



**THE BIMONTHLY
JOURNAL OF
CROP CIRCLES
AND BEYOND**

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2000

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**Y2K: THE BUG
THAT DID BITE**

**KNIGHTS
TEMPLAR
CIRCLES..?**

**HOAXING LECTURE
FAILS TO CONVINCE**

**THE CIRCLES AS
DOT MATRIXES**

**VIDEO ANALYSIS: TOO EASILY FLAWED?
'ASTEROID' FORMATION DECODED**

"Nothing fortifies scepticism more than that there are some who are not sceptics; if all were so, they would be wrong"
BLAISE PASCAL

Believe it or not, the first formation of 2000 has reportedly already arrived! In mid-January a small single circle in long grass was spotted from the M25 in Essex about 15 miles north of the Dartford Tunnel. It appeared to be a proper circle rather than a wind splodge. We have no further details, but it goes to show it pays to be on the look-out all year round.

It's not the first time we've had early-year events. In 1994, a soil ring appeared at West Kennett in February, directly on the spot where the first 'galaxy' formation of that year would arrive months later, and in 1996 strange discoloured grass rings were spotted at Land's End, Cornwall in January.

There is some argument as to whether there are more winter formations than we know of, appearing in wild mediums such as grass, but which go largely undiscovered because they are not so visible as grain crop patterns and easily prey to very quickly being wiped clean by wind and rain. In 1994, a ringed grass circle actually appeared *within* the Avebury stone circle next to The Cove and most people walked over it, unaware of its presence. It was only visible in a certain light and just one fortunate lady managed to photograph it.

Going back to the aforementioned galaxy formation, this month we have yet another fascinating article by astronomer Jack Sullivan, this time investigating one of the 1995 'asteroid' designs, with more very persuasive results. By our next issue, the date of 7th April 2000, as predicted by the star patterns in the three 1994 galaxy designs (SC 81) will have come and gone. Whether we'll be any the wiser as to the significance of the date remains to be seen.

We think Jack's work could be of crucial value, and from the strong reader response you obviously do too - ironic, then, that no other sources of circle information, until now, have seen fit to even refer to it in any capacity. Strange how such potentially important information has remained mute for so long, when we're all supposedly in this to help further our understanding of the phenomenon. These ideas deserve more coverage. However, Jack's first articles will finally be debuting on the *Crop Circle Connector* web site in the next few weeks, so if you know of people who may be interested, who haven't read his works in SC, let them know this info is now on-line and available to all. About time too.

ANDY THOMAS



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Editor: ANDY THOMAS
13 Downsview Cottages
Cooksbridge, Lewes
East Sussex
BN8 4TA
England Tel: 01273 474711

SC e-mail (editorial & mailing):
SCR@landl.freemove.co.uk

SC: Edited and produced by ANDY THOMAS on behalf of Southern Circular Research (SCR). The SCR team: Di Brown, Martin Noakes, Jason Porthouse, Barry Reynolds & Kaye Thomas. Articles, letters and contributions to the editor's address please.

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**SUBSCRIPTIONS & GENERAL
MAILING ENQUIRIES ADDRESS:**

Di Brown & Jason Porthouse,
36 Graham Crescent, Mile Oak, Port-
slade, East Sussex, BN41 2YB. Tel:
01273 885117 (E-mails to SC address)

Front Cover: Silbury Hill, Wiltshire, June 1999.
Photograph by STEVE ALEXANDER

There has been much in the press recently about the so-called Millennium Bug and its abject failure to cause widespread panic and global meltdown. Apparently, those responsible for spreading the rumours earned small fortunes working Millennium Eve and are now looking forward to early retirement, whereas instead they should be pilloried for even daring to suggest that chaos would ensue and should pay back the umpteen millions they earned.

As one of those deeply involved in Y2K, I feel it necessary to correct a few misconceptions and explain why I am not now languishing on a tropical isle.

My main angst on reading the popular press and learning that there was no problem, nay never would have been, is that this is quite blatant poppycock caused by a complete lack of understanding of the underlying issues. Let me explain.

In the summer of 1997, I headed a team of what was eventually to become seven programmers dedicated to Y2K busting at the UK office of a global car manufacturer. During the two man-year project, we fixed literally dozens and dozens of Y2K-related program bugs, increasing the length of date fields where necessary and correcting obvious date-related problems. Had we not fixed these bugs, I have serious doubts as to whether this major car maker would still be trading in the UK today. But this was the sole point of the project. After this, I moved on to a major US bank in London. Again, hours and hours of desk-checking program code and testing functions revealed many, many Y2K bugs - all of which were fixed. Then, along came Millennium Eve. I was on call for the princely sum of £300, not quite enough to retire on (!), and had done exactly zero hours of overtime up to that point. And guess what? I wasn't called out! Why? Because the hours and hours of work that we had put in had paid off. That's the whole point! You lot never got to hear about it because us mugs had spent years, yes that's right, years, fixing the problem which most certainly did exist and in frighteningly large quantities. So, were there really no problems at all then? Well, of course there were, but you don't think that these major

corporations that had spent several vigintillions (a prize for the first person who emails me with how many zeroes a vigintillion has) of pounds are going to let you know that, do you? Let me enlighten you.

— REPORTS —

THE BUG THAT WAS...

Already the supposed Millennium Bug seems like a distant fantasy which never came to pass... or did it? What we heard in the media about its non-arrival may not have been the whole truth, as Y2K-fixer BARRY REYNOLDS discovers...

January 4th was the first working day after Millennium Eve and all was well for about five minutes. The first problems we had were with third party software where we had guaranteed bug-free versions of software - not. Whilst it all worked, we had telex software and helpdesk software which were incorrectly sorting items so that the newest records were appearing at the bottom of the lists instead of the top. Whilst this

didn't stop the business from working, it can be very tiresome having to page through 300 screens full of several-year-old telexes just to get to the newest one!

However, a couple of hours housekeeping got the list down to a more manageable 20 screens or so. Meanwhile, internally, the problems slowly trickled in. The first two weeks of January saw approximately three to four new bugs raised PER DAY, the vast majority being inconsequential and fixed the day they were discovered. Our only major problem was the incorrect storing of the daily Bank of England Base Rate, but this only affected every single mortgage account we had - whoops. Soon fixed that, though...

So that was us, nothing life threatening, but a handful of problems that were soon sorted. But what about the rest of the world? The following is just a microcosm of what really happened:

- Kidney dialysis machines at Monkland's District Hospital in Airdrie, Lanarkshire malfunctioned on the stroke of midnight due to a timing mechanism error.

- BT Broadcast Services' year 2000 compliance website proudly announced that the date on the first working day after Millennium Eve was Tuesday 4th January 192000.

- The depth-sounding equipment at Portsmouth

Harbour gave up the ghost, causing problems for boats docking as no-one knew how deep the water was.

• The first may-day off the Italian coast was sent by a boat in some distress as it had been lost at sea since 1st January 1900. (Incidentally, the theory that the Italians had spent nothing on preparation was pure nonsense. It was a legal requirement for UK companies to report how much they had spent. That's why we knew the figures so accurately - some 20 billion pounds. Italy had no such law, hence the low figure reported. When someone actually got round to checking it properly the Italians reportedly spent more per capita than we did!)

• A New Yorker returning his video on the 2nd January was told that he owed \$91,000 in fines as it was 99 years overdue!

• All 382 birth and death registration offices in the UK were writing certificates by hand as the date was showing '202020' (that is hexadecimal

for blanks, for those that are interested).

• In Maine, USA, over 2000 brand new vehicle owners received documents registering their cars as 'horse-less carriages' as they were registered prior to 1916.

• The Italian Prison Service decided to let everyone out on parole as they had all served the minimum time required regardless of the length of sentence served.

• Other casualties included the Italian who withdrew his entire life savings of 11 million Lira (£3700) as a safeguard, only to be robbed on the way home, and a Bangkok Street vendor who did the same, taking out her life savings of 100,000 baht (£1,620), hiding the money under the mattress. On 2nd January her house burnt down.

• And finally, Bruce Beach, who buried 42 old school buses north of Toronto 27 as an Armageddon shelter, feels a twit. **BR**

It was advertised as 'a rare public talk by a member of The Circlemakers'. Rod Dickinson was to go public and let us in on his secret life! A chance not to be missed:

"Crop Formations: A Circlemakers Perspective.

A talk by artist Rod Dickinson on his experiences during the last decade making crop formations in the West country of England.

...This is a rare public talk by a member of The Circlemakers. Rod Dickinson's artwork has focussed on an ongoing involvement and fascination with several areas of peripheral belief; including crop circles and UFOs. For the last decade he has covertly created crop circles. His art work has been widely exhibited in contemporary art galleries...

REPORTS

DON'T SPARE THE ROD

Rod Dickinson, a member of the 'Team Satan' alleged circlemaking outfit, recently gave a presentation in London, the promotional spin hinting that beans might be spilled on a decade of human crop-crunching. As MARCUS ALLEN discovered, beans remained unspilled, with credibility notable by its absence...

