

SC

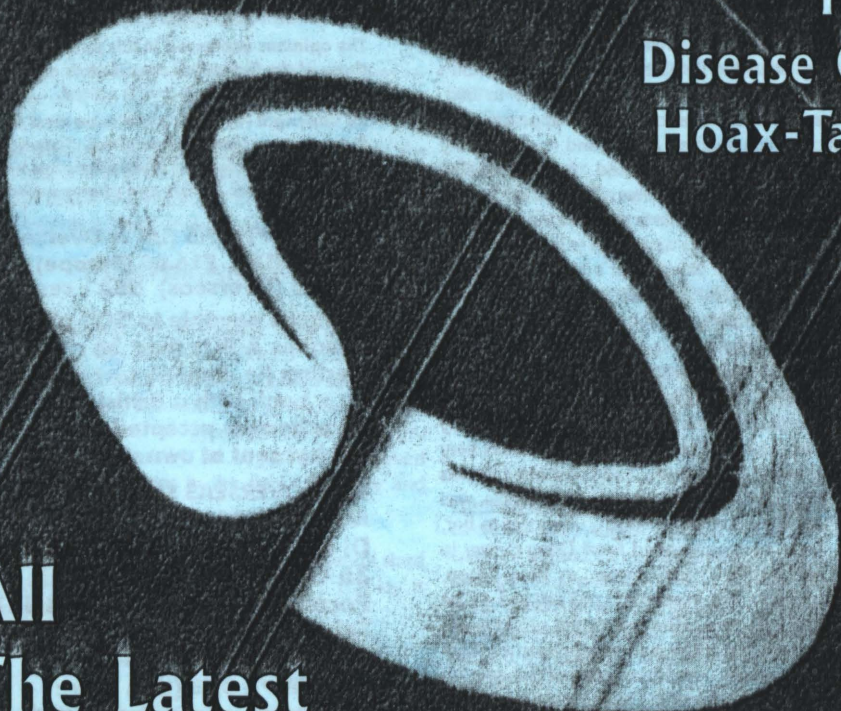
*THE MONTHLY
JOURNAL OF
CROP CIRCLES
AND BEYOND*

68

SEPTEMBER 1997

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The
Disease Of
Hoax-Talk



**All
The Latest
Formations
Detailed**

**SC - Our Last,
Best Hope For
Cerealogical Sanity**

"In dealing with cunning persons, we must ever consider their ends to interpret their speeches; and it is good to say little to them, and that which they least look for" FRANCIS BACON

I take back everything I said last month in being so generous as to think that perhaps the Oliver's Castle video was about to be publicly revealed as a fabrication after all. Despite all the promises of TV exposes, anniversary revelations at *The Barge* and the rest of the twaddle, none of these have materialized, not one piece of evidence has been forthcoming to challenge the video's authenticity and no-one has openly confessed to anything. Once again, those charlatans who have shouted the loudest about all this have failed to produce the goods despite all their promises, leaving themselves looking like cheap tricksters. Even if the much-hyped 'truth' about the sequence being faked does finally arrive, the point is that it never comes when the big mouths guarantee it will, throwing the reliability of their claims into severe doubt. Either the video is a scam or it isn't. If it is, let's meet the man responsible, who all these people claim to know, and let's hear his story. If this simple thing can't be established then can everyone please shut up once and for all and admit that they don't have the facts necessary to put this mystery to bed. Here we are now over a year on from the appearance of the formation which sparked all this and no-one is any the wiser about what really happened. A major window has been missed by the debunkers. The excuse for the non-appearance of the expose is that one individual TV production company is now rumoured to have exclusive rights to the supposed video-faker's story and that it won't be released until they choose to do so. Given that this production company is one that was heavily involved in some questionable circle-debunking a few years ago, it hardly encourages hope for the integrity of the project. Enough of all this. Away with these shysters! In fact, TV companies never seem to give up on the very old hat let's-fool-the-silly-circle-freaks pantomimes they like to stage from time to time. The latest attempt was from BBC 2's *Country File* when Lucy Pringle was asked to examine a formation which, unknown to her, had been made by reconstituted fossil Doug Bower in the same field as the 'pastry cutter' at West Meon. Happily, Lucy was not impressed and refused to be drawn into the jolly jape. The rest of the report is apparently rather more sensible and can be seen on English screens - hopefully - on the morning of Sunday 7th September, if the schedulers are telling the truth.

Others who never seem to give up are the annual hoax-claimants Lundbergh and Dickinson who have issued a press release claiming responsibility for many of this year's major designs. The funny thing is, their case collapses at just the briefest of glances at the formations in question. The designs speak for themselves to anyone with an ounce of discernment and if they don't then those who would believe the unsubstantiated musings of these alleged "artists" are beyond reality recall anyway.

ANDY THOMAS

SC

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Front Cover: Long Marston, Warwickshire, August 1997. Photograph by Steve Alexander.

New reports of crop formations continue to pour in, so here goes with the latest as we have it... By the way, if you're wondering why we're speaking in the past tense now, instead of the usual present, it's because by the time you read this, nearly all of these formations will almost certainly be harvested. Sorry.

BEDFORDSHIRE

Flitwick: A ringed circle with an emanating Y-shaped path accompanied by a smaller ring appeared on 4th August, not too far from a similar pictogram at Barton Le Clay reported briefly last month.

CORNWALL

Downderry: A formation of unknown details was reported here on 15th August.

Skimmel Bridge, Nr Tremethick Cross: Only the second formation ever to have appeared in flax, to our knowledge (there is a record of one from 1990), was reported here as a small single circle around 11th July.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Hemel Hempstead: An extremely long pathway of several thousand feet length and about 5' width, twisted in a bizarre configuration in wheat, with two semi-circles as part of the 'design', was written off by the farmer, very charitably, as the work of 'gypsies'. However, Barry Reynolds, who discovered it on August 2nd, observed classic crop circle qualities in the flow of the lay and believes otherwise.

