

SO

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

88 JAN-FEB
2000

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**REASSESSING
THE ECLIPSE
PICTOGRAM**

**CIRCLE DETECTIVE
GOES A.W.O.L.**

**PHOTO ANOMALIES
DEFENDED**

**LATEST BOOKS & VIDEOS REVIEWED
OVERSEAS FORMATIONS 1999**

"Enthusiastic admiration is the first principle of knowledge and its last" WILLIAM BLAKE

The century seems so old already that it hardly seems worth wishing you all a happy new one, but I'll do so anyway. The Millennium Bug failed to strike big time (or did it? - see Barry Reynolds' article in our next issue), the world didn't end and in the event everyone seemed very calm about the whole thing, curbing the expected excesses. Next stop, then, for the major will it-won't it happen betting bandwagon is the May 5th planetary alignment supposedly causing storms and earthquakes, mixed up with the peak of the Sun's solar activity cycle. We shall see. And don't forget 7th April before that, as predicted in the 1994 galaxy formations. Whether anything tangible will actually happen then, or whether we're missing the point, is another matter. Incidentally, we have another revealing Jack Sullivan article coming up, but we've decided to hold it back until the next issue, which will follow fairly hot on the heels of this one, which is, as threatened you'll remember, rather late.

A Millennium Bug of some kind must have crept into the calendar reviews in our last issue, causing a couple of errors. Most of the calendars are, of course, A4 size, not A5, and the photo of the aircraft wheel in Michael Glickman's calendar covers just under a *third* of the photo, not the stated two-thirds, which would be a bit excessive! We should also point out that we reviewed a proof copy of Michael's calendar and that since then Michael himself has come to the same conclusion as us and reinstated the beautiful cover photo of the Beckhampton 3D ribbon so that it also appears inside as well (we complained that it wouldn't get seen properly, just being on the cover).

We should take this opportunity to welcome Michael Glickman back to these shores, after three years in the USA. He's now back in England, as he explains in his *Cornography* column on page 20.

SC is a whole eight years old with this issue, not bad for something which began as a double-sided typed sheet. We continue to influence the research community as well as spreading the word wider to those outside of it, and feedback continues to be very positive and strong. Don't forget, although we have our pool of regular writers, we're always open to receiving articles and submissions from anyone, so if you have something you want to share with others, getting it printed in SC is a pretty good way of doing it. Our only condition is that we receive exclusives. We try not to print bits which have also been sent to other journals where we can, to avoid boring repetition for those who read more than one circle publication. Get writing, then!

ANDY THOMAS



THE BIMONTHLY
JOURNAL OF
CROP CIRCLES
AND BEYOND

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Front Cover: Ehlen, Kassel, Germany. Photo-
graph by: FRANK LAUMEN

One of the things which Colin Andrews took us to task over a few issues back was our dismissive attitude toward the private detective he had hired to investigate alleged crop circle hoaxers.

In the wake of this, we became aware of rumours that the detective, an ex-CID officer funded by Colin's money from Laurance Rockefeller, had discovered that large amounts of unexplained money were entering the bank accounts of particular human circlemakers. We then learnt that at the point he was supposed to hand over to Colin the evidence for this and other findings he had made, the detective had suddenly clammed up and refused to share any of the information! The then unfounded rumour circulating was that the very same hoaxers the detective was supposed to be investigating had paid him off not to reveal his findings.

In our new spirit of more open communication (which has been operating successfully since Colin's letter in SC 86), we approached Colin with these rumours in an attempt to verify them. We received an answer from Colin, which is as interesting as it is bizarre:

"I can confirm that I have run into a significant problem with the private detective agency contracted two years ago to investigate the hoaxing problem. Communication suddenly and unexpectedly ceased during the early summer this year.

Things appeared to go strange after detectives were asked to inspect a triangular formation near Danebury Ring in Hampshire. They spent time in the field with the farmer and later informed me that no evidence could be found that people had made it. Coincidentally, some days later three men walking past the field witnessed a strange glowing red sphere come out of low clouds and remain stationary over the field. The glowing ball emitted short flexing fingers of what looked like lightning strokes. The object moved

slowly back into the clouds and was not seen again. The men were not aware that a crop formation was in the field at the time.