...The talk will cover The Circlemakers' use of geometry in crop circles and their placement in the landscape, offering a personal perspective on sacred sites and the historical continuity of belief systems that have been etched onto the landscape.

The process of mediation of these huge artworks will also be discussed, along with the role of the media, particularly the story behind the crop circle commissioned by the Daily Mail in July 1999 at Avebury and a blow by blow account of what it is actually like to make a huge formation in the Wiltshire landscape."

His talk was one of a series put on by the London Earth Mysteries Society at the Diorama Centre near Regents Park. With around 50 people packed into the rather small room, the

majority of whom appeared to be regular crop-pies, Rod began with, as he put it, "an overview of the phenomenon". This consisted of a selection of photographs readily familiar to anyone who has seen Steve Alexander and Francine Blake's work over the last few years, but rather amateurly copied.

Far from being in any way new, the first hour could as well have been a presentation by SC's esteemed editor Andy Thomas, but without the enthusiasm Andy brings to his shows.

Despite repeated questions from some of the more direct members of the audience, Rod said he would not be admitting to making any formations except for the two discussed later. "What we do is illegal, we have to work covertly. It is what people believe that we study," was approximately his answer.

As one of the exhibits at galleries where he displays his paintings (Dickinson is an artist) appears to be a recreation of part of the back room at *The Barge Inn*, his fascination with crop circles is quite clear. It has been since his own experience at Alton Barnes in 1992 when he photographed an 'anomalous object' above a formation. Enlarged, it appears to be a formless white blob similar to some of the objects photographed by Andy Collins in his orgone experiments around the same time.

We were also promised 'The Circlemakers' use of geometry in crop circles'. We waited with bated breath for revelations. We are still waiting. To explain that the Koch fractals consisted of triangles was hardly rocket science, but when we were asked to take on board that the Golden Section of 1:1.612 is the basis of how these formations were made, we lost the plot altogether. Anyone familiar with John Martineau's work on Sacred Geometry in crop circles, published in 1992, would wonder whether these people even understand what geometry is all about. It really is much more than a few triangles and joined up lines.

There was much insinuation that underlying tracks visible in the photographs of formations such as the Stonehenge spiral and Alton Barnes seven-sided mandala were the result of certain individuals (never named) laying down the basic outline. As to clarifying how just these two formations, given their size and complexity, could have been placed in the landscape without anyone being seen to do so, there was no answer. As to producing any evidence, such as an outline drawing - forget it. We were really being asked to take on trust that Rod and his fellow travellers could see in the dark and disappear at will. Most people present appeared

unable to do this. Consequently, any respect Rod might have earned as a genuine researcher into areas of crop circle belief, even if his efforts antagonise others, tended to evaporate along with his credibility. Which was a pity because many people at the lecture came with an open mind ready to learn something new about the enduring mystery of the crop circles.

The two formations Rod said he helped to make were the 1998 BBC *Country File* circles which "took three people 2.5 hours to lay down". He said they tried to do this one without being spotted, but were discovered by Matthew Williams and his trusty night-sight.

Rod did gain a few brownie points by saying he refused to go along with the BBC producer who wanted to invite cropies into the finished circle and try to get them to pronounce it genuine on camera (the words 'old dog', 'new tricks' and 'cannot teach' come to mind here).

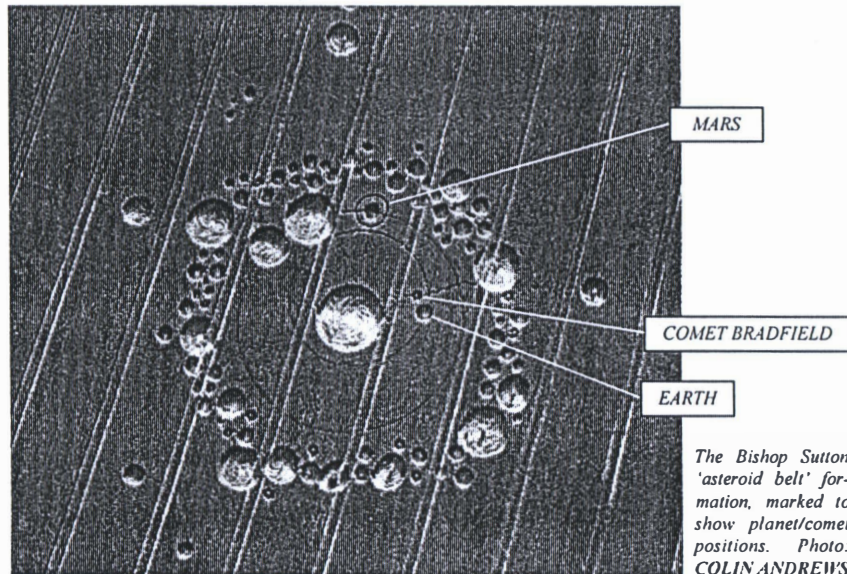
The other formation spoken of directly was the 1999 Avebury triangle (see SC 86). A few rather rough outline diagrams were shown as evidence that this formation which "took seven people 4.5 hours to make" was flattened for the *Daily Mail*, who presumably paid for it as well. The diagrams we were shown had no measurements on them, no sequence of construction and no indication as to how the seven people were to be organised so they did not either repeat or forget anything. We just had to take it all on trust again. Or not.

"We make between three and 20 formations each year" was about as close as we were going to get to hearing any actual admission from Rod as to what he claims to produce. Given that there are around 150 formations each year in England, a reasonable question would be; who makes the others? Reasonable, but not one that was to be answered other than with the rather lame explanation that "other teams do make them". As to who these teams are, we are still in the dark.

Rod is quite clearly a committed artist, and having experienced the magic and mystery of crop circles has devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to investigating them. His particular way of doing it may upset some people, but this should not detract from the quite clear evidence that he needs crop circles to exist. When he says, "not all crop circles are man-made", he is really coming from the same viewpoint as any cropie. The only difference is in the numbers. Does size really matter all that much? **MA**

This formation, which appeared at Bishops Sutton, Hampshire, 20th June 1995, is a truly precise astronomical 'Heliocentric' depiction of our solar system and well named as an 'asteroid belt'. The viewpoint is from a position some 500 million miles above the plane of the solar system and two planetary orbits are visible; but which planets?

Of the astronomical formations presented to us in the years 1994 and 1995 (see Jack's articles in SC 81, 82, 84 & 87), this has proved to be the most difficult to decrypt, primarily because it seems to contain contradictions. The most obvious component is, of course, the Asteroid Belt itself, which in the real solar system is positioned in-between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter, so the outer of the two orbiting bodies should be Mars as labelled in the accompanying photo. But why should Mars have an outer ring? Isn't it more likely to represent Saturn? Perhaps so to our eyes, but Mars has two moons, the larger called Phobos (Fear) and the smaller called Deimos (Horror), and the outer ring, in the eyes of 'our friends' the circumalbers, could well represent the orbits of the Mars moons. Also, very recent astronomical reports say that Mars appears to have the vestiges of Saturn-like rings around it. Perhaps 'our friends'



The Bishop Sutton 'asteroid belt' formation, marked to show planet/comet positions. Photo: COLIN ANDREWS

are confirming this finding?

If the outer orbiting body is indeed Mars then the other body, some 45 degrees clockwise of Mars, has logically to be Earth, as labelled above. But if this is so, what is the small body adjacent to Earth? It can't be our Moon because to be consistent

our Moon's orbit would have to be shown as an outer ring as the Mars satellites are, and also, this small adjacent body acquired a wiggly tail trailing out to a large circle in the perimeter cluster a few days after the formation's initial appearance. Some will assume this is a man-made path, but it appears to be very specific and winds in an unlikely manner for an simple access trail. Did this tail indicate movement either towards or directly

away from the Sun or does it represent an extra-terrestrial visitor of some kind? Well, as shown by the label alongside it in the photo, I concluded that it is a 'visitor'; a comet and its tail, which, as with all comets, points directly away from the Sun. (See also Wolfgang Schindler's letter in SC 85 for a further interpretation - Ed.)

So, having come to the conclusion that we are being shown the event of a 'near-Earth' visitation by a comet, when does the event take place and

- FEATURES - The COMETARY PREDICTOR

JACK SULLIVAN's sifting through of archive crop formations for astronomical interpretations continues to uncover astonishing correlations. Now one of the 1995 'asteroid' patterns reveals itself as an announcement of a new comet...

which comet is involved?

There are literally thousands of comets out there. Some dozen or so new ones are discovered every year. They come into the solar system from all directions, usually sweep around the Sun and then zoom out again. Some are 'Long Period' comets taking hundreds or thousands of years before they return, others are 'Short Period', returning in just tens of years. Some are famous mainly because they are very visible to naked eye viewing or have an historical record. Finding the Bishop Sutton comet seemed to present difficulties.