Walkern, Nr Stevenage: A line of many different sized circles appeared here around 4th August. The lay is apparently neat and pressed very flat.

HEREFORD & WORCESTER

Wythall, Nr Solihull: A bizarre complex of circles, rings and other shapes, connected by very long thin paths, arrived here in wheat on 6th August. A kind of stick-man shape with 'insectogram'-type antenna not unlike the 1991 'Mr Curlyman' formation lay nearby. The swirled floors of the circles were complicated. A good view could be had from trains on the nearby Birmingham to Stratford-on-Avon railway line.

KENT

Cuxton, Nr Rochester: One of Kent's most complex patterns yet almost got overlooked - found in the middle of August, locals estimated it had been there for at least

two months! Nineteen circles cluster at the centre of a design which has three fractal-type arms. The formation was in wheat very close to a water pumping station.

Sevington, Nr Ashford: At the site of a 50' circle from 1996, three 10' clockwise circles appeared in a triangular configuration on 13th August.

OXFORDSHIRE

Toot Balden: Competing with Haslebury Plucknett for the award of silliest circle-site place name this year, Toot Balden was apparently host to two circles in one field, one 60' and the other 10' in diameter, reported 6th August.

Arse Sodbury: Actually, we just made this up in an effort to come up with an even sillier name than the above. There is no such place really, you'll be glad to know.

SHROPSHIRE

Forton, Nr Shrewsbury: The small circle in wheat near the A5 reported last issue has since been joined by a dumbbell alongside it, reported 2nd August.

SUSSEX

Angmering, West Sussex: While flying in his microlight aircraft in early August, Michael Hubbard spotted a field covered in patches and pathways, many of which were clearly animal/people tracks. However, in amongst this mess seemed to be several small squiggles and pictogram-shapes which couldn't possibly be standard lodging, although the field was never examined from the ground.

Offham, Nr Lewes, East Sussex: Just one mile from the SC editorial address (more fodder for the silly SC-team-as-hoaxers rumours - is this the phenomenon's idea of a bad joke?), a 40' approx clockwise single circle appeared in flax, directly next to the banks of the River Ouse as it flows north out of Lewes. A 13' long Y-shaped pathway lay next to it and a 10' approx grapeshot circle lay 100' or so to the south-west. First spotted on 9th August, the formation was growing up

again and rough in places when surveyed a week or so later but had been nicely laid with some good specimens of fairly thick stems bent neatly at ground level. This is the first ever report of a Sussex crop circle in flax, the plant with the pretty blue flowers which is used to produce linseed oil, and only the third flax formation ever reported anywhere (see Cornwall report for the second). In a nice synchronistic irony, the farmer who owns the field has recently been in the national news for having illegally ploughed up part of the protected South Downs to grow... flax. The fine for doing this is so much less than the subsidy received for growing flax that he reasoned he may as well just go ahead and plough!

Southase, East Sussex: Just a mile or two north from the Newhaven dumbbell reported last month, alongside the same country road from Lewes, a 49' circle with two 40' long L-shaped emanating pathways and a third 19' straight path was found on 5th August. Very visible from the road, the formation was only one field south of the 1995 double-ringed rape circle. I was lucky enough to enter the formation and take some photos and dimensions shortly before it was harvested. The full Southern Circular Research (SCR) team surveyed what was left a few days after. The lay was very reminiscent of the Newhaven pattern and showed many of the same qualities, including some fine examples of nodal bending to effect certain curves within the floor pattern. Given that a few people didn't think I should have mentioned (*whisper it*) N-A-Z-I-S with regard to the swastika formation reported at Aylesbury last issue, was it coincidence that this design seemed to be the beginnings of... a swastika?

Storrington, West Sussex: As we go to print, word is reaching us of a large and reportedly impressive pictogram which appeared here sometime in early August. The farmer apparently surrounded the formation with traffic cones to ward people off entering it! Unfortunately, the SCR team didn't find out about it until the field had been harvested.

Wineham, Nr Henfield, West Sussex: An unconfirmed report of "six circles in a row" here in early August remains unconfirmed as no amount of searching on the ground or from the air (courtesy of Michael Hubbard) has managed to unearth anything although the farmer apparently swears they were there. Some other strange blocks and patches, which could have been bird damage, were, however, spotted at nearby Edburton.

WILTSHIRE

Alton Barnes: Overlooked by its bigger brother at Alton Priors (reported last issue), a similar but much smaller design of overlapping rings was found in the East Field on 31st July. As the lay wasn't very neat - neither was its predecessor's - this has, of course, been written off by the

usual bunch as an obvious man-made copy. There is no evidence for this, would you believe.

Badbury/Liddington Castle, Nr Swindon: Several formations have appeared within a small area here. An exquisitely laid single 20 metre circle in wheat just off the A346 near Chiseldon was reported on 31st July. A week later, a simple but quite beautiful pictogram of two circles connected by a gracefully curving 150 x 1.5 metre pathway appeared close by. The spiralled lay of the circles, one clockwise and 15 metres, the other anti-clockwise and 25 metres, were very neat. Later in August, a rougher 60' approx 'eye' design of two standing crescents and another shape encompassing a single central circle arrived on the same spot as the 'squashed caterpillar' fractal of 1996. The most beautiful of all the formations to appear though was a stunning fractal of 29 different sized circles splaying out like arms from a curved crescent arrangement reminiscent of last year's Ashbury 'croissant'. This was found around 17th August in the same field as the 'eye'.

Barbury Castle: A crude arrow design emanating from a squashed-looking circle is mitigated somewhat by the impressive radial burst lay in the centre of the circle. Perhaps the arrow was added later? This arrived in wheat around 29th July.