As they stood pondering what they had witnessed, two white 'Ford Transit'-like vans approached and asked what they were doing and then asked if they would leave the area. The vans had numerous aerials and were full of 'serious-looking' men.

I asked the farmer about these vehicles and was told they did not belong to the farm. The farmer then told me that one of his own staff had reported a similar white van with several men aboard,

parked near the field some days earlier.

From this time on, none of my telephone calls were returned by the agency. I asked for reports on the current status; these too were not forthcoming. Eventually, I terminated the contract and sent a report on the situation back to the United States. To this day, the owner of the agency has not given me the reason for the sudden stone wall. The contract was worth several thousands of pounds to him, therefore the reason has to be more than mundane.

I am not in possession of any evidence to suggest that bank accounts belonging to anyone had anything to do with this outcome. I do not know either if the Danebury Ring investigation was in any way responsible for the pull off. It was just the timing which was so curious.

The hoaxing investigation project continued, but without the Hampshire-based agency.

I would like to seize this opportunity to make clear the objectives of the hoaxing investigation. It was to discover who was making crop circles and which patterns were involved. It was not the intention to be party to any legal proceedings. If farmers felt strongly enough about hoaxing in their fields they could engage the police to instigate proceedings any time they wished."

The plot thickens. AT

- NEWS -
**THE DEFECTIVE
DETECTIVE**

All is not well at 'New Cropland Yard'... Colin Andrews's hired hoaxing investigator has gone mysteriously AWOL, while tales of strange goings-on in the Danebury fields emerge... ANDY THOMAS goes watching the detectives...

We won't claim this list constitutes the definitive guide to the overseas formations of last year (we've omitted unconfirmed or confused accounts), but it will give you a pretty good idea of what's been going on around the world, and these are the major reports which have filtered through. Some of the strange patchiness of distribution can be put down to the fluctuating awareness and lack of reporting networks in particular areas, rather than the real numbers - we suspect there are many more formations across the planet that don't get reported. Note how lively Canada has become, although, here again, the rise in figures may be due to the recent sharp increase in active research efforts there. Some sizes included are approximate, as are some of the dates.

OVERSEAS FORMATIONS 1999

While England may get the most formations and the overtly spectacular stuff, evidence that the crop circle phenomenon is truly global is now irrefutable. ANDY THOMAS rounds up the international events of 1999...

AUSTRALIA

Karoonda, Adelaide: 30 July. Five rings. Discovered on a very remote farm, 5km from the nearest road.

CANADA

Acadia Valley, Alberta: 4 September. Three circles in durum wheat, one circle 60', two 30', each about 10' apart.

Ardmore, Alberta: 27 August. Six 4' circles in hay, all with standing centres. Three circles were placed in a clear semi-circle, equidistant to each other. Three others stood apart, more randomly scattered. Oddly, apart from the standing centres, in each the actual crop had been removed instead of having swirled lays. The farmer reported having circles in the same field for the last three years and put a notice into farming journal *The Western Producer* advising others to look out for them.

Christopher Cross, Tignish, Prince Edward's Island: Mid-August. Two circles, 18' and 12' in - blueberries! Didn't Christopher Cross used to be a singer or something?

Conquest, Saskatchewan: 2 September. Two identical small pictograms next to each other, each consisting of a circle (one 30', the other 36') with an emanating cruciform path. A very similar design was found here in 1998.

Dease Lake, British Columbia: 19 August. 100' single circle in wild grass.

Edmonton, Alberta: 23 August. Cross design quintuplet with large central circle connected by thin pathways to the satellites.

21 September. 85' circle with two emanating stubby paths and two small 20' circles, forming a cross shape, in barley. The farmer cut around the formation, which was featured on local TV news.

28 September. 190' 'Julia Set'-type fractal of seven circles in barley, the central circle 30m. All the circles were laid radially. Many stretched and ruptured nodes were found in the stems, which were intertwined with thistles. Again,

the farmer cut around the formation and vowed to keep the grain separately to grow on next year for experimental comparison to his normal crops. Aerial lights have been witnessed in the area in previous years.

Hagersville, Ontario: 25 July. Long thin paths, rings, circles and other shapes. Only found after harvest.

Lowville, Ontario: 22 October. A 'teardrop' and several 'diamond' shapes in 8' high maize. Equipment anomalies and a low humming sound were experienced by researchers, who also found strange cobweb-like material inside.