The most obvious place to start was with the most spectacular and well-known ones. Hale-Bopp, Tuttle, Shoemaker-Levy, etc. My trusty astronomical computer program *Red Shift 3* soon showed me that none of these had come or would come anywhere near enough to Earth to be our visitor. I then set up the program to show all visiting comets coming into our solar system from the date the Bishops Sutton formation arrived in the field.

There are a lot of them, but only one, named Bradfield C/1995Q1, seemed to get anywhere near to Earth. Checking further, I found that on 26th July 1995 Bradfield was in the position shown in the formation and, furthermore, the positions of Earth and Mars relative to each other and to the Sun are identical (see photo). Bradfield C/1995Q1

was our mysterious real time visitor just over one month after the Bishops Sutton pattern appeared. The letter/number coding attached to the name Bradfield (after the man who discovered it), indicate the following:-

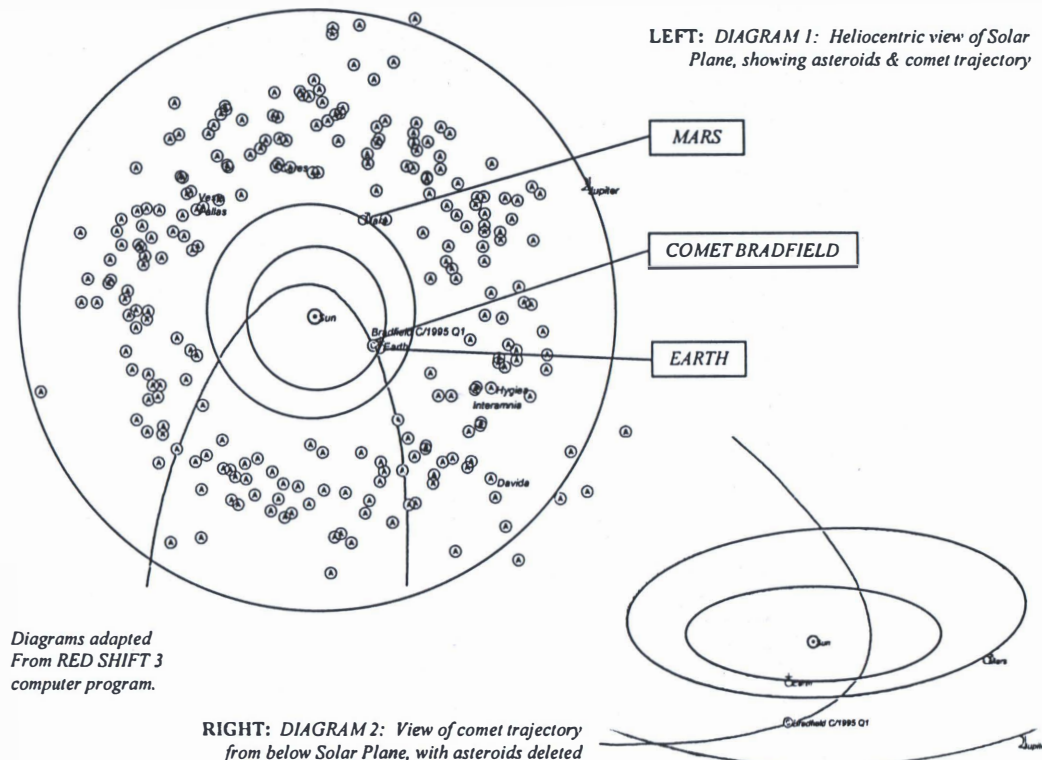
1) C/ - this prefix means that the comet is a 'Long Period' visitor.

2) 1995 was the year Bradfield discovered it.

2) The letter Q indicates that it was discovered in the latter half of August 1995! This is astonishing! It means that this comet was discovered by science one month after the date of its position shown in the formation and two months after the appearance in the field of that pattern.

So, on 20th June 1995 we were given information about a comet and a future celestial event that no one on Earth was aware of!

Finally, as shown above, the comet's coding C/, indicating a 'Long Period' visitor, by definition means that the orbital plane of the comet is likely to differ greatly from that of our solar system. *Red Shift 3* confirms this, (see diagram 2). Bradfield entered our system at an acute angle, approaching from beneath the solar plane. At the time of the position shown in the formation, the comet was some 50 million miles below the South Pole and was probably visible only to telescopes in low southern latitudes, but no one saw it anyway! JS



Diagrams adapted From RED SHIFT 3 computer program.

RIGHT: DIAGRAM 2: View of comet trajectory from below Solar Plane, with asteroids deleted

LETTERS

GLICKERBUG

Michael Glickman's recent column (SC 88) is too childish for me to believe he gives lectures, when he does not appear to have learnt we are apt to accuse others of our own faults. He refers to "those silly soldiers", then "the most mysterious, beautiful, optimistic events on the surface of this planet".

Surely there has only been one such event?

As for freedom on our planet, is this not a goal each has to find for themselves? I'm learning! Some people say we can no longer write his or hers, did you know?

Crop circles make people think.

What else do they do that is good, can you tell me?

Pearl Harding, Wivelsfield Green, E Sussex

MICHAEL GLICKMAN REPLIES: *I have read and re-read Pearl Harding's enigmatic - indeed impenetrable - letter and I am little the wiser. I accept my childishness. It is a source of pride to me. But I cannot fully understand the point she is making. She claims "only one such event", but does not let us know what that event might have been. She seems upset by my questioning the value of our massive military preoccupations, but does not elaborate. She feels that the only value of the crop circles is that they "make people think". Certainly they do, but does she believe it stops there? Has she not noticed the wider implications of this phenomenon? In all other respects I totally agree with her! MG*

DIVINE INTERVENTION

I am writing regarding the crop formation which appeared on 23rd May 1999 at Avebury Trusloe, Wiltshire.

It has been likened to a virus or a fertilised egg. When I first saw the aerial photograph in SC 85, I was immediately reminded of a painting from a 13th century French Bible which has always intrigued me.

Benoit Mandelbrot (pioneer of fractal research) makes a lot of this image. He describes it as God the great mathematician creating the

world. Within the act of God there are the dividers and the geometric shapes, he says, but there are also strange wiggly shapes, 'the wiggles' which are what was entirely missed by science before chaos theory came along.

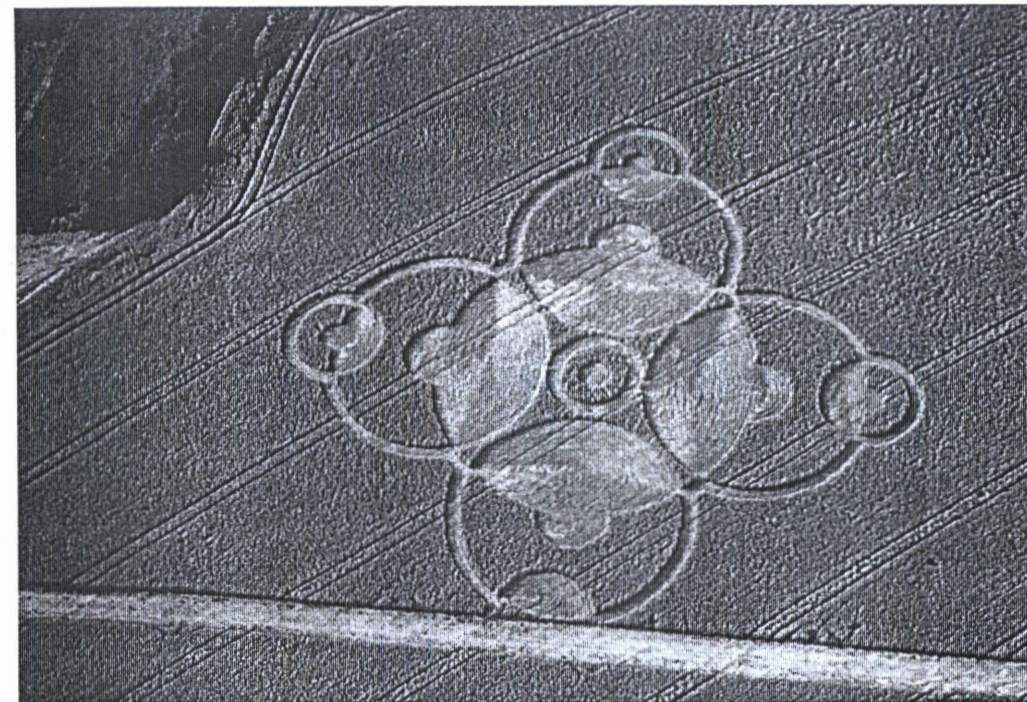
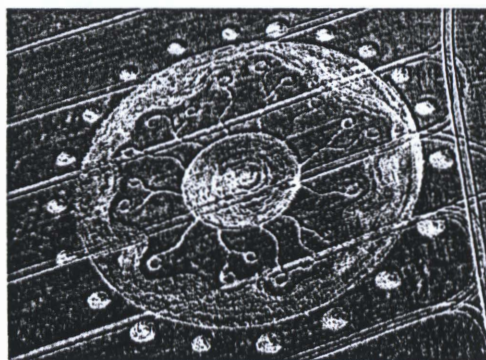
The match is not perfect; the crop formation seems to be a stylised version of the Earth as it appears in the medieval painting.