Etchilhampton: In the same field as last year's record-breaking pictogram of over 4000' length, two quite stunning designs arrived next to each other in wheat on 1st August. One, bizarrely, consisted of a flattened circle with a standing square inside it. The square was sectioned off into 780 little boxes by criss-crossed paths - in reality only two continuous paths which wound back on themselves to continue at the end of each row. This pattern has been described as a 'boustrophedon' (see *Cornography* this issue for more on this). The other design, 150' away from the first, is an astonishingly gorgeous ringed circle with six unusual petals clustered closely around a central circle. Two of the neatest formations of this year without any doubt. On 8th August, the circles returned to an adjoining field with a long, thin early 90's-style pictogram. Around 300' in length, a circle with a long emanating key shape connected by a path to a circle with a standing crescent, which in turn connected to two joined circles and an odd Aladdin's lamp-type symbol at the end. The flow and layering of the crop were reportedly very impressive. As if all this were not enough, a single clockwise circle lay further up the field.

Lockeridge: I take back some of what I said about lodging being mistaken for formations here in the last issue; after being alerted, closer inspection revealed that there was indeed a perfect 'proper' crop circle in amongst the other non-geometric shapes around it, leading once

again to deeper speculation about just what some of this 'lodging' really is... (I still maintain it's impossible to keep a record of all this stuff, though.) Interestingly, the stems were all bent down from about two or three inches above the ground, as opposed to the more usual floor-level flattening, giving quite a springy trampoline-like feel as one walked inside it. This circle and its attendant flattened areas were on the same spot as the bizarre squiggle pictogram of last year.

Milk Hill, Nr Alton Barnes: As if the fractal star (known, apparently, as a 'Koch snowflake') at Silbury Hill (reported last month - see photo on page 8) wasn't enough, another near identical but even more impressive version of the same design appeared here on 8th August in wheat, this time with a central six-armed flower. Arguably one of the most impressive formations ever to have appeared, there are around 200 grapeshot surrounding the 200' approx snowflake's outline, a record-breaking number of circles in one pattern. Like Silbury, each small circle, all clockwise, seemed to have been beautifully constructed in different way from the next. One of the central grapeshot had a nest-like hole you could actually place your entire forearm into and another was spiralled inwards in a single plait. The overall lay was slightly rougher than the Silbury design, but more complex. Overlooked by the famous Milk Hill white horse carving, with the Alton Priors rings formation clearly visible to the east, the setting for this formation was stunningly beautiful and attracted many visitors. Several TV crews filmed inside. Unfortunately, one of these was the satellite channel Sky TV, who, with Colin Andrews in tow, filmed alleged 'hoaxer' Rob Irving adding five grapeshot circles next to the massive design, the inference being that if he could make these, he could have made the whole formation. Just one glimpse of the aerial shots or a sensible stroll inside this thing from anyone with an ounce of sense, however, shows that implication up as the complete tripe it is. Curiously, a week before, with permission, American enthusiast Erik Beckjord had stamped out (the somewhat simplistic)

"WHERE DO YOU LIVE?" in a nearby field as a question to the circle makers. Was this his answer, as he believes? If so, we're still none the wiser.

Warminster: An early 90's-style neat dumbbell of a single-ringed and a double-ringed circle and other paths was reported here on 31st July.

YORKSHIRE

Dodworth, Nr Barnsley: A 'thought bubble'-type formation of a large ringed circle with two decreasingly smaller tail circles was reported on 1st August. The smallest circle was attached to a larger satellite some distance away by a long curving pathway. A very neat 70' approx triple-ringed clockwise circle with rings of various widths was also discovered nearby on the same date.

AND FINALLY...

Please, no more calls about the field-size maze at Abingdon in Oxfordshire! This is NOT a crop formation, but a piece of well-documented landscape art in sweetcorn maize. The maze in maize was created by an artistic farmer pulling up stems to create a vast and elaborate windmill design and has been featured heavily by a gushing and enthusiastic media. Ironic, isn't it, that equally impressive works of art are popping out of nowhere into our fields every night but they only warrant the odd mention here and there with a liberal dash of cynicism...

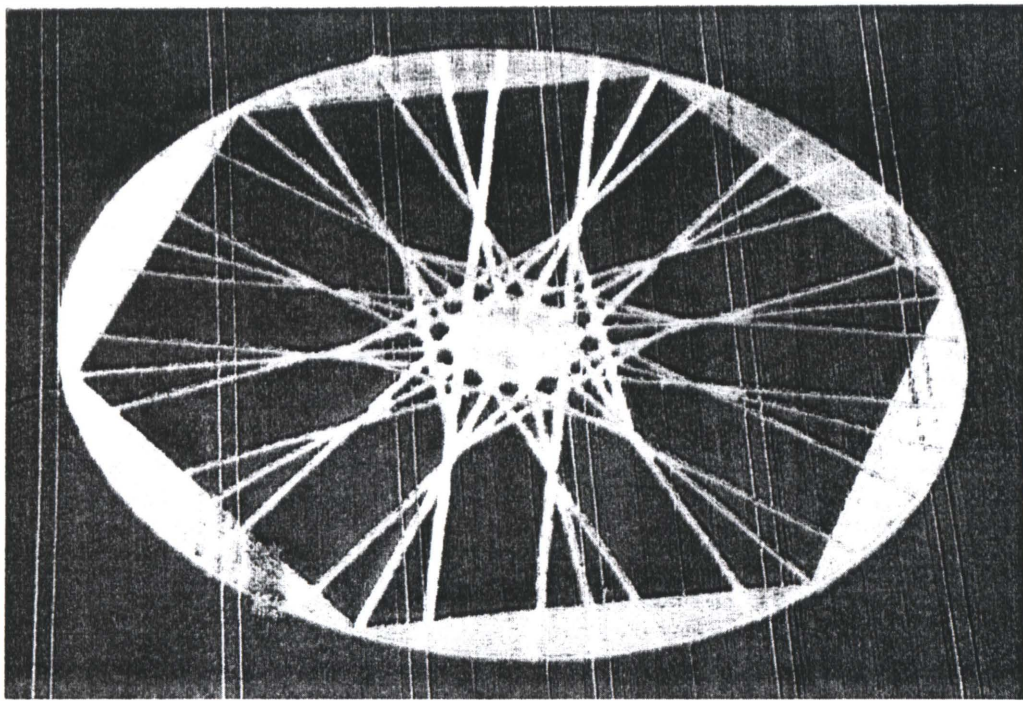
Once again, we promised last issue that this month we'd update you all on the overseas crop formations of 1997. We lied. Lack of time has beaten us again. We will get 'round to it in the end. AT

Thanks this issue to: Crop Circle Connector, Michael Glickman, Patricia Murray, Barry Reynolds, Michael Hubbard, Ray Cox, Nigel Tomsett, Chris Stonor, Jenny Keen & Tim Lock.