Midale, Saskatchewan: 6 September. Ringed circle with two satellites and nearby 6-spoked ring with smaller central ring. The ringed circle was superimposed over the edge of the field, cutting off a quarter of the design. This has happened with other designs before, but is rare. The spoked ring resembled a Native American medicine wheel.

14 September. 85' ring and 50' double ringed circle in wheat.

18 September. Three 10-12' circles in wheat, placed in a straight line. The farmer reported a "UFO" sighting that week.

20 September. Two 8' circles in wheat. Same field as 6 September event.

26 September. 60' circle with small offset standing circle of 3' within it, in wheat.

8 October. Three circles in a line, 60', 40' & 20', in durum wheat, each about 20' apart. The smallest circle was laid part-radially.

Montebello, Quebec: 15 July. Strange almost Russian-looking 300' long hieroglyphic script found after harvest. Some think this might simply have been the mutated remains of an advertising slogan made by the farmer himself, however.

Neilburg, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: 4 September. 185' three-armed mini-Julia Set fractal of 11 circles in wheat, the central circle 35' and the others ranging from 4' to 22'.

Viscount, Saskatchewan: End of September. Two circles, 45' & 36', in wheat.

Weyburn, Saskatchewan: 19 September. Six randomly scattered rings in hay, five 25', one 40'.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Bohuslavice: 3 July. One large circle with two smaller satellites.

Kasovice, West Country: Mid-July. Triple ringed small circle and circle in oats, both 7m overall diameter.

Krincec, Mecir: 7 June. 8.6m circle in barley.

Jindrichovice, West Country: 25 July. Large 50m three-petaled flower design with central ringed circle in wheat. Neat and very attractive.

Lomnice, Popelka: 8 July. 68.5m triple ringed circle with extra half ring and 5.6m small circle, with 23.5 dumbbell (one end a ring) nearby. 13 July. A further 42.9m double ringed circle appeared.

Mokrosuky, Susice: 3 July. Nine circles in some kind of cross arrangement.

Novy Jicin, North Moravia: 25 July. Tree-like 60m design of emanating tendrils. One of the most interesting overseas formations of the year, anyone familiar with the famous children's book *The Little Prince* will note the resemblance of this strange but beautiful emblem to the illustration of the baobabs taking over the Prince's planet, looking like four trees growing from a central point. On the same night, a small ring and large ring containing a triangular arrangement of three circles around a smaller fourth was found nearby.

Ruda, Morave: 25 June. Thought bubble design with two tails of three circles on each side of a large central circle, one curved up, the other down, in wheat.

Vestec, Krincec: 28 June. 6m single circle not far from the Krincec formation above.

GERMANY

Borchen, Nordrhein-Westfalen: 10 May. 56m double ringed circle in oilseed rape.

Burghasungen, Kassel, Hessen: 1 May. 40.6m triple ringed circle with short path curving inwards from outer ring, in oilseed rape. This area has had formations every year since 1996.

Dorla, Gleichen, Hessen: 20 June. 233m pictogram of two rings (outer: 13.6m) leading to a Y-shape path with a small circle at the end, in barley.

The same day, a complex 60m formation comprising a ring made from 110 connected semi-rings, standing circles, a crescent and a comet-like design appeared one field away, also in barley.

Ehlen, Kassel, Hessen: 26 June. Neat wiggly spiral with small double ringed circle at outer end and two ringed circles at the centre.

The same night, an intricate emblem like a claw of three crescents emanating from a three-quarter ring and scattered small circles, also appeared. Two of Germany's most pleasing designs to date (see photos, page 9).

Gut Rangen-Zierenberg, Kassel, Hessen: 30 June. Two complex shapes, one a multi-ringed circle cut off and contained by an arrowhead of straight lines, with two grapeshot, and one a circle with two semi-circular rings.

Lindau, Schleswig-Holstein: 6 June. 20.3m single circle with standing centre, in barley.

ISRAEL

Betlechem Hagalili, Jezreel Valley: 20 March. Dumbbell, two 9m circles connected with a 9m path. An 11m single circle lay nearby.

THE NETHERLANDS

Beek, Limburg: 25 July. Single circle near airport.

Berkel-Enschot, Noord Brabant: 23 July. Three circles, one 25m, two 8m. These very neat formations made it onto the front of the local newspaper. The farmer put them down to strong winds...