As there have been many fractal formations in the past, there may be some connection.

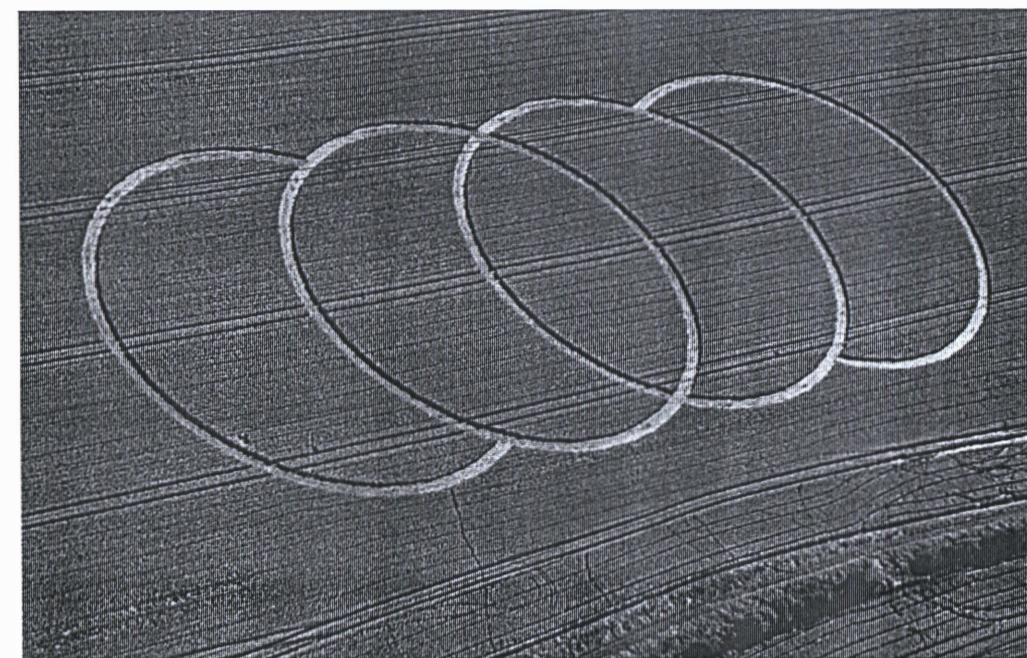
Rupert Knapman, Weybridge, Surrey

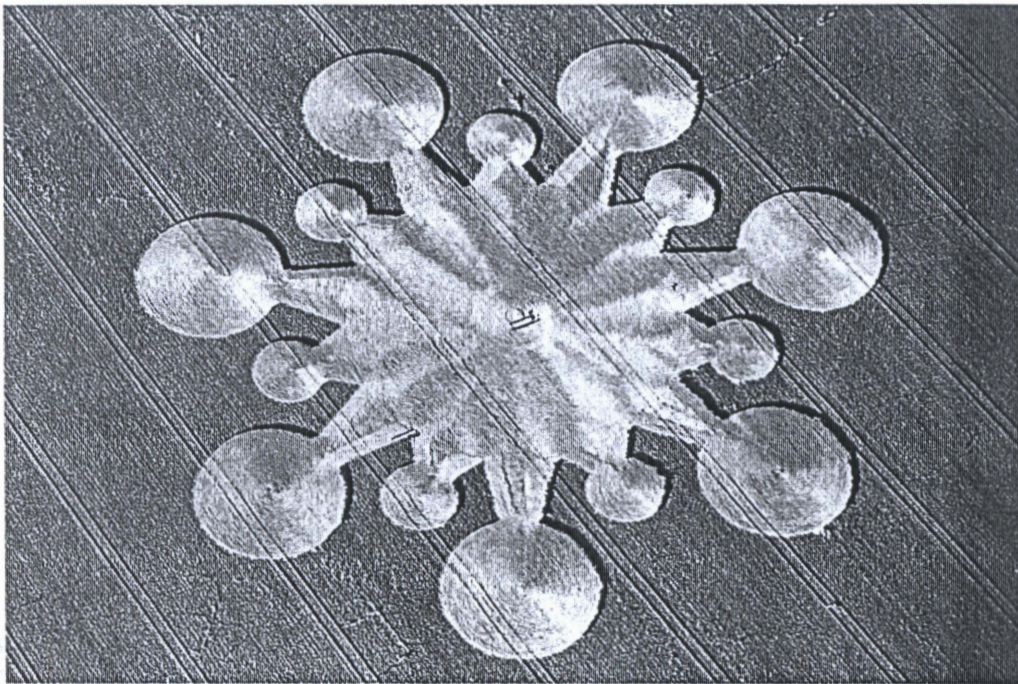


Photo: LUCY PRINGLE

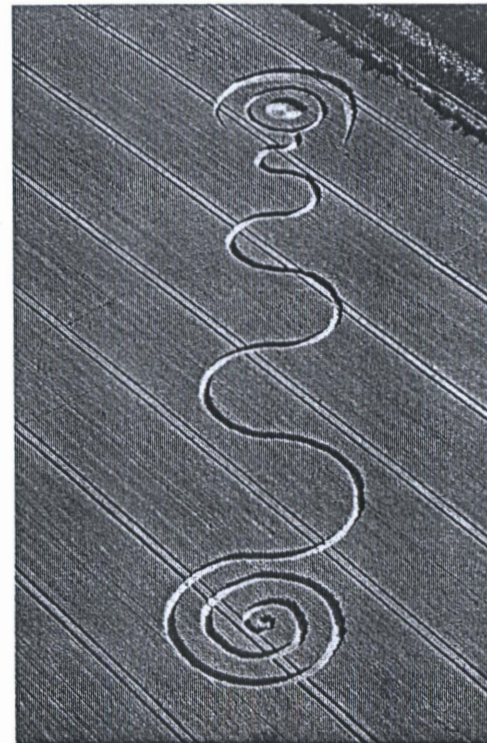
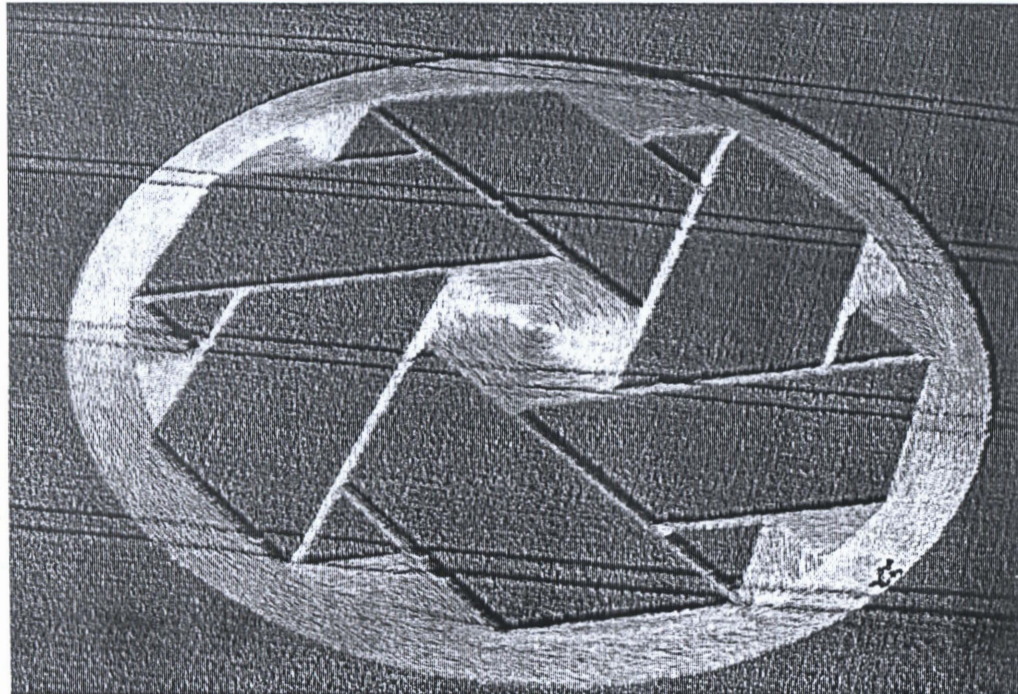


ABOVE: Chilcomb Down, Hampshire, 1st August (report: SC 86). A rare example of a formation being cut off by an element in the landscape, in this case a track mown by the farmer, which was there before the formation appeared. Photo: STEVE ALEXANDER
BELOW: Chiselden, Wiltshire, 12th August (report: SC 86). Hula hoops or another eclipse-type motif, the day after the total eclipse. Photo: LUCY PRINGLE