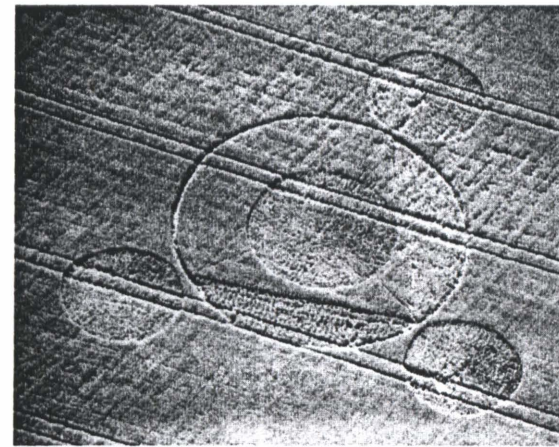
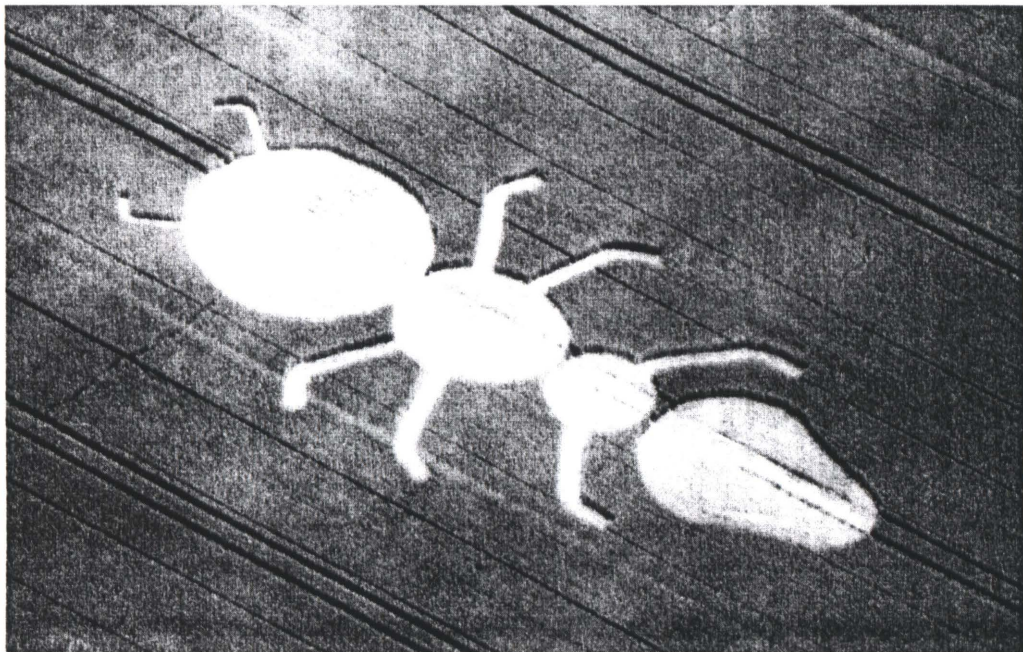
DIARY DATES

Just a few upcoming events which may interest SC readers... On 20th & 21st September, the Cornwall UFO Research Group (CUFORG) are holding a large weekend conference at Truro College Sports Hall. Speakers will include David Icke, Nick Pope, Roy Lake, Nexus magazine's Marcus Allen, and, er, one Andy Thomas. The event (which has most certainly not been cancelled as one rumour suggested) promises to be exciting and costs only £18.00 for both days or £10.00 for each. Telephone 01872 276381 for details.

Then, on 25th September, at Haslemere Hall, Haslemere, Surrey, co-author of *The Orion Mystery* and *Keeper of Genesis*, Robert Bauval, will be joining Lucy Pringle for an evening of enlightening information on the latest discoveries about the significance of the sphinx and the pyramids, together with a review of the 1997 crop circle season with Lucy's many photographs. Tickets cost £7.00 and details can be obtained from Lucy at 01730 263454. And if you can't wait for these, that Andy Thomas person will be giving a whole-day workshop examining in detail the crop circles of 1997, exploring the history of the whole phenomenon and looking at formations which have appeared around the globe, at Flint House, Lewes, East Sussex, on 14th September. Telephone Flint House on 01273 473388 for details... AT



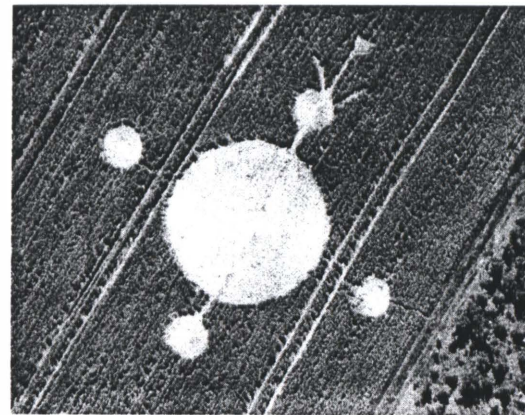
ABOVE: Cley Hill, near Warminster, Wiltshire. This started out as a single circle... Note how the pathways extend visibly out into the laid crop of the hexagon. **BELOW:** The East Meon 'ant' in Hampshire. Actually, if it is an ant, the circlemakers don't know much about insect biology... or are we missing the point here?



