

Seeing is believing

By all accounts the recent week-end conference on UFOs held in Holmfirth was a resounding success, attracting some 600 delegates from all around the universe. No wonder that Crown Bottom car park was choc-a-bloc with flying saucers cunningly disguised as Citroen Berlingos and Nissan Qashqais. Guest of honour was an American, Travis Walton, who had once been abducted by aliens, but lived to tell the tale in Holmfirth. Why they seized him, and not Donald Trump, thereby rendering mankind a great service, was not on the agenda. Few, if any, of the delegates were of the fruitcake variety, although some approached the event with considerable scepticism, being interested not so much in UFOs per se, but why some people feel the need of them and therefore see them with an almost monotonous regularity. With perfect timing a UFO was sighted over Scammonden, apparently the local hot-spot for flying saucers, although once again it disappointed us by deciding not to land. But it must be admitted that a quick view of the Elland bypass in full spate would be enough to deter the most intrepid explorer. (I will not spoil the party by pointing out also that Scammonden is on the extended line of runway 23 at Manchester airport and that aircraft can frequently be seen here as they line up on their approach to land.)

So far archaeology has failed completely to uncover any evidence of the remains of crashed alien vehicles on this earth, but in the interests of fairness and balance (and the struggle not to let my cynicism get the better of me) it has to be pointed out that seeing strange things in the sky is by no means a recent phenomenon, encouraged by Hollywood. In paintings going back many centuries there are objects which look suspiciously like our present day conception of flying saucers. One of the most famous of these dates from the 15th century: ***“The Madonna with Saint Giovannino”*** by Domenico Ghirlandaio. A man with a dog can be seen staring up into the sky at what we can only describe as a flying saucer. Other examples can be seen here: <http://www.crystalinks.com/ufohistory.html>



However, considering that the photographic camera has now been in existence for more than a century it is puzzling that the fans of flying saucers have so far failed to produce a convincing, sharply-defined and indisputable image of a UFO. Certainly Google has plenty

of pictures on offer which usually consist of fuzzy white or grey spots in the sky. More saucer-like pictures have “fake” written all over them. The iPhone Selfie “Me with aliens at Scammonden” is still eagerly awaited.

UFO sighting Australia
2016 from Google



Apart from human credulity the strongest argument against the existence of UFOs in our skies lies in the vast size of the universe and the colossal distances involved in making any journey between any two points, a fact generally ignored by the avid UFO watcher. A flying saucer coming from the other side of our own Milky Way galaxy would involve a trip lasting hundreds of thousands of years. If we send our own UFO from Earth to our nearest star, Proxima Centauri, this would take more than 70 000 years. The Hubble telescope is now finding galaxies more than a million light years away. If a UFO over Scammonden had come from there, even travelling at the unlikely speed of light, it would have been an awfully long voyage. I hope the seats were comfortable and they felt that the view of the M62 was worth it. But why come all that way and not drop in to try the beer?

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