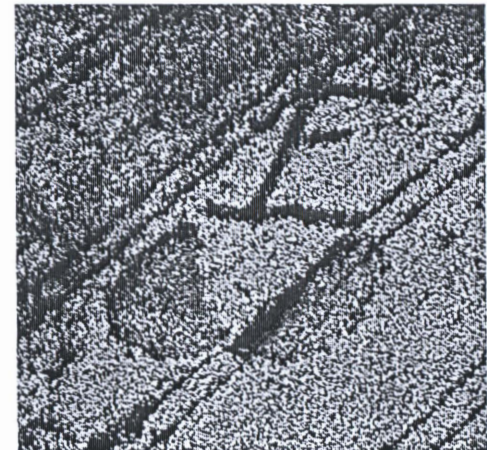
ABOVE: Roundway, near Devizes, Wiltshire, 31st July (report: SC 86). A continuous path of laid crop flowed all the way around the formation, creating the 14 arms and circles. Photo: STEVE ALEXANDER BELOW: Beckhampton, Wiltshire, 28th July (report: SC 86). The 3-D effect in this ribbon-like design is very striking. Photo: STEVE ALEXANDER



ABOVE: Barbury Castle, Wiltshire, 5th August (report: SC 86). This arrived not far from the 'Menorah' and the crescents from earlier in the season. Photo: STEVE ALEXANDER

RIGHT: Rockley Down, Wiltshire, 10th July (report: SC 86). One in a series of 'mini-fractals' in 1999. Some have suggested they may represent DNA strands. Photo: LUCY PRINGLE

BELOW: Marlborough, Wiltshire, 12th April (report: SC 85). A cosmic garden roller...? Photo: LUCY PRINGLE



FORMATIONS

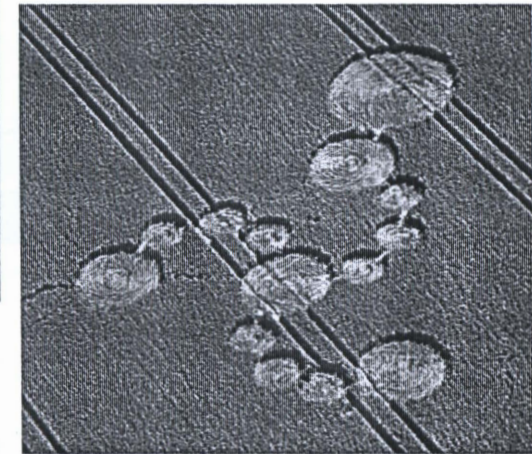
1 9 9 9

Gallery #5

Full colour original copies of Steve Alexander and Lucy Pringle's photos can be obtained from:

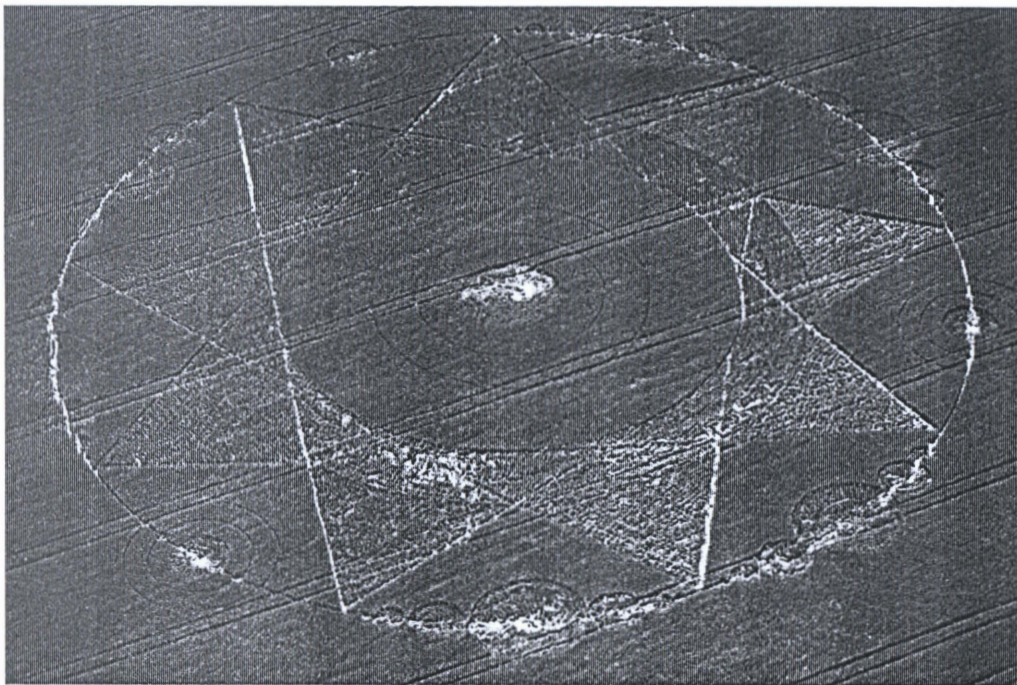
LUCY: 5 Town Lane, Sheet, Petersfield, Hants,
GU32 2AF, tel/fax 01730 263454
e-mail: LucyPringle@compuserve.com

STEVE: 27 St Francis Road, Gosport, Hants,
PO12 2UG, tel/fax 01705 352867

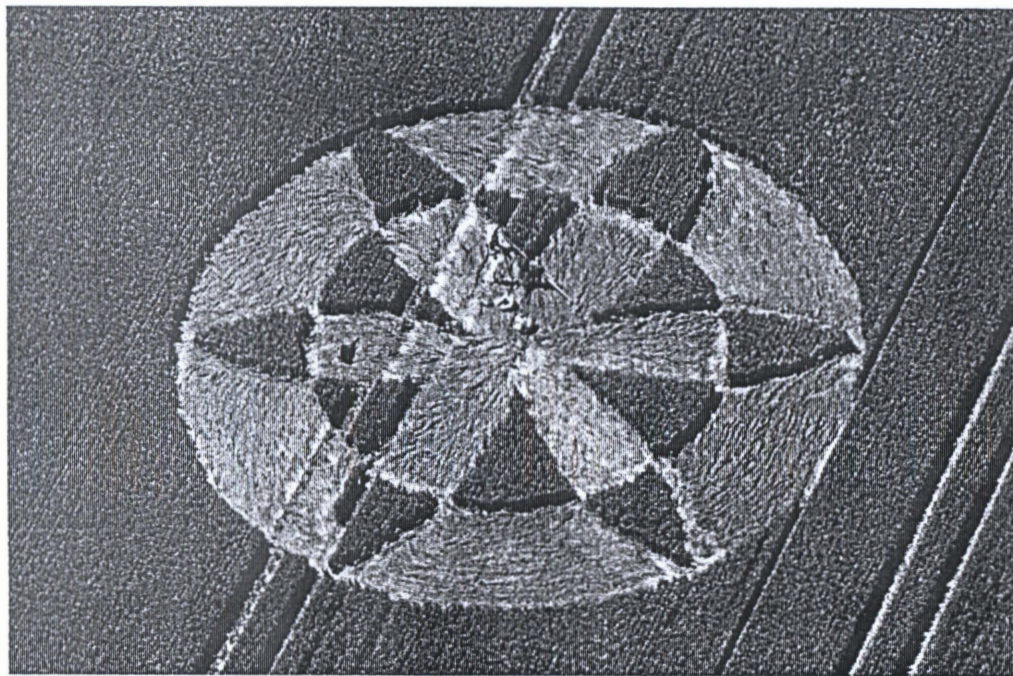


BELOW: Pewsey, Wiltshire, 13th June. The lay inside was woven beautifully and very fluffy. Photo: FRANK LAUMEN





ABOVE: Aldbourne, Wiltshire, 24th June (report: SC 86). Seemingly an evolutionary link to the 'asteroid' formations of yore, specifically the beaded perimeter of the 'Earth is missing' glyph (see SC 84). Photo: STEVE ALEXANDER BELOW: All Cannings, Wiltshire, 12th June (report: SC 85). Attractive, but the geometry of this is rather ragged... Photo: LUCY PRINGLE



Visual perception shapes our lives. Since the earliest stage of human development, we have recorded images of the world around us – both the mundane and the metaphysical. Technological advances have been mirrored in the sophistication of these records. The advent of photography in the late 1800's marked an important turning point. For the first time in history, visual records of actuality unfettered by human mediation were possible. As photography, then film and, latterly, video became democratised and ownership of cameras and camcorders commonplace, the means to record the world in which we live has grown exponentially. It has also given students of the paranormal the chance to capture visual evidence of the intangible – the Holy Grail for many researchers. A plethora of photos and videos, some steeped in the public consciousness, serve as evidence that *something* really is out there. However, the clamour for proof can lead to a lack of discernment when assessing the importance of these images within our research and, more importantly, the impact that they have when released to the wider community – one that is often inherently sceptical.

Three years ago this August, a ten-second clip of video threatened to turn perceived reality on its head. For those of you new to the circle phenomenon, or who have been living in a cupboard since 1997, the video in question was a short film of a crop circle forming at Oliver's Castle while a number of balls of light (BOLs) flew over the field. Ever since that date, debate has raged as to the authenticity of the video, the identity of the cameraman, the possibility of an orchestrated hoax – and we are no nearer finding out the real truth now than we were then. However, the furore caused by the video, the polarisation of opinion that followed it and the ongoing debate serve to illustrate the importance of evidence that would anchor the phenomenon in the 'real world'.