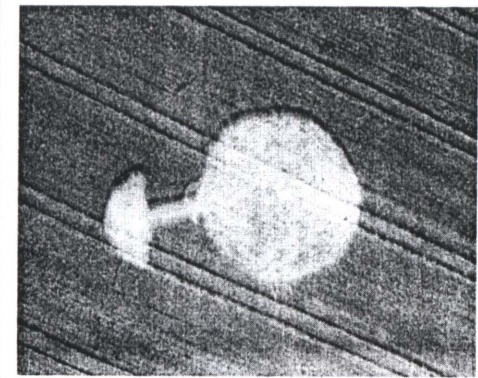
#4 '97 CIRCLES GALLERY

More visual records of the diverse and beautiful crop formations of 1997 by STEVE ALEXANDER, with the exception of the Newhaven photo which is by MICHAEL HUBBARD.

Full colour original copies of Steve's pictures can be obtained from him at: 27 St Francis Road, Gosport, Hants, PO12 2UG.



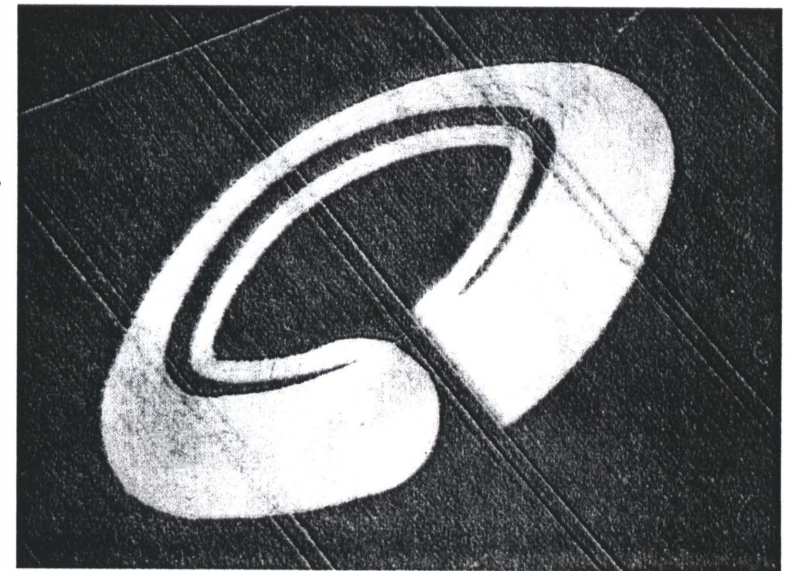
TOP: Rockley Down, Wiltshire.

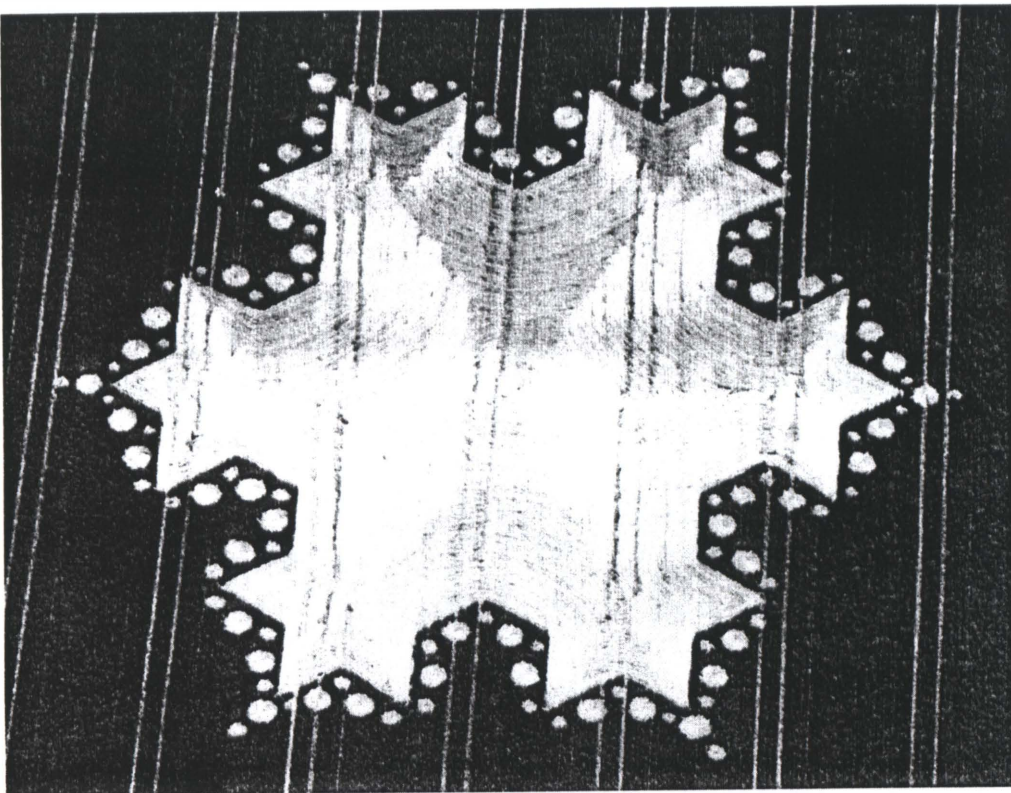


MID LEFT: Chiselhampton, Oxfordshire. The satellites were not originally joined to the central circle and the odd branches at the top also arrived later.

MID RIGHT: Newhaven, East Sussex. The distinctive mushroom shape is very reminiscent of part of the pictogram at nearby Denton in 1995.