Eijs, Limburg: Date unknown. Single circle.

s'Heerenberg, Gelderland: End of July. Two rings, 20m & 10.5m, and a 14m F-shaped 'claw'.

Hoeven, Noord-Brabant: 7 June. 9m circle in barley. An elliptical bright pink light was seen to hover over the field the night of its appearance. The witness ran to find the circle immediately afterwards, beneath the spot where the light vanished. (This same witness has seen much light phenomena in the area and seems to personally attract it. Nancy Talbott of Dr Levensgood's BLT laboratories personally investigated these happenings two years ago and found them to be valid and true as attenders of her UK lectures last year may recall.)

12 June. Another circle discovered in the same field, after the same witness saw a bright flash.

6-7 October. Flashes again seen, heralding the arrival of three circles of 15m, 5.5m & 2m in a (very) late crop of oilseed rape.

15-16 October. Another bright object, this time very large, was seen, apparently leaving two more circles of 12m and 2.4m.

Nieuw Vossemeer: 18 July. Small wide-ringed circle.

Nieuwerkerk, Zeeland: 24 July. Huge 171m fractal symbol in wheat. Easily one of the most impressive overseas formations of 1999, this is naturally the most controversial. A vast 3D-looking three-pointed loop of many circles superimposed over a thin ring, this, like The Netherlands' other prominent fractal formation of 1997, has been claimed as man-made by the same team. 'Project Fe-male', as it is named by the claimants, allegedly took 15 people to make in one night, according to one source. However, the supposed creators themselves say two nights, and all participants worked for a technical design and consultancy agency. Just like before, though, when diagrams supposedly lodged with a solicitor before the making of the 1997 triple fractal never materialised, no evidence has been produced to prove the human creation of this one. There is apparently a video of this year's formation being made, however, no-one has seen it. SCR's Barry Reynolds and Martin Noakes separately e-mailed the alleged makers, challenging them to provide details of the construction methods (there is no centre-point in the standing crop for the large ring to have been gauged by, for instance). Saying only that they used "very advanced equipment" (never specified), unsurprisingly, as ever, the claimants refused to give any details or evidence whatsoever, saying "we don't make our techniques public"...

Schermerhorn, Noord-Holland: 7 August. Dumbbell. A second formation was found in the same field on 26 August.

Sevenum, Limburg: 30 June. 7m circle in potatoes.

Wieringerwerf, Noord-Holland: Mid-July. Two pictograms, total length 80m. Cut and burnt stems found inside.

Zeddum, Limburg: 24 July. 50m pictogram.

Zeddumse Weg, Kilder, Gelderland: 28 July. Two complex pictograms, one 18m comprising a path connecting two circles, a larger ringed circle and a circle with emanating crossbar and 'halo', and a larger 60m design comprising a large circle with a protruding pathway connecting circles, rings and ringed circles.

Zutphen, Gelderland: 1 August. Pictogram of 12m, 11.5m, 8.5m, 8.5m & 6m circles.

PERU

Cinochero, Cuzco: 8 March. Single circle. A light was seen coming down into the field the night it appeared.

Lindera, Arequipa: 8 March. Groups of three circles joined by paths, in wheat.

U S A

Brentwood, Tennessee: 18 June. Complex pictogram in wheat, consisting of a 90' circle connected by a 73' path to a 69' T-bar with a 28' cross bar at one end and a 36' circle at the other, with two small emanating 'insectogram' antenna. A 24' ring surrounded the cross of the T-bar. The field belonged to a Baptist church organisation who were not best pleased at the formation's arrival.

Cottonwood Canyon, Walla Walla, Washington: 30 July. Six circles, one with four irregularly radiating arms, in wheat. The lay inside the circles ran clockwise on the outer edges and anticlockwise towards the centres. Reported in local newspapers with photos provided by the farmer himself, although he cut the field before visitors could arrive.

Hamel, Minnesota: 11 July. 60' thin-ringed circle with five small circles spiralling outwards on each side, in wheat.

Verona, Wisconsin: Mid-September. 96' ring with three emanating paths in timothy grass. **AT**

Much of this information has come courtesy of various web sites (where photos of many of these formations can be seen), so we express acknowledgements to Crop Circle Connector and its many contacts, FGK, Paul Anderson of CPR Canada, Eltjo Hasselhoff, Doug Rogers and anyone else who has helped report these events.

