE POTENTIALS BEHIND THIS, AND OTHER SIMILAR CASES.

Highway chase terror as the aliens pounce

The incident took place some 800 miles from the city of Perth, Southern Australia in an area known as the Nullabor Plains.

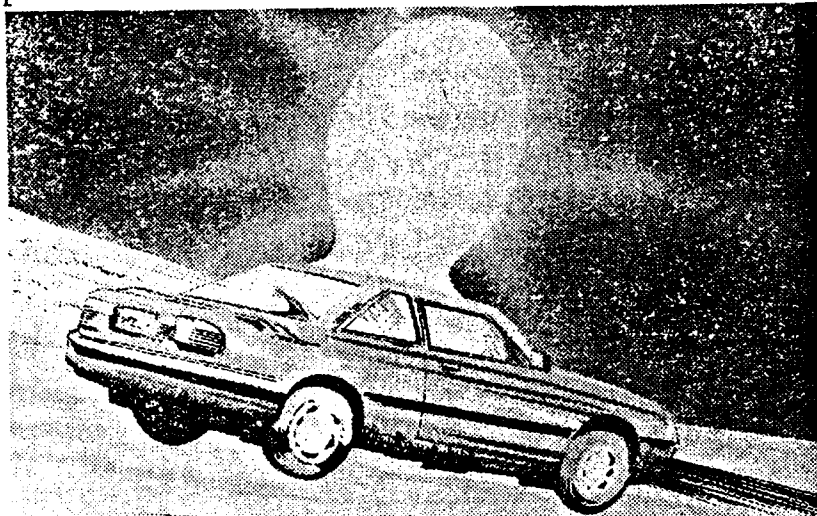
The Knowles family (Mrs Faye Knowles and her son's - Patrick 24, Wayne 18, and Sean 21) first sighted the UFO at around 2.45am on Wednesday morning. Described widely in the popular press as an 'egg cup' shaped object, Mrs Knowles first became aware of a brilliant white light in the rear view mirror. The family became disturbed as they looked around for other traffic.

The family continued their journey for several more minutes, until finally they stopped the Ford Telstar saloon. Moving to the rear of the vehicle, the Knowles began to realise that 'something' was untoward. Sean Knowles stated on Australian television - "It was weird, and we got frightened so we ran through the bushes and back to the car, but the thing kept on following us." After entering the vehicle the witnesses decided to leave the area as quickly as possible.

The family from driving at 70mph, now decided it was time to accelerate away from the object, they increased the speed to 125mph - the phenomenon kept on coming.

The UFO moved closer to the vehicle and then reportedly took up a position directly over the car. Mrs Knowles wound her window down and smoke filled the vehicle, she reported - "I thought we were going to die. We were going silly - something was going into our heads, we didn't know what it was. It felt like we were dying, I was screaming - hysterical." Seconds later the vehicle was purportedly 'picked up' from the ground and shaken violently. The two young men started to shout but their voices became slurred, "as if talking in slow motion". Patrick Knowles said:

"Something seemed to be on top of us, it [the UFO] seemed to get a grip on the car. The car began to smoke, the dogs in the car were going crazy. We wound the windows up but the car began to fill up with smoke inside. It smelled like dead bodies."



Lift-off... an artist's impression of the family's amazing encounter

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(A Yorkshire UFO Society Publication)

Mrs Knowles reported that when the UFO initially 'picked-up' the car, she thought it felt like rubber suction pads. Seconds after the car was physically shaken, the family were literally 'dropped back to earth'. On impact the rear tyre burst - such was the force in which they had hit the ground. The UFO then departed.

This terrifying encounter must obviously have caused embarrassment to the authorities, but as we shall see later, the Knowles family acted with much intelligence and fortune was on their side in the way of corroborative evidence from other witnesses.

The family were badly shaken but help was to arrive in the shape of truck driver - Graham Hewley. He claimed the family were both "bewildered and frightened." Hewley reported to the Australian press:

"They were in a state of shock, even the dogs were cowering in the front of the car. There was soot all over the car and four dents on the roof as if the car had been picked up by a magnet. I can't explain it but I saw four very frightened people."

