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On 4 September 1976 the Author (right) was called by London's Metropolitan Police to their Bromley Station in South London to inspect a **UFO**, handed to them by a member of the public. It was of course a hoax, well made from terrestrial wood and plastic. *Courtesy Daily Telegraph.*

UFO stands for Unidentified Flying Object, the official term for a sighting reported by the public to authority and which cannot be explained as a balloon, an aircraft or other man-made object or a naturally occurring meteorological phenomenon covered by the known physical laws of science. In the decade of the 1960s, there were many such unexplained sightings and in Britain, 56 were reported to the RAF. Careful investigation explained many and only 14 were classified as UFOs.

As Science Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* I was frequently asked to explain such a sighting. On a memorable occasion, 4 September 1967, I was called to the Police Station in Bromley, a south London suburb, and shown a 'flying saucer', claimed to be extra-terrestrial by its finder. Its shape was that of a double-convex lens, about one meter in diameter, made of plastic and wood, and of definitely terrestrial origin. A nice hoax, photographed in close-up by a staff photographer of the *Daily Telegraph* and published next day.

However, many sightings were made by highly reliable observers, such as aircraft pilots, civil defence personnel, scientists, engineers and officers of the Armed Services. I began to keep a file in the office, and as it became too large I wrote an article on the subject published 20 August 1966, which the Sub-Editor headlined as "Unidentified but Undeniable". I considered this an excellent conclusion to which I subscribe still today. At the time there was a large sensational literature on UFOs, claiming that the US and British 'Authorities' had evidence of the extra-terrestrial nature of UFOs but did not release it, for fear of causing panic among the public. Never did I find any evidence for these claims:

The sightings of UFOs occurred all over the World and were often strikingly similar. Observed at high altitudes from an aircraft, they appear as large white or silvery cylinders, capable of very high velocities. Nearer the ground, they looked like two saucers, placed rim to rim, radiating strong light from the periphery, changing rapidly in colour. They are always silent, sometimes they 'wobble' from left to right, or up and down, they may hover for some time at tree level and disappear with great acceleration in their flight path.

I concluded in my article that the existence of mysterious flying phenomena was undeniable, but that no valid explanation had been found by 1966, when my article was published, or since then. The appearance of UFOs, although one still hears of them very occasionally, has greatly declined in recent decades, and this is just another unexplained fact. Science has solved many mysteries of the past, and perhaps this one will also be resolved one day. No further comment!

A BBC announcement on 23 April 2001 stated that the British UFO Bureau had closed down, because there were no longer sufficient sightings to continue.