LETTERS

GLICKERS JITTERS

I read Michael Glickman's comments in your last issue (*in which Michael challenged Colin Andrews to respond to the recent Oliver's Castle video analysis by Chris Everard - see video review page 16*).

A long time ago it became obvious to me that Michael Glickman is not a rational person with whom a good honest down-to-earth conversation changes anything. I see no advantages to anybody in starting yet another public affray with him. The so called 'Oliver's Castle Confession' video confirmed all the private detective's findings, those being that the video was manufactured by bloody a**holes in Bristol who set out to make us all look fools and with any luck make them some money too. In the main I think they failed.

The thing we all should understand is that sometimes, to obtain information, one has to promise confidentiality. In the case of the Oliver's Castle video, I exposed myself to prosecution for making public that certain of Wabe's details were obtained by illegal means. It is somewhat bizarre to me that the man's real name discovered by my investigation is now accepted and used widely, but that the other details discovered at the same time have not been accepted by the small camp of people who appear to be selective with the facts to the extreme. I obtained the Wabe confession rushes only by promising a Japanese TV company that I would not show the material in public or release it outside my own hands. I agreed to these terms and was sent all the material. One half shows the version the Bristol company wanted us to believe, ie. that it was real. The second segment shows how they made it and the complete confession etc... They had set up the hoax to be financially beneficial in both cases. Having failed in convincing everybody it was real they attempted to sell to the media the film they also made of themselves making the video and explaining why they did it.

To allow at least one other perspective than my own, I obtained permission from Japan to send one copy, with strict conditions, to Peter Sorensen who has expertise in video production and who, in my experience, is a sound, rational and honest researcher. Peter has also come to the same conclusion as myself - ie. that the OC

video is a fraud.

For me to re-open the whole can of worms in taking up yet another fight with Michael Glickman would serve nobody. He believes or wants to believe in it and so shall it be.

The great shame with the Glickman/Andrews relationship is that I feel our views on the crop circle phenomenon are very close - but on how many crop circles are made by people and the Oliver's Castle video we are 180 degrees out of phase.

Colin Andrews, Connecticut, USA

Oh dear... by now most readers are aware of the endless wrangles which have gone on over this controversial video. Some do not accept the 'confession' (seen only by an very small handful) as being truthful, others do. Some think the original sequence is a fake, others don't. We'll leave it to Glickers himself to respond to Colin's letter, as he does in his Cornography column on page 20 - Ed.

NOT SO NEGATIVE NEGATIVES

I was surprised to read the comments about the light anomalies pictured in our calendar (*which we suggested might be moisture on the lens*), in the last issue of **SC**. It seems to me that you are making some easy assumptions as to the cause of these anomalies, something which we should all try to refrain from.

I discovered the East Field double formation at Alton Barnes on Saturday 12th June, 1999. It consisted of a long pictogram measuring 1,020' long and an attendant 500' long coiled serpent. I was unable to visit the formations just then because of family obligations and only got to see them from the top of the hill later on that evening. With the farmer's permission, I resolved to go and visit them early the next day. I arrived at 6.45am on Sunday morning to find quite a few people already there. I decided to go into the long pictogram first. The couple who were walking in front of me, but in a parallel tramline, entered the formation only to turn back immediately. This puzzled me and I shouted, asking them why they had not stayed in. They replied that their dog, which I could not see, had become too distressed to enter the formation.

I sensed a strong atmosphere on entering the pictogram and started to feel somewhat queasy myself. I began to photograph the long formation and at its far end took a picture of the attendant serpent a little distance away. When

I received my photographs a few days later, I was astonished to see light anomalies on them. The negative of the film taken on Sunday showed a progressive darkening throughout, culminating with a startling light shape in the last frame. I could not see anything of this with my eyes inside the formations.