Hewley reportedly told the press that other truck drivers had been seeing mysterious lights on the Nullabor Plains for some thirty years. "We don't stop unless we have to," he said.

AUSTRALIAN POLICE INFORMED

The Knowles stopped at the home of Mrs Shirley Lunden in Mundrabilla after the incident. Lunden spoke of their arrival:

"They had scratches on their legs running through the bush to escape the object and there were also scratches on the roof and on one side of the car."

Mr Knowles then drove another 400 miles to report the incident; Sgt Furnell of Ceduna Police in Southern Australia said:

"We were a little sceptical at first, but upon investigation, we are treating the reports very seriously."

Note 'reports'! Those other reports are slowly making this case very significant.



brothers Sean (left) and Wayne Knowles

They have come in the form of a trawler, an aircraft and other road users in and around the Nullabor Plain. Perhaps the most interesting and relevant to the Knowles encounter was submitted by the crew of an Australian trawler 50 miles out to sea in the Great Australian Bight, South Australia.

The tuna fishermen encountered the UFO (similar in description) at approximately the same time. The men reported that the object 'buzzed' the boat and their speech was affected in a similar manner to that of the Knowles family.

Another truck driver driving in the opposite direction at the same time also informed the authorities that he too had spotted the UFO.

THE UNKNOWN SUBSTANCE

This report is perhaps more convincing because of the actual physical data available for examination, i.e. the 'dust'. This was purportedly inside and outside the vehicle. Black in colour, several authorities are currently dealing with this. However, first comments were issued by forensic scientists in the Police. They couldn't explain it! "We don't know what it is," said one man.

Australian Police then supplied scientists at Adelaide University with samples. "If these guys can't find an answer, then it will be passed on to more scientists until

someone comes up with something.....or until we can go no further," said another Policeman.

The actual substance looks something quite similar in features and context to soot or burnt ash - black in colour and soft to touch.

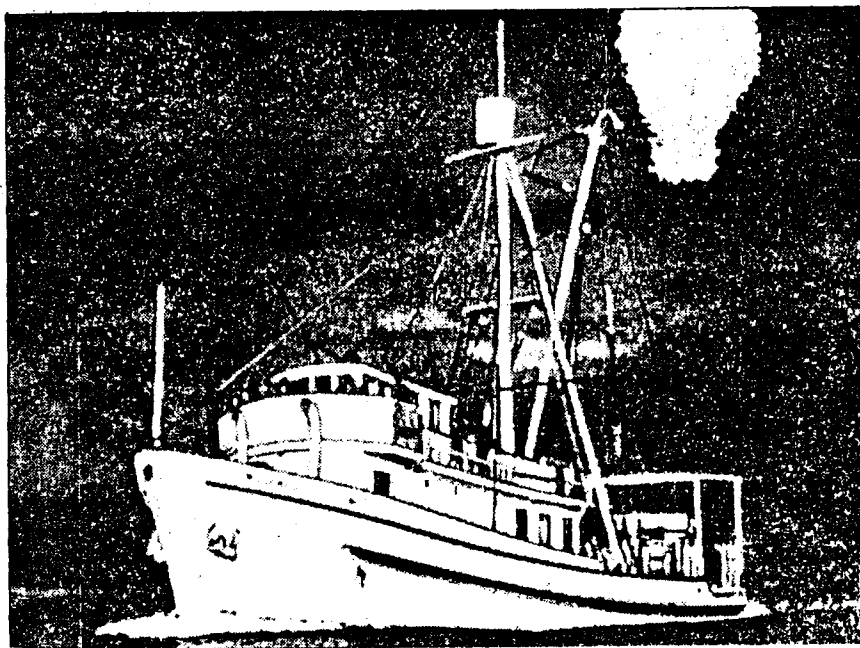
THE DEBUNKERS COMMENT

Without any sort of investigation or before an official report has been released (by the Australian Police) there has been the usual 'mish-mash' of comment issued by people who refuse to accept the facts.