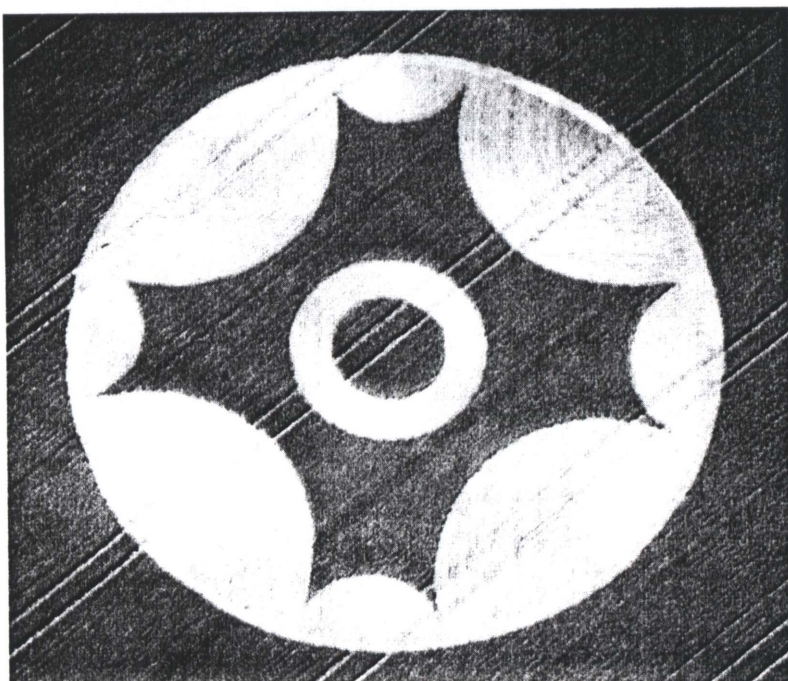
RIGHT: Long Marston, Warwickshire - allegedly the logo of a pop band. The 3-dimensional quality to this design is stunning.





ABOVE: The astonishing fractal of triangles at Silbury Hill, Wiltshire. If you think this is impressive, wait until you see the mark two version of this design at Milk Hill next issue...

RIGHT: Morestead, Hampshire, a beautiful pattern which has got rather overlooked in amongst the other stunners of 1997...



LETTERS

Our comments in SC 66 have prompted the following reply from Peter Sorensen. Bracketed numbers within the text denote points raised in our comments below.

SC is not the only entity to say that I've been unusually negative about the circles this summer - which is, uncomfortably, true. But it is not due to a spiritual slump or from selling out to the CIA (as one worried friend wondered). There are two interrelated reasons.

It's taken me years to develop the Red Indian-like skill of spotting footprints in laid crop (which are obvious if mud is involved, yet nearly invisible if it isn't), but last season my eyes learned the subtle clues to look for [1]. The other thing is that I feel that many of the early formations this year have been "crude and unsophisticated designs" (your words, accurately describing my opinion, in the July SC) [2]. The fact that there have been so few circles until recently (at the time this letter was written - Ed), has not helped.

I was lucky enough to get into nearly all the early Wiltshire and Hampshire formations on the first or second day, being probably [3] the first researcher in several of those. With the exception of the Winterbourne Bassett 'Harlequin', the crop in these early ones was, in my opinion, definitely flattened by humans. Clear footprints with tread marks and, often, mud, were present virtually everywhere. These were not left by visitors but went in lines strictly parallel to the standing crop, the way human artists work [4]. In addition, the two rape circles near Barbury Castle consisted of plants that were all crimped or broken in two, and - worst of all - hundreds of stalks were scarred along the length of their upper surface (the fingerprint of a stomping board) [5].

Having found damning evidence on the ground, I have not been inclined to be charitable about the style of the designs for the most part (the Barbury crescents being a beautiful exception - well done lads!) [6]. Take the Stonehenge snowflake, for example. (It would be much easier for me to attack some of the outright ugly designs but the snowflake - which was the example SC used to point out my "perverse" point of view - is an interesting case.) Now, virtually any design with six-sided symmetry will be pretty (that's why a kaleidoscope is such fun) and the snowflake is pretty. But, as an artist who was attracted to the mystery by the awesome power and superb sense of style that the true circle makers have demonstrated, I have to say, "pretty" is not good enough for me. From the sublime proportions of the 1987 Upton Scudamore quintuplet, to the spectacular spiralling Julia Sets, there is something transcendental

about the masterpieces of the real Artists. They are not of this Earth! [7] The snowflake was terribly weak by comparison, and its arms were unpleasantly irregular. On the ground, the Stonehenge snowflake was a textbook case of human fabrication [8]. Despite the supple young barley, which would be a prime candidate for magical bends, all the stalks were crimped [9]. Muddy footprints were everywhere. I looked in dozens of out of the way little circles but they all had treadmarks going painstakingly around them. The centre of the whole thing featured a ridiculously contrived sculpture consisting of a tightly twisted doughnut with a kind of tepee inside it - an exaggerated caricature of the lovely 'corn dollies' we sometimes find in good circles [10].

Despite such early disappointments, we are getting many good formations now, such as the Triad at Danebury, the Ring Quintuplet, the Goddess, and, of course, the big one here at Alton Priors.

Let me say that, despite our occasional differences in opinion about certain circles and videos, I always admire (and read) SC for its frank and outspoken pursuit of the crop circle mystery. Since hundreds of wonderful croppies who read SC have been dismayed with my early statements this summer, I would be grateful if you would print this letter as the best means of clarifying my position. Onward!

PS. The snowflake was five big tramlines wide, which puts it around 300' in diameter, and it had 194 circles, if you count the one that encompasses the design and one that was obscured at the centre where the arms converge. That smacks of hoaxers trying for bragging rights for tying the record of the Triple Julia [11] - except that nearly all of the snowflake circles were merely four feet in diameter!

Peter Sorensen, c/o Alton Priors, Wiltshire.

First of all, let us say that we respect Peter for responding decently and directly to our recent comments, instead of resorting to the revengeful teeth-gnashing and rumour-mongering which some of SC's comments about other people's opinions have produced over the years. Peter has at least explained his position clearly and honestly, even if we don't agree with his views. So, our hats off to him for that.

The operative words here in Peter's letter are "in my opinion". This letter sets out where Peter is coming from but it should be remembered that this is his opinion. Some who have entered the same formations as he have disagreed with his observations and their views must be seen as equally valid. People who have not had personal experience of the formations in question must make their own minds up who to rely on.