On the Monday I got airborne at about 2.30pm to take aerial shots of the two formations using the same camera, but with a new film. As on the previous day's film, the shots got progressively darker, showing curious light patterns around the formations, again culminating in a very strange-looking shape in the last frame very similar to the one photographed on Sunday; in the same place within the field, but taken from a different angle. I took the negatives back to the lab where they had been processed. The technician told me they had been processed with a batch of other films which had come out perfectly alright and that he could not come up with any technical reasons for the presence of these anomalies. He said that if the films had stuck together, or to the tray, it would have prevented the chemicals getting to those areas and the effect would have been the opposite of what it is at present. In other words the shapes on the negative would have been left transparent instead of being black as they actually are. This would allow the light to stream through during development making dark shapes on the photographs instead of light ones. He cannot understand how the chemicals could have reacted so differently on my films from the other films in the batch which came out perfectly. He can only deduce that something from outside did make an impression on the films or that somehow some force affected the chemicals in the processing tank to precisely enhance certain localised areas on my films only, a supposition that he said gave him goose pimples!

I use a Mamiya 645, a middle format semi-professional camera. I use 220mm films (30 frames) ISO100 which I buy from a shop that supplies professional photographers. These were new Fuji films bought just a few days before the appearance of the double formation. I keep my films refrigerated (not frozen) and they are sealed and in their original boxes. No-one else has access to them and I loaded the camera myself just before flying. I have used the same camera, the same type of film and the same laboratory for the past two years. I take the aerial shots from a small helicopter especially designed for aerial photography. I have taken hundreds of photographs in the same conditions and never had results like this. The days the photographs were taken were dry

and sunny, eliminating the possibility of moisture on the lens.

Francine Blake, Etchilhampton, Wiltshire

We were not suggesting all the anomalous photographs had mundane explanations, only that in our opinion "a couple" of them might be moisture on the lens. This was based on comments made by two friends experienced in photography, who felt this was an explanation which shouldn't be discounted. I agree that we should never make "easy assumptions" in these areas. Neither, though, should we always refuse to consider more straightforward explanations in some cases, despite the interesting details above - Ed.

MILLENNIUM BUGGED

Thank you for printing our letter in SC 87 (regarding the proper Millennium being 2001). We were a little disappointed by the response.

If one chooses to 'go with the flow' rather than be technically accurate, one must therefore follow the vast majority of people again in believing that all crop formations are made by pranksters. They believe it (at least over here in the USA), because that's what is shown on television! So in our view, quantity does not overwhelm quality or accuracy.

You will, of course, be welcome at whatever festivity we may get up to on 31st December 2000!

David & Beryl Holyoake, USA, via E-mail

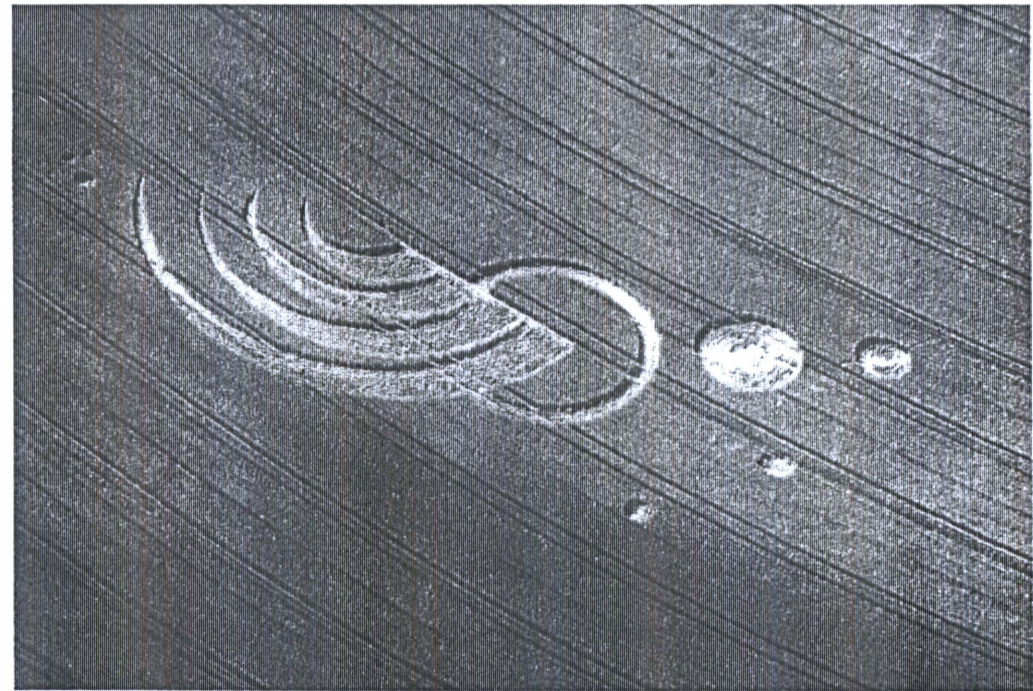
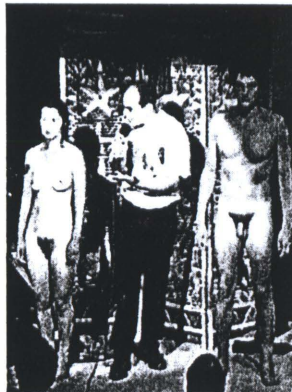
Point taken... but I really think we can be forgiven for 'going with the flow' on this one! - Ed.