A few months after the Oliver's Castle video first aired, I was asked to comment on it for *The Magic & Mystery Show* on ITV. I stated then

that the video was hoaxable. Not a hoax, but hoaxable. There is an important difference. If you've been to the cinema lately, or watched TV, you are constantly being hoaxed – tricked into believing that alien ships are hovering over

the White House, or that you can drive through the eye of a tornado and live. On a more mundane level, how do cover models get such flawless skin, or the skies in the travel brochure look so enticingly blue? Visual effects have become so sophisticated that it is often impossible to tell where they have been used. Often our only clue is that the impossible becomes possible – witness the racing snails in the latest Guinness advert, or the Titanic sailing again with Leo and

- FEATURES -

WHAT THE EYE DOESN'T SEE

Chris Everard's recent analysis of the dreaded Oliver's Castle video has been championed by some as the ultimate proof of its veracity... This investigation may in itself be flawed, though. In a world where special effects are routinely used to fool us, we must use learn to use much greater technical discernment when it comes to 'analysis', argues JASON PORTHOUSE. Jason won an Emmy award for video editing in 1998.

Kate at the bow. We know that it was visual artistry which put Forrest Gump next to John Lennon in order to inspire a generation – but imagine you're an alien visitor seeing this for the first time. Without the benefit of received wisdom, fiction can too easily become documentary evidence.

Witnessing something never before seen is a rare and powerful experience, and many of us in the circles community did exactly that the first time they saw the OC video. There are only a dozen or so reported eyewitnesses to the formation of a circle, so we have little 'experiential' yardstick by which to judge the video. Many people dismissed it outright by saying "it doesn't look right" – but how would they know? With this first level of filtering denied us, scientific analysis was the only way to determine the veracity of the video. Here we encounter the next major problem, which in my opinion renders subsequent debate somewhat pointless. The master tape, that is the tape taken from the camcorder the footage was shot on, was never, to my knowledge, properly analysed. All the crop circle community had to view were copies of the master tape – so any real study that could determine whether the *original* tape had been tampered with was made virtually impossible.

Now we have the latest analysis of the OC

video. Chris Everard, in his recent video *Crop Circle Update '99* (reviewed last issue), has taken a fresh look at the tape and come up with conclusions that he claims proves the authenticity of the footage. As someone who works in television, I naturally wanted to check out his claims – and unfortunately, having done so, feel that they are flawed.

Chris's analysis concentrates on the area of a TV picture not normally seen on a television set. Using computer analysis, he has found movement in the top portion of the image – the BOLs moving behind trees, changing shape, becoming gaseous, and even disappearing for a period of time. His argument is, on the surface, a persuasive one. Why would a hoaxer go to all the trouble of making an object that can't be seen by the viewer? However, a brief look at the process involved in *faking* such a piece explains this – and a lot more besides. A technical bit follows. Stay with it though, and you'll understand a lot more about TV at the end, hopefully...

Almost all visual effects are produced using computers. The process of turning an analogue signal (in the case of video, a varying magnetic field imprinted onto a plastic based tape – identical in principle to an audio cassette) into a series of ones and zeros (a digital representation of the signal that can be stored on a computer) is called digitisation. A video signal comprises 25 frames per second (30 in the US, which uses a different standard) and each of those frames comprises an image broken down into pixels (short for 'picture elements'). A single video frame consists of 720 horizontal pixels and 576 lines of vertical resolution (again, different in the good ol' US). So, look at any scene and imagine a 720 by 576 grid over the top of it – that is what a computer sees as it converts video into a digital signal.

In order to create a video such as the Oliver's Castle footage, all of the elements need to be digitised into a computer. All digitised video (that is, destined for playback on a television) is at a size of 720x576 pixels. A computer takes in the whole image, and any animator, designer or compositor (the person that puts all the separate elements into one composite image) will have the whole video frame to work with. This includes the area of an image not normally seen on a domestic TV – but this is due to physical constraints of the television set itself. All TV's are marginally different – some show more of a picture, some less. In creating video effects, you have to work to the whole screen size as you cannot predict how much will be 'chopped off'. Just because action occurs out-

side the viewable area proves nothing in itself. The process of digitisation requires an awful lot of computer memory to store a moving video image, and in order to make this process more efficient the images are often compressed. Compression introduces blemishes called artefacts. Some artefacts are hardly noticeable, others more so, and they're an important consideration when analysing video.

Chris's contention that the BOLs change shape and become gaseous is consistent with the video having been digitised prior to analysis. Compression can work in a number of ways, one of the most common being to break down the single frame into blocks – grouping the pixels together and averaging the image out into simpler, bite-size chunks. The difference between the pixels in each chunk is flattened somewhat, and is most noticeable when the image chunk contains lots of detail. A blue sky may show little in the way of artefacts, but a chunk containing lots of detail – such as a cornfield, for example – may well show heavy artefacts. So a small, high-contrast object, such as a ball of light, may well appear blurred and 'gaseous' when subjected to compression. This problem is further exacerbated by the quality of the original video. Most of the copies of the Oliver's Castle footage are fifth or sixth generation copies. Each time a video is copied, the quality deteriorates and visual 'noise' is introduced into the signal, making it harder to separate the signal (the image as was originally recorded) from the noise (fuzziness, smearing of colours) introduced by copying. This, for me, was most marked in Chris' statement that one of the BOLs travels *behind* a tree at the top of the image and later disappears altogether for a time. My version of the video, an early copy onto professional format tape, shows the same BOL passing *in front* of the same tree and hardly disappearing at all. Later generations of the tape deteriorate the image until it does look as if the BOL disappears – but it merely becomes indistinguishable from the noise.

So what does this prove? That the Oliver's Castle video is man-made? No – it merely shows that in this case, though well intentioned, the research is flawed. Research that can easily be disproved can, if released unchecked, become further fuel for the debunkers.

Photographic evidence often fares little better. Over the years, we have seen many pictures of balls of light, energy forms, and even structured craft. Whilst many of these may indeed be genuine, some, for me, are more dubious. Having training in any discipline can often remove the 'magic' of untainted perception – but it can

also allow a more dispassionate approach to analysis. Many photographs of the extraordinary may well have prosaic causes. Ed Sherwood's photos of small luminosities doing the rounds on the Internet at the moment are a case in point. They show small white spheres floating in front of the camera, allegedly the result of experimentation with energy fields and thought-interaction. Many of the photos, however, share something in common. They are all taken in twilight or darkness, and flash or fill-in light has been used. Any small object, an insect, even a dust particle, will reflect the intense light from a flash. If it is between the subject and the lens, it will appear as a white (overexposed) spherical point – slightly translucent as a result of it being out of focus, and as a result a very convincing BOL.

Francine Blake's photographs of the '99 East Field formations are also creating a stir (see Francine's letter in *SC* 88). Whether or not the image captures an energy form (even, as some have suggested, a 'craft') on film is a contention that may never be proven, but having seen the entire set of negatives, something has definitely happened to the whole film. In cases such as this, the usual suspects of faulty film, bad development or light fogging must be considered. However, the fact that the film in question is a professional format (and hence processed by a specialist, meaning much more care was taken with the film than is likely at your local photo shop) makes these scenarios less likely, though a such a processing lab is unlikely to admit to making errors if it did. Unfortunately, testing for any radiation damage to the film would be nigh on impossible.

LETTERS

KENT BIOHAZARD

In *SC* 88, you included photos of two formations that appeared together in wheat at Trottscliffe, between Sevenoaks and Maidstone, Kent, 20/6/99. The larger of the two formations consisting of three slender overlapping crescents looks remarkably similar to the international biohazard warning sign to me. Do you think this could be comment on the dangers inherent to genetic engineering, or what? "Operationally, God is beginning to resemble not a ruler, but the last fading smile of a cosmic Cheshire

So with Ed's photos we have a *possible* conventional explanation – but not necessarily the *only* explanation. Francine's images are more ambiguous – and this makes it much more difficult to 'prove' or 'disprove' their content. I have seen many images allegedly showing paranormal phenomena that are easily explicable in purely photographic terms, but to the untrained and eager eye can be readily mistaken. Equally, there are many images that raise interesting questions, and conventional knowledge falls short of accounting for them.

As someone who has been involved with crop circle research for a number of years, I would dearly love to see irrefutable evidence that supports our research – proof that validates our beliefs and transforms them into knowledge. I also believe that in order to refute the arguments of those who would decry the metaphysical world, you need to be able to see through their eyes occasionally. This article is not a support of scepticism. It is a call for the application of a little wisdom when looking at what purports to be evidence. Whilst the desire to find a 'smoking gun' (or at least a picture of one) is understandable, sometimes this enthusiasm can mask the obvious. Pushing images that can be explained normally as proof of paranormal activity can feed straight into the hands of those who would seek to discredit the phenomenon. In presenting pictorial evidence to a largely sceptical world, where the manipulation of imagery of all kinds is the norm, we all have a duty to be even more thorough than the debunkers in our quest for further knowledge. JP

cat" - JULIAN HUXLEY "Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind" - ALBERT EINSTEIN
Cogito Ergo Zwing Zwang Zwum Zen.

