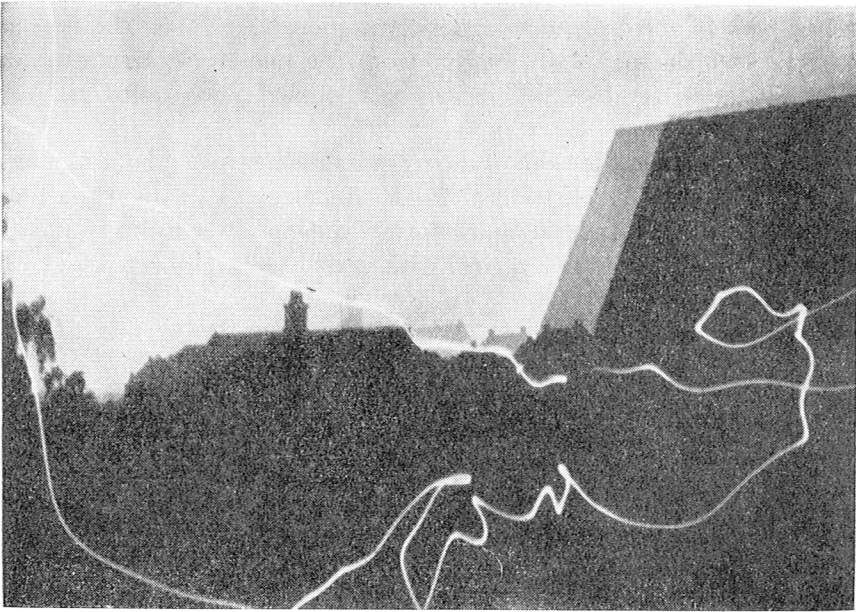


Ball Lightning



An acquaintance of mine, a lecturer at the Copenhagen Polytechnic, asked me some time ago whether a photograph of ball lightning would be of any interest to me. On my confirming this emphatically, he told me that he had found amongst some old papers such a photograph, taken in his presence by a friend several years previously. He kindly put the photograph at my disposal on learning that it was unique. As a non-meteorologist, the observer was unaware of the importance of the photograph and failed to take proper note of the date, hour, exact duration, etc. All that can be stated, from some written remarks on the back of

the original photograph and from the observer's recollection of the occurrence, is the following:

During a thunderstorm the observer and his friend had set up a camera with open shutter in a window, in an attempt to photograph a lightning flash. During the exposure the ball lightning was seen to pass the window. Presumably the moving of the camera during exposure, which is clearly seen on the picture, was due to an involuntary movement of the observer whilst looking at the lightning. The movement of the ball was described as »slow». It was finally carried by a downdraught into the chimney (a cold chimney on a hot summer day) and finished by exploding in the fireplace of the central heating system.

The path of the ball, as traced on the picture, exhibits the type of movement which one would expect from the numerous statements on record to the effect that ball lightning is carried along quite passively by the airflow.

On the basis of the breadth of the trace on the negative (about $\frac{1}{2}$ mm.) and with reasonable assumption as to the distance (10 m.) and the focal length of the lens (10 cm.) the approximate diameter of the ball is computed to be 5 cm.; this is in good accord with what is generally reported from visual observation.

Helge Petersen.

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»The Variation of the Compass Magnetic Declination 1950»

(Scale 1 : 2 milj.)

Prepared by the Hydrographic Office of Norway, the Royal Hydrographic Office of Sweden, the Meteorological Central Office of Finland, and the Danish Meteorological Institute.

Geophysicists from the countries of northern Europa held a meeting in Stockholm in 1950 and urged their countries to prepare a general chart of magnetic declination. A committee was formed from delegates representing the above-mentioned institutes to undertake this project, and Director Rolf Kjær of Norway was elected as chairman. To carry out this task, the committee held meetings in Sodankylä in August 1950,