PORN CIRCLES

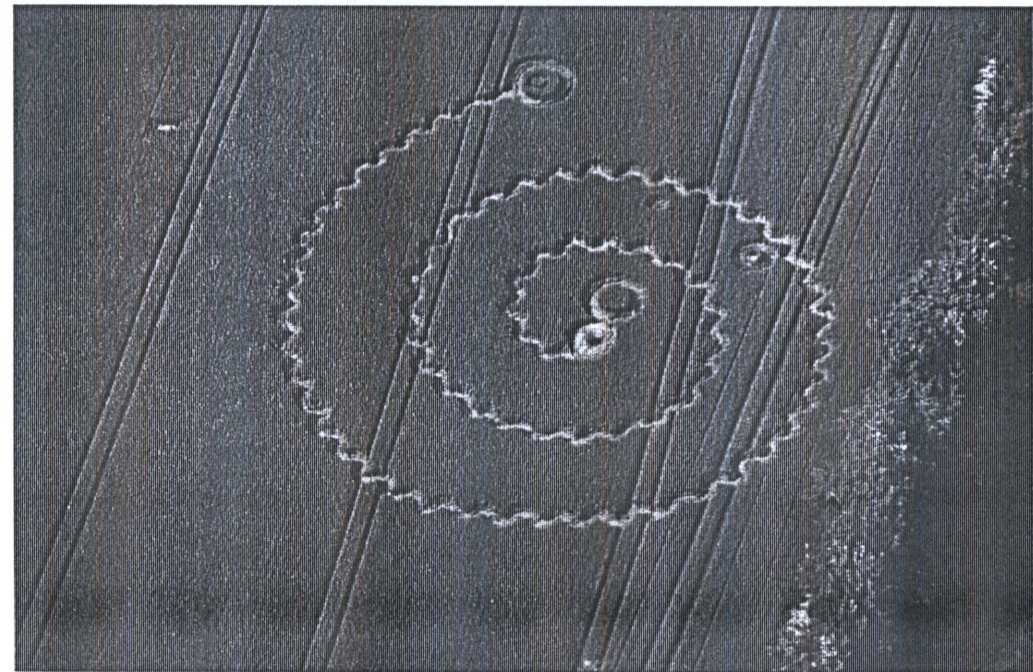
Re. live nudity at the Glastonbury Symposium (SC 87). Can you reserve me a front row seat next summer? Ta.