Derrick Hunt, Downham, Bristol



Photo: ANDREW KING

Many of the Sussex denizens and others may have wandered the graceful swirls of last year's Celtic Cross formation at Sompting (fig. 1), West Sussex, which appeared on 14-15th June (SC 86), located upon the same spot as a very similar precursor on 23rd June 1993. A number of visitors to this formation will have walked over to the ancient church of St Mary's, Sompting, to examine its obscure Saxon tower and to soak up its mysterious aura. Some visitors were perhaps drawn inside the church's dark, dank interior to learn of its history, itself being a church acquired by the Knights Templar. Inside also are some unique stone carvings, of which close examination reveals some explicit symbolism, inscribed on a rather unusual rectangular stone, set upon a plinth in the north wall of the nave. The relationship of this carving to the design found flattened in the nearby field is immediately apparent.

The carving depicts (see fig. 2) a man (possibly Jesus or a saint) seated upon a throne with one hand raised and the other holding what might be a book or Bible. Surrounding him is a curvilinear enclosure. Set at the four corners of the stone slab are four winged creatures. A winged lion at the bottom left, a winged bull at the bottom right, an eagle at the top left and at the top right an angel. Naturally, these four creatures symbolize the four cardinal signs of Leo, Taurus, Scorpio and Aquarius, and also the four elements of Fire, Earth, Water and Air. The seated figure at the centre is the fifth element of intellect or spirit.

The four creatures are all enclosed in semicircles, which intersect the curving enclosure that forms a ring around the central figure. Visitors to the Celtic Cross formation will have noticed that the four satellites were unusually positioned so that their perimeters intersected the surrounding ring in a way not dissimilar to the four semicircles of the stone carving. Also, the formation's satellites were set at the diagonal directions of northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest in a similar way to the carving. Thus, the carving in the church might help us to decipher the nearby formation's symbolic

meaning (there is also a wall carving of interlaced wheat by the altar - Ed).

Tarot enthusiasts might recognize the divinatory message proposed by the stone carving as it would seem to be of a comparative design to the 'World' card, the final card in the major arcana, which usually portrays the world as a dancer surrounded by a wreath of laurel leaves (see fig. 3). Set at the four corners of the World card are four creatures representing the four elements, four fixed zodiacal signs and four seasons, the central figure seemingly unifying the opposites. In effect, the combining of the four elements creates a fifth complete element.

The World card symbolizes completeness and a oneness with self and nature. The realization of the world is the objective to which mystics strive towards, the ultimate goal of all the world's major religions.

Juliet Sharman-Burke suggests (*The Complete Book of Tarot*, 1985) that "the tarot links up at this stage with something much vaster than simply divination. Here the tarot connects with the great mystic traditions which have constituted a common denominator between all the world's great religions and systems of philosophical thought from ancient times up to the present day."

If that's not enough, there is one other tarot card to which both the carving and especially the crop formation relate - the spinning 'Wheel of Fortune', a card known for its alchemical associations and for the fact that the words TARO or TORA appear within its design. The meaning of this card is quite complex, but to summarize, it suggests the need to recognize what powers we have got over our own destiny. Some outstanding questions remain; had Sompting's Templar priests or their predecessors discovered an unusual pattern pressed into a nearby field? And if so, had they preserved its memory in a stone carving, linking its symbolism with iconography to which they were already familiar, namely the World card in the tarot? It is likely that the Christian churchgoers could have interpreted the arrival of such a unifying symbol as a sign from God, hence the

usurping of the world dancer substituted by the figure of Christ, who had surely reached a level to which the World card aspires.

Or, alternatively, had our mysterious circle-makers placed this circle and its predecessors here to draw attention to the symbolic carving, with the deliberate intention of passing on to us a very complex message by a method of symbolic pairing?

The fields around Sompting have spawned crop formations on a regular basis; one in 1990; two in 1992; four in 1993; four in 1994 and two last year. It would therefore be quite likely that formations have been discovered here in bygone years. It is fair to suggest that

the reason why the Templars acquired the church may have been (given their notorious reputation) solely because of the arrival of symbolic patterns in the nearby fields... SG

This article picks up on themes first explored by Debbie Pardoe way back in SC 11 (Nov '92) in connection to the 1992 Sompting pictogram, which interested readers may like to check out (back issues are available from the editorial address at £1 each).

Past Sompting formations and St Mary's church also feature prominently in the books Fields of Mystery (by Andy Thomas) and Quest For Contact (by Andy Thomas & Paul Bura), published by S B Publications and available from bookshops or the editorial address.

FEATURES SECRET OF THE SUSSEX TEMPLARS..?

Did a mediaeval crop formation appear at Sompting, West Sussex, prompting the Knights Templar to commemorate the event in the mysterious church of St Mary's? SAM GOODWIN shows why he believes it's a possibility...

Fig.1: Sompting Celtic Cross, June 1999

Fig. 2: Carving at St Mary's church, Sompting

Fig. 3: 'The World' tarot card

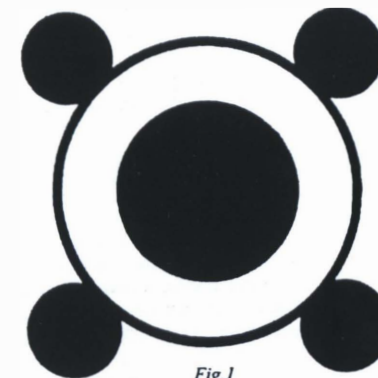


Fig.1

Fig.2



Fig.3

In the early '70s, when I taught at the University of Southern California, their football team, The Trojans, was - as it still is - a major source of pride. The games always caused campus-wide excitement.

My department, Architecture, was in charge of the card display. I imagine that even outside America these are familiar. At a break in the game, one side of the stadium became a giant shifting image as people in the audience held up a carefully organised sequence of coloured cards.

Now, as a teacher, I was expected to participate. My seat, like every one in the USC sector, had a precisely numbered stack of coloured cards beneath it. On loud-speakered instruction from an individual in front of us, we ran through our sequence of cards. Of course, we, as card-holders, had no idea of the images we were forming. We were expected to see it on TV after the game. I remember that the last card had two instructions. First, holding it still, we formed a gigantic Stars and Stripes, second, we had to wobble our cards in a specific way, making the flag appear to wave, or at least to shimmer.

Those familiar with Art History will recognise here the relevance of *Pointillism*, a style which reduced forms to the smallest possible dot of colour. The dot was of significance - of course - only as a component of a larger arrangement of dots, a more comprehensive - and comprehensible - scheme.

Another reference: The image on the computer screen is made up of many thousands of individual points. The solitary pixel is meaningless and almost irrelevant. It has precise position and exact colour, yet only as a component of the whole image on the screen does it acquire real meaning.

It is apparent that these cited examples deal with large systems comprised of entirely separate and discrete parts. The American stadium display, the computer screen and *Pointillism* share one characteristic: the diverse parts need to be organised into a coherent whole by a controlling intelligence.

We have recently become aware of the fractal and the hologram, both 20th Century developments. The fractal, dearly beloved of crop circle observers, is a reiteratively self-similar form which is said to contain (and to be contained by) every aspect of its own manifestation at whatever scale. In a strange parallel, the merest splinter of a shattered holographic plate will reveal all the information

contained in the entire hologram.

A quote from Johannes Kepler might be illuminating here:

"I believe the geometric proportion served the Creator as an idea when He introduced the continuous generation of similar objects from similar objects."

- VIEWS - DOT MATRIX

Several fractal shapes have appeared as crop formations over the years, leading some to think the phenomenon in itself must work fractally. But does it? Is not the process that creates crop circles closer in form to a dot matrix, argues MICHAEL GLICKMAN..?

We observe here, then, two fundamentally differing systems. In the former, the small components aggregate to compose an organised whole. An organising mind is essential; coloured cards, dots of paint or pixels are meaningless without an applied intent.

The second group, fractals and holograms,

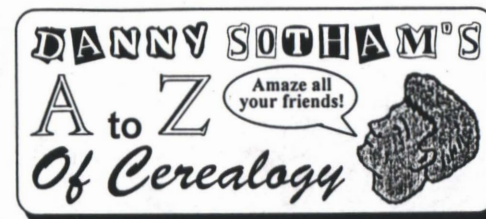
seem to possess an inherent organising principal. They seem to sit comfortably alongside currently perceived spiritual teachings or what might be called New Age ideas, or at least the catch phrases approaching those ideas: "As above so below"; "What goes around, comes around"; "The interconnectedness of all things".

Though fractal forms have regularly appeared in the fields, there is little to suggest that the crop circles possess anything approaching a fractal or holographic nature.