First U.K. nonsense appeared in the Daily Telegraph from Adrian Berry (Science

Australian official scepticism came from a chap by the name of Professor Peter Schwerdtfeger, head of Meteorology at Flinders University in Adelaide. He claimed the Knowles report fits the description often associated with, "dry thunderstorms".

He went on to say: "In one of these, natural electricity charges the atmosphere and dust particles create a layer of light. The fine ash could be a product of lightning and the violent shaking of the car a result of the storm. No doubt if you are in the middle of a fairly intense electric field, you're going to feel very strange."



Artist's impression of what the fishermen saw

Shaken
mother
tells of
alien
attack
on road

Correspondent) who is now becoming more of a joke every day. He states:

"The object seems very likely to have been ball lightning, a phenomenon that scientists do not fully understand and the behaviour of which is extremely difficult to predict. An unpleasant smell has sometimes been noted in manifestations.

As for the story that the object followed the family, this could be attributed to the fearful state of the people at the time. Whatever ball lightning can do, it cannot act intelligently."

I would have thought that if the vehicle and family were in the middle of an intense electric field, then that at some point the witnesses would get 'a belt' from high electrical charges being emitted from the phenomenon? As it is, not one witness reported any kind of shock. The fact that science is confused over ball lightning is nothing new, quite simply science knows very little about the subject. I well remember a famous incident when ball lightning actually hit a large passenger aircraft and a ball of light floated down the aisle. It missed all the people on board and disappeared out of the

rear of the aircraft. Scientists then reported, "if that ball of energy would have hit or touched anybody, it would have killed them."

If we are to believe Schwerdtfeger and his theory, the Knowles should be dead, it's possibly as simple as that - but it isn't of course.

Message in the sky for sceptics

I was interested and somewhat surprised to see so many well known UFO researchers offering comments before any kind of investigation had commenced. Walt Andrus (International Director of MUFON - Mutual UFO Network USA) was quoted as saying:

"This is one of the most important cases we've had in a long time. Something major has happened. It [presumably referring to an unidentified craft] did something physical to the car and left something to be analysed."

Sydney Wilks [according to the 'TODAY' newspaper a UFO expert] said:

"Important details could be buried in their subconscious, I'm sure they could tell us a lot more about their encounter if they were hypnotised."

Mr Colin Norris (well known Australian UFO researcher) was quoted in the DAILY TELEGRAPH:

"It fits in with a lot of other sightings in the world. It appears to be an extraterrestrial encounter. It's not of this planet."

Much of this could well be 'journalistic license' and comments taken totally out of context. Early in February, I myself was quoted as saying, "aliens have landed" - etc! I never said a word of course!

But above all I think caution is the key. After all it's not that often when UFO researchers come across possible physical elements associated one way or another with 'UFO' reports. One thing is clear; the authorities are taking this incident very seriously indeed.

Isabelle Gidley (a journalist in Australia) reports that the Space Agency NASA is monitoring the reports and may launch an inquiry.

QUEST RESEARCH

QUEST researchers have already located a possible key to the event which may be connected. Nearby to the Nullabor Plains lies one of America's most secretive bases - WOOMERA. An ultra-top secret establishment that according to our sources only ONE photograph exists of the base.

It's here that some of the most sensitive radar tracking equipment is used. Our information also indicates that the base is used for missile and SDI research. It seems likely therefore that WOOMERA would have the capability to track any incoming target regardless of nature of phenomenon.

We also learned that a tuna fish spotting aircraft observed the UFO hovering over the trawler in the Great Australian Blight.

The RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) is to launch its own enquiry.

The Nullabor Plains are situated very close to some of the world's biggest mineral mining areas, only two or three roads run through the general vicinity.

PUBLICITY

World Ufology now has to wait for the evaluation offered by the various official and civilian bodies currently involved in the case, my guess is that some highly 'charged' explanation will be offered by the scientists, then quickly dismissed by the UFO movement.

An Australian TV company has already signed the Knowles family up and are currently working on a reconstruction. Yet I think it is apt to leave the final words to Mrs Knowles who bravely appeared on television shortly after the incident:

"THERE IS SOMETHING OUT THERE WE CANNOT EXPLAIN. SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE OR SOMEONE IS GOING TO GET REALLY HURT"