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The Daily Telegraph, Tuesday, March 5, 1968 21

SPACE 'SIGNALS' MAY BE FROM INTELLIGENT BEING

PULSATING STAR TRACED

By Dr. ANTHONY MICHAELIS
Science Correspondent

AN entirely novel kind of star, or the first signal from other intelligent beings in space, has been discovered by radio astronomers in Cambridge. It came to light on Aug. 6 last year and, at first, the extremely regular pulsations of the new radio source could only be explained by intelligent signalling.

SEE 681108 (68:230)!

The star was referred to by astronomers as LGM (Little Green Men).

Now, with further tests under way, their opinion has changed and it is thought to be a novel type between a white dwarf star and a neutron.

The name Pulsar (Pulsating Star) is likely to be given to it. Since last August four others have been discovered.

"Natural explanation"

Dr. A. Hewish of the Cavendish laboratory, Cambridge, told me yesterday: "We think there is a natural explanation. We have eliminated any source within our own solar system and have found it to lie within our own galaxy.

"It pulsates every 1.337 seconds with extreme accuracy, better than one part in 10 million. Since we published the results last week I have had several telephone calls from America. I am sure that today every radio telescope is looking at the Pulsars. It is the greatest thing in radio astronomy for a long time."

Sir Martin Ryle, director of the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory, Cambridge, where they were discovered, described them as "the funniest stars I have ever come across."

The accurate pulsations were noticed first by Miss S. Jocelyn Bell, a Ph.D. student from Ireland working under Dr. Hewish. At the observatory at Barton, near Cambridge, I saw the interplanetary scintillation aerial, the telescope with which they were discovered.

Mr. B. Elsmore, of the observatory, said that the telescope made of thin cedar wood supports, 12ft high, containing 50 miles of wire, cost less than £1,000.

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The word "PULSAR" was invented and first appeared in print in this article of *The Daily Telegraph* on *Tuesday March 5, 1968* but the Science Correspondent did not write the headline. *Author's Collection.*

LGM and my astronomical Neologism Title 158

On 5 March 1968 the *Daily Telegraph* published an article under my name which was headlined: "Space 'Signals' may be from Intelligent Beings". This title was a typical example of editorial exaggeration (The titles of stories, their headlines in a newspaper, are never given by the reporters who actually write them, but by a special sub-editor who is employed just for this purpose to choose an evocative line to attract the readers' attention and curiosity).

I had visited Dr Anthony Hewish (later professor, FRS and Nobel Laureate) at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge on the previous day and he told me of an entirely novel kind of star which had first been noticed on 6 August 1967. To begin with, the only explanation of the extremely regular pulsations of the star could be explained only by intelligent signalling and among themselves they called it L.G.M. (Little Green Man).

The first to notice the regularity of the pulsations was Miss S. Jocelyn Bell (later Mrs Bumell, Ph.D.) a student from Ireland working with Dr Hewish. Miss Bell told me: "We have eliminated any source within our solar system but have found it to lie within our own galaxy. It pulsates every 1.337 second with extreme accuracy, better than one part in 10 million. Since we published the result last week, Dr Hewish has had several telephone calls from America. I am sure that today every radio telescope is looking for pulsating stars. It is the greatest thing in radio astronomy for a long time" With further tests under way, the Cambridge team of radio astronomers had changed their opinion and favoured a completely natural explanation of the new star's pulsations. It might be somewhat between a dwarf star and a neutron star, was their opinion at the time.

I asked Dr Hewish "What do you propose to call this new type of star? As it pulsates" I said "would not 'pulsar' be appropriate?" He replied "Yes, that might be a good name for it". I think I was justified in my report in the *Daily Telegraph* to state in print: "The name Pulsar (Pulsating Star) is likely to be given to it"and thus the word *Pulsar* entered the literature and has always been used for this type of star. Many more stars of this kind have been discovered since then.

It was only 11 years later that I received confirmation that I had created an astronomical neologism by being the first to use the word 'pulsar' in my report in the *Daily Telegraph*. I had sent a cutting of my article of 5 March 1968 to Mrs Bumell at the Mullard Space Science Laboratory near Dorking in Surrey where she was then working and asked her for an assurance of my priority which had been doubted. She replied very kindly on 18 October 1979 "Yes, as far as I know, this was the first published use of the word pulsar".

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