The single stem is a tiny component of the medium which seems blindly to conform to the creative will of the circle-making force. The individual plant here can be compared to the tiny dot of paint, meaningless without the genius of Seurat, the individual coloured piece of card, incomprehensible without the co-ordination of a designer, the glowing pixel, totally irrelevant unless organised by will or intent.

Our culture is made very uncomfortable by this. The idea that fields of crop might meticulously conform to impulses from an unknown elsewhere makes us uneasy. Many find solace in the notion that all crop formations are man-made (this idea is pathetic, but even to hear that one or two are hoaxes brings relief and puts the mind back to sleep). Others spend many years pursuing the minutiae of the stem-bending mechanism.

For me, the fundamental question remains. Not how the individual plant lies down, but how it is persuaded to lie down in the precise position and direction to take its place in a considerable work of art, communication and intelligence. **MG**



JAPAN: Each year strange sightings are reported of minibuses packed with small humanoid figures flitting from crop formation to crop formation, pointing odd apparatus at people's faces and firing off unintelligible questions. The annual arrival of the Nippon TV crew is now awaited with some excitement as their presence invariably brings with it another amusing scheme to chase video-makers across car parks or attempts to catch the phenomenon in the act, usually resulting in infra-red cameras pointing in entirely the wrong direction while East Fields bursts into a frenzy of light balls, black helicopters and flying saucers.

Meanwhile, the homeland itself, where the plasma vortex theory remains inexplicably popular, can lay claim to having had the only reported cases of circles in the dirt of underground rail subways, and a paddy field formation. Team Satan must have spent days drying their boots out afterwards.

JELLY: Substance allegedly found in a number of early formations, put down to ectoplasmic paranormal processes by researchers and melted boiled sweets by scientists. Nearby Rowntree's boxes have been conspicuously absent. Others have suggested these blobs were in fact sewage waste ejected from aircraft toilets. Doug Bower monotonously claims to have once been hit on the head by an iced block of just such a discharge, despite the incredible odds against a) such a small object hitting a person, and b) anyone surviving it. On the other hand, such a blow could account quite well for his mental state, and it brings a whole other meaning to the word 'sh**head'.

JESUS: Popular figure in Christianity. Some believe the crop circles herald his second coming, pointing to the many cruciform shapes which have graced the fields over the years. Given the large amount of Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist and Pagan symbols which have also popped up, one presumes we can also expect revisits from Krishna, Mohammed, Buddha and Alistair Crowley in the near future. We're going to be pretty crowded with historical religious and occult characters, but the TV chat-shows should be interesting:

JEREMY PAXMAN (Newsnight presenter): *Krishna, you've been away for rather a long time. Don't you think it's a bit late to be making a comeback?*

KRISHNA: *Well, I...*

PAXMAN: *Come on, I haven't got all night. Jesus,*

what have you got to say...?

JESUS: *This is...*

PAXMAN: *Oh come off it, that was two thousand years ago. Answer the question, man. And now over to Kirsty Wark for today's headlines...*

JOSS STICKS: If you find yourself sniffing the air on entering a formation, thinking some paranormal scent is lilting in from another dimension, the chances are it is, in fact, a hideous-smelling smouldering piece of wood bought from *Smells & Bells Ltd*, stuck in the central swirl as an offering to the circlemakers. Quite why they should be impressed by some cheap, smelly old stick isn't clear.

JOURNALS: The flame of continuing interest in the bizarre and wacky world of crop circles has been much carried by outlets such as the one you hold in your hand in the dark times of the post-Doug and Dave holocaust, the post-Jim Schnabel fall-out and the *Country File* Armageddon. Never have staplers and photocopiers had such power. Well, apart from in the hands of secret campaigners in totalitarian states, but cerealogy is something that really matters, after all. Glossy UFO magazines have come and gone in the wake of fads and fashions (*The X Files* largely to blame), other paranormal 'zines and newsletters have been set up and died deaths almost from birth, but on the cerealogical journals plod, against all odds and adversity. Which is something to be proud of - or are cippiers just extremely bloody-minded?

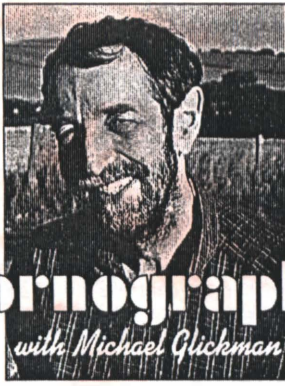
JULIA SET: Lady who lives at 31b Barrack Terraces, Devizes, who is getting just a little tired of receiving letters from cippiers asking how her Fibonacci spirals are this month. Still, pity Mr and Mrs Fractal who live next door. Or Mr Koch Snowflake, come to that.

JUNG: Oft-quoted coffin-dodger (actually he didn't dodge it, did he?) with glasses whose work has apparently much to say about crop circles, you know, power of the mind... archetypal symbols... flying saucers, er... puns about 'The Jung Ones', er... will this do? (*No - Ed*)

JUPITER: Remember those 'thought bubble' designs of 1994? Many thought they might in some way represent the fragments of the wacking great comet that just happened to be giving our friendly neighbourhood gas-giant a good old going over at about the same time. This connection was further compounded when one of the black scars comet Shoemaker-Andtheelves 9 left after striking Jupiter appeared to mirror the shape of the West Sussex East Dean crescent thought-bubble. If the *Galileo* probe ever starts sending back photos of crop formations on Ganymede or something, which resemble Earth atlases with big holes in the middle, we'd better run for shelter fast. **DS**

More next issue!!!

SC 89, Mar/Apr 2000 19



Since I arrived in this magical landscape, I have seen three deer, frozen for a moment in the beam of my headlights. They recovered quickly and leaped through the hedgerow into the field. The next day, driving along the lovely valley between Devizes and Beckhampton which has held so many crop formations, I saw two bison grazing at Baltic Farm. I was late and had to hurry by. I returned in excitement a couple of times, but they were never there. And then, of course, logic kicks in. There cannot be buffalo in Wiltshire! This is impossible. They must have been a couple of hoaxed Highland Cattle. Much more reasonable.

Anticipating the coming season, it seems appropriate to contemplate what might be the trajectory of this phenomenon and to speculate on some of the themes it might pursue. We can begin with the geometry of the five pointed star, the pentagram, which has been explored over the past years. It was John Martineau's work at the start of the '90s which showed that a pentagram (a form which contains the Golden Section proportion) was invisibly present as a guiding constraint in many of the early formations. Though it was so widespread as a hidden skeleton, the pentagram itself never appeared until Bythorn in 1993, certainly one of the most articulate crop formations we have had. There have been several pentagrams since then, but the *pentagon*, the five-sided figure, has always only featured as a supporting form. So Prediction 1 is a pentagon in its own right.

The Seven, by contrast, has been represented only by Heptagons, or forms based on the Heptagon, a seven sided figure. Prediction 2 is a *Heptagram*, a seven-pointed star.

Last year I suggested eleven would arrive. I was thinking, I admit, of the geometry of eleven and I was wrong. We didn't get it. However,

we had a couple of formations in which the number eleven was crucial, the Barbury Castle Menorah and Devil's Den. Prediction 3, then, is eleven-fold geometry.

Finally, and with no more evidence than my intuition, I believe that the 2000 season will include reference (although preliminary) to 13, the number of Transformation.

I am very much aware that crop circle predictions can be either futile or arrogant. These tentative ideas are put forward because my work implies that these will be some of the forms we will see this year. It is impossible to be involved with this phenomenon without a sense of awe, and any suggestion approaches hubris. The alternative here is to maintain secrecy about one's ideas for fear of criticism or being proved 'wrong' - a strategy which is favoured in certain quarters. Obviously, if these shapes appear, I will be delighted. It will be a confirmation of the validity of certain ideas. And if they do not appear, I will not open my veins in public and nor will I petulantly announce my retirement.

I promised not to reveal this earlier, but I can now report that Elvis was seen, by several reliable and independent witnesses, in a crop circle last year. Mr and Mrs Charles Kreuzer of Kansas City woke early to go to the Cherhill formation. When they got there, they saw a black stretch limo with darkened windows by the roadside. There were several suited individuals who prevented them from entering the field. A little while later, Joseph Trellis and his girlfriend Christine Haythorne, both of Lincolnshire, arrived and were also told that they would have to wait. The four visitors moved down the road to a vantage point from where they observed the circle through Mr Kreuzer's binoculars. They saw a rather paunchy, long-haired individual in sun-glasses and a white sequinned jump-suit with flare bottoms. There were several other dark-suited minders guarding the perimeter of the formation and peering cautiously outwards.

Suddenly the party decided to leave the formation. They returned to the road at what Mr Kreuzer, a former marine, described as "a trot". "It looked to me like Elvis was being carried," he said. The limousine and two accompanying cars left at speed towards Beckhampton.

It is encouraging to know that at least one member of the Presley family is truly interested in the circles. **MG**