

Unidentified Aerial Phenomena - scientific research

An examination of aspects of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) from a scientific perspective.

Saturday, January 29, 2011

Cold case - Port Augusta - 5 February 1947

Introduction:

As you will know from reading this blog, one of my current research projects is looking at old Australian cases. In this post I investigate an event which occurred in 1947 in my home state, several months before the Kenneth Arnold sighting.

I had known about this event for several years, ever since an Adelaide contact, Darryl Tiggeman, supplied me with details. I visited the State Library in Adelaide and confirmed that the following accounts did appear in the papers of the time.

Newspaper accounts:

(1) "Strange objects reported in sky"
Port Augusta 6 February.

"While working in the yard at the Commonwealth Railways workshop yesterday morning Mr Ron Ellis and two workmates claim to have seen five strange objects in formation pass across the sky from north to south.

"The objects were white or light pink and shaped like an egg. Mr Ellis said that he could not give an accurate estimate of the size of the objects, but they were casting shadows and judging by his experience with aircraft in the RAAF during the war he considered they were about the size of a locomotive.

"Although the objects kept on a direct course at a height of about 6,000 feet they appeared to be quivering he said. Owing to their great speed they were out of sight within a few seconds.

"Any question of the phenomenon being an optical illusion was dispelled by the fact that a few minutes later both Mr Ellis and his companion gave an identical description of what they had seen. Their description was verified by another member of the workshop who said he had also seen the objects."

Source: "Adelaide Advertiser" newspaper. Friday 7 February 1947, front page. Viewed in the State Library, Adelaide on 27 January 2011.

(2) "Objects in sky not meteorites."

"Commenting yesterday on a report from Port Augusta that several men working in the yard at the Commonwealth Railways workshop at about 9am on Wednesday had seen five strange egg shaped objects in formation pass across the sky at a height of about 6,000 feet the Government astronomer (Mr G F Dodwell) said that the phenomenon did not fit in with anything astronomical and was a complete mystery to him.

"Mr Dodwell discounted the probability of the objects being meteorites. He said that meteorites being so small and travelling at such high speeds did not cast shadows whereas the report stated that the objects had cast shadows about the size of a locomotive. The presence of falling meteorites would have been accompanied by a deafening roar."

Source: "Adelaide Advertiser" newspaper. Saturday 8 February 1947, front page. Viewed in the State Library, Adelaide on 27 January 2011.

Research:

1. I visited the State Library, Adelaide and confirmed that the above accounts had appeared in the respective newspapers. They had.

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2. I then searched for additional information about the event. I checked other newspapers. The "Adelaide Advertiser" between 1 and 19 February; the "West Coast Sentinel" (based at Streaky Bay 320km W of Port Augusta) between 5 and 19 February; "The Recorder" (based at Port Pirie 80kms S of Port Augusta) between 7 and 14 February; Adelaide's other daily newspaper "The News" between 5 and 11 February; the Adelaide weekly "The Mail" for 8 February; and "The Quorn Mercury" (based at Quorn 22kms NE of Port Augusta) between 6 and 20 February.

3. I found that "The Quorn Mercury" of 13 February 1947, page 3, carried the exact same story as the 8 February 1947 "Adelaide Advertiser" quoted above. Interestingly, "The Quorn Mercury" of 20 February 1947, page 3, also carried an additional sighting.

"Writing in the Advertiser, Mr F W Flavel of Lock, Eyre Peninsula states: "I saw objects in the sky between 7 and 8 o'clock the same day as you record a report from Port Augusta. I was walking in a north-westerly direction to the house after feeding the pigs.

"There were five of the strange objects and they seemed to be coming up out of the sea like a shadow with smoky greyish color around them. They were oblong with narrow points. I saw them quite plainly. They seemed to be floating in the air from north-west to south-east and caused a shadow."

4. I then checked the "Adelaide Advertiser" and found a letter to the editor in the 17 February 1947 edition, page 2.

"Strange objects in the sky."

"I saw objects in the sky between 7 and 8 o'clock the same day as you record a report from Port Augusta. I was walking in a north-westerly direction to the house after feeding the pigs.

"There were five of the strange objects and they seemed to be coming up out of the sea like a shadow with smoky greyish color around them. They were oblong with narrow points. I saw them quite plainly. They seemed to be floating in the air from north-west to south-east and caused a shadow."

"I called the wife to have a look at them and she did so. It was a sight. I wish I had watched them longer as others had seen them and Port Augusta men did so an hour later. I have never seen anything like this before, and after reading what others saw I thought I would let you know that my wife and I both saw these objects."

5. I checked the weather forecast for Wednesday 5 February 1947. The state forecast was "Unsettled, with scattered rain and thunderstorms. Cool on part of the coast, elsewhere warm to hot and sultry. SE to NE winds. " The weather chart was shaded over Port Augusta indicating that rain was expected that day.

Sunrise was at 0539hrs. Moonrise 1925hrs. Full moon was 6 December 1947.

Adelaide's actual temperature (300kms S of Port Augusta) for 5 February 1947 was minimum of 73.8 deg F at 0545hrs; maximum of 98.3 deg F at 1245hrs.

6. Lock is 225kms SW of Port Augusta and is inland, at latitude 33deg 34mins S, longitude 135deg 45mins E; whereas Port Augusta is at latitude 32deg 30mins S, 137deg 46mins E.

7. As it was mentioned that Port Augusta witness Ron Ellis had been in the RAAF, I checked for service records for such a person in the National Archives of Australia. I found there was a Ronald Ernest Ellis, born 5 November 1920 in Port August. This is most likely the same person.

I checked for records for an F W Flavel, the Lock witness' name but found nothing.

Comments:

1. The fact that there are two separate reported observations on the same morning of five strange objects in the sky which cast shadows, would indicate the observations were of the same set of objects.

2. Based on the information given, I cannot see a mundane explanation for the observations.

3. Note that this was about four months before the US based Kenneth Arnold sighting which started the "modern" UFO phenomenon.

Over to comments from readers.

Posted by [Keith Basterfield](#) at [Saturday, January 29, 2011](#)



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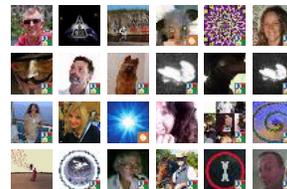
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1 comment:

Anonymous [September 22, 2013 at 11:31 AM](#)

Did anyone see the light in the sky last night. We viewed it from port augusta shacks, brilliant red, then green to silver then vanished. I have never seen anything like it, fortunate to call out to a mate who witnessed this event

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