I suppose our greatest problem with Peter's stance is that although he is quite entitled to his beliefs and views, his presentation of them always carries an implication of

their being gospel fact in his well-known captioned diagrams of new crop formations, which are widely distributed across the world via the Internet and other outlets. Peter has even started omitting certain parts of formations that he doesn't like in his drawings. As many out there seem oddly unable to exercise any sort of discernment of their own and are quite happy to quote third-hand opinion as certainties, Peter's work carries the potential of creating widespread damage when pronouncements on the genuineness or otherwise of formations - or parts of them - are made by him. Several worrying comments have come our way this year along the lines of "Oh, I heard the circles were all hoaxes this year - it said so on the Internet/The Barge noticeboard/wherever". The main source of many of these disillusionments have been Peter's words. Although Peter may well be happy with some of this year's patterns, the fact is those on the periphery of interest are being turned away by his more negative opinions being presented as fact and this is doing no-one any good.

Peter must, of course, be allowed to exercise his right of free speech, but we would beg him to consider his words and how they are presented with his pictures very carefully. Peter, too, is human (we presume!) and not infallible. As we have seen before, longevity within the research community is not necessarily a guarantee of reliability. Some humility from all of us (yep, even SC) wouldn't go amiss right now to avoid the catastrophic effects of expanding egos. Those who are figureheads in the croppie world have a huge responsibility to pass on information uninfected with too much opinion - others must be allowed to choose their views without being hammered on the head with negativity at the outset. Sadly, such hammering is increasingly occurring - see Martin Noakes' article this issue, written without even having read Peter's letter above.

We are not saying that every formation should be declared genuine but rather that no formation should be declared anything at all, simply reported with cool observations, free from heavy implication unless solid intelligence information is available, which it rarely is. What we do ask - beg, even - is that those who scour information networks, public bars and journals for crop circle information should use their own discernment before deciding that Mr A or Mr B is the only one in possession of all the answers. The crop circle mystery is STILL a mystery. No-one really knows what's going on, what's real and what isn't, not Peter, not SC, not the believers nor the cynics. Think for yourselves, don't rely on other's opinions.

With all this in mind, and our respect for Peter's calmly considered response to our comments, his letter cannot go unpublished without responding to some of the issues raised within it. The numbered points are signposted within Peter's letter - Ed.

SC's OBSERVATIONS:

[1] These 'Red Indian' skills are another in a long line of personal 'litmus tests' from various researchers which may or may not be effective and which are seldom verified by others - thus their reliability is uncertain.

[2] Sorry, but we still don't agree that "many" of this year's early formations can be described as crude. But, each to their own.

[3] Is "probably the first researcher in" good enough here? It only takes one visitor to a formation to leave footprints and marks. How sure can Peter be that he is absolutely the first in to all of these circles?

[4] How do we know how human artists work? Based on what proven and thorough study?

[5] Scarring along the length of rape stems is a questionable test. The SCR survey team has examined many standing rape stems in the past which display the same 'scarring' - which has nothing to do with board marks. Have such 'board marks', again, ever been a subject of a serious study? It is also a bit of a myth that stems in 'genuine' rape formations are never broken.

[6] Upcoming geometrical observations by Barry Reynolds (see future issue) strongly challenge any idea that the "lads" - whoever they are - had anything to do with the Barbury crescents, in our opinion.

[7] Another assumption! How do we know the circle-makers "are not of this Earth"?

[8] Again, what is a "textbook case" for human fabrication? What textbook, where?

[9] 'Magic bends' - where stems are bent at nodal positions - are nice to find, but their absence cannot be taken as proof of hoaxing. The majority of plants in generally-accepted 'genuine' formations have not had magic bends in them.

[10] What makes something "contrived"? Is this indicative of anything? Given that The Oxford Reference Dictionary states that to 'contrive' means to "Devise, plan, or make resourcefully with skill", surely every complex formation that ever was appears to have been 'contrived'?

[11] The coincidence of the numbers of circles in the Stonehenge snowflake and the Windmill Hill triple Julia Set smacks more to us of the synchronicity and consistency we have come to expect from the phenomenon. Why are "hoaxers" a more credible alternative? AT

The phenomenon of crop circles is, as always, presenting us once again with an array of complex patterns to study.

I can accept that some people will be sceptical, I can quite happily accept that not everyone will find the subject as exciting as most of you reading this magazine. However what I find increasingly diffi-

cult to comprehend, is the unbelievable arrogance of people, some who should certainly know better, who blindly proclaim formations as hoaxed.

To give you a couple of examples: I recently returned from three days in Wiltshire. We camped at a pub called the Golden Swan and on our first evening there, having set up our tent etc, we entered

into a conversation with a chap who stood next to me at the bar. His name was Tony. I discovered that he was on holiday to look at the formations. "What do you think of the formations so far?" I asked him. "Oh, they're all hoaxes this year". Shocked, I asked him for any evidence of the alleged hoaxing. He replied that "there are teams of skilled hoaxers, who do it for the buzz". When I asked him who these people were, he didn't know. According to Tony, about 98% of all formations were hoaxes. Why then did he spend two precious weeks of his holiday studying MAN-MADE FORMATIONS? It made no sense.

The next day we went to The Barge and met up with Steve Alexander and Karen Douglas. Sitting with them was Michael Newark (the dowser). To my amazement/horror, once more I heard about these amazing teams of hoaxers from Michael. (He also thinks that the reasoning behind hoaxing is for the buzz).

Lastly, at the Stones restaurant at Avebury we saw a well-known researcher. I asked her if there were any new formations, to which she mentioned a couple and then said that there was "one in the East field" (Alton Barnes) and at another location (I can't remember where), that were "no good". "How do you know they're no good?" I asked her. "Because the farmer told me, and he had a lovely formation on his land last year. I don't think he would be silly

about it". She had, at that time, neither flown over nor seen at first hand the last formation, and yet with absolute confidence said; "It's no good".