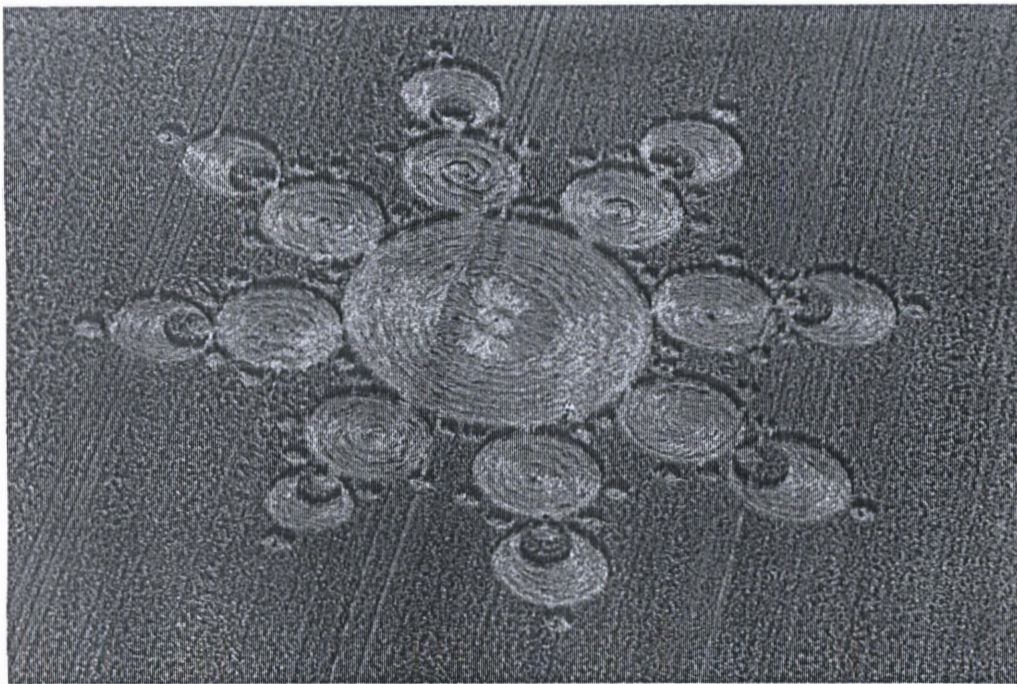
Geoff Hinton, Godalming, Surrey

No - Ed.

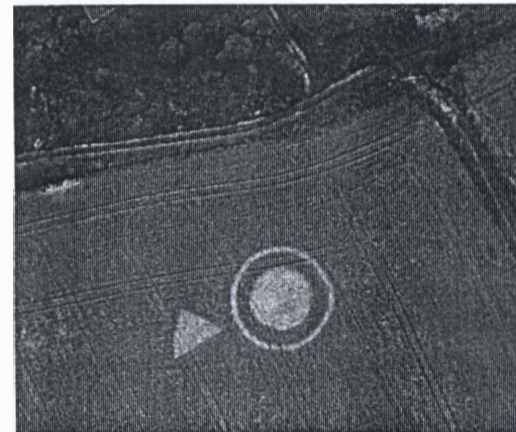
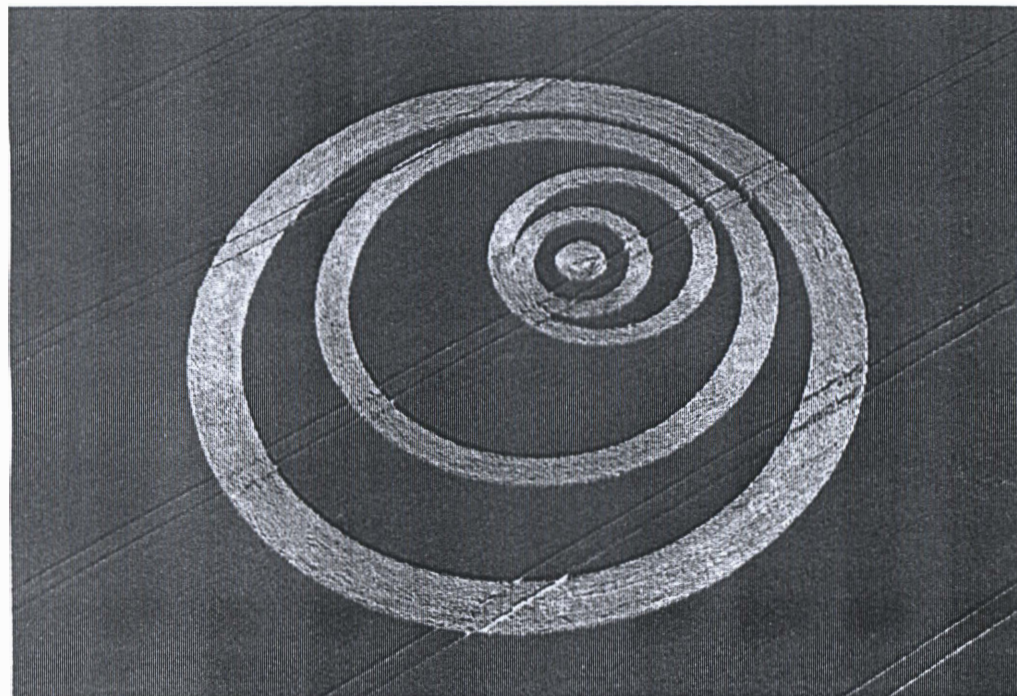