I am no more an expert than anyone else on this subject. I think it's fair to say that we are all but students, feeling our way around in the dark. I don't know the energy used to create a formation.

Neither does anyone else, therefore it cannot be guaranteed that the same effects will be detected in genuine formations every time.

Surely without compelling evidence (of which I see none), it is totally wrong to express a personal negative opinion as fact, especially when interviewed by the media. Unsubstantiated statements along the lines of "we know that many of the formations are hoaxes", need clarification. Explain how you KNOW formations are hoaxed, because myself, and fellow researchers in Sussex, know nothing of these amazing teams of hoaxers (who never make a mistake, never leave a formation half-finished, have never been caught, never seek publicity after all this time and should obviously be employed by the likes of large and successful creative advertising agencies).

Surely if just one of the pictograms is genuine, there's no reason to suspect that many, if any, of the others aren't totally genuine. It's time for us to encourage new people into the active field of research, not to display a show of disharmony. If someone thinks a formation isn't genuine, fine, discuss it with other researchers, get other opinions, and move on to the next formation. But please don't shout it out to the world, because that's exactly the reason this phenomenon is easily debunked, and why Joe Public believes the debunkers.

The last thing I intend to do is add to the negativity that currently exists in the crop circle community, and upset people, but I feel the time has come to speak out. MN

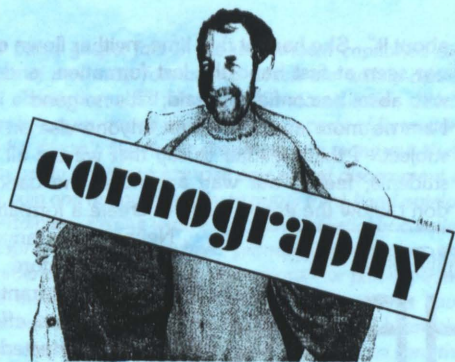
Martin and Sloane Noakes are currently appearing in the September issue of Homes & Ideas magazine if you want some dinner party cookery tips... Honest - Ed.

- OPINION -

TO HEAR IS TO BELIEVE..?

MARTIN NOAKES takes a crop-circling excursion in Wiltshire and is not amused by the senseless negativity he finds in other croppies. Cereological research is still being hoodwinked by charlatans and rumour-mongers it seems, in the face of almost non-existent evidence...

"Tossing occasionally..."



with Michael Glickman

The closest field to where we stay in Wiltshire is Gypsy Patch in Etchilhampton. This is the field that received the 8/10 mile formation last year. In the way of croppies everywhere, we took it as a personal gift because it landed the day we spoke at Glastonbury. Darryl Anka, who spoke the same day and who was staying with us a mile from the field felt that the formation was of real significance for him, too.

Patricia Murray and I assumed we would get another this year in our neighbouring field and, on about the 24th July, in the dark, a large luminosity whizzed past us towards the field. We took this as an omen and visited the field daily. On the night of Wednesday 30th July, driving home from Devizes, I turned the corner near the field and blurted out "It's landed!". I have never done this kind of thing before and I was as surprised to hear it as Patricia. She said, trying to humour me, I thought - "What's it like?". I replied "It's three circles" with a similar certainty. To this day I have no idea how I got this information. The following afternoon, we went to the field and discovered the twin formations; a six-fold spinning star and the 'Calendar Grid', the first large square ever.

Compare, for a moment, our delight at this discovery (a delight which is there for anybody who wishes to be involved with the circles) to the sleazy satisfactions derived by the know-it-all debunkers, whose greatest thrill is to diminish wonder and steal joy.

The fact that there were only two circles did not bother me a great deal. After all, I had no idea where the information came from. I was hardly in a position to moan about its inaccuracy!

The Calendar Grid was a huge 100' square set within a 150' circle. The square was divided into 780 smaller squares, 26 east-west and 30 north-south, by laid grid-lines, about eleven or twelve inches wide. The grid systems both commenced at the north-west corner of the square, horizontal lines laid first and then vertical. They were laid *boustrophedon*, which

means 'as the ox ploughs', that is left to right, then right to left or up, down, up, down. Thus the lines followed a continuous snake-like path of well over two and a half thousand feet in length.

We called it a Calendar Grid because we felt that the 26 units represented 26 weeks, or half a year. 30 lines of 26 thus was fifteen years which brought us to - wait for it - 2012, the date signalled so clearly by the Mayan calendar.

Do I need to describe the joy of this work? Do I need to clarify my sadness at the thought of those pub-rats whose idea of research is to sit with a beer and proclaim their groundless doubts to anyone stupid enough to give them time?

Yesterday we spent three hours in the field watching the formations being harvested. Watching a harvester cut a formation away is always moving, especially if it has been important to you and if you have spent time there. As the machine moved up and down, I lay in the formations and examined my surroundings in the minutest detail. It had never occurred to me that there were so many wildflowers in a wheat field, possibly because they are so tiny. I had never been so clearly aware of the number of insects that live in this environment. Nor had I spent so long staring, really staring, at one square foot of laid crop circle. There is so much to learn.

As the harvester sliced into the formations it revealed, as it always does, the shadow of the circle. The laid crop is generally below the blades and the pattern is sometimes clearer after harvest. In the case of the grid, it was exposed as an even more astonishing creation.

I arrived for this season filled with anticipation and looking forward to seeing my friends. It took me two weeks to recover from the horrors of the negativity of *The Barge*. What a lovely pub we had and what a gracious meeting place it had been. Now I find it painful to enter. So do many new and innocent croppies who arrive only to have their expectations dashed by the new fundamentalism which has taken control. I urge you to take to the barricades! Restore our Barge to its previous glories! Tear the hollow propaganda from the walls! Dethrone the self-appointed emperors of hoax-boosting and ego and duck them into the Kennett and Avon canal!

Above all, call in the Thames Valley Police. If these people are telling the truth, they are aiding and abetting numerous crimes against farmers' property. They claim to know of hundreds of cases of damage which they refuse to disclose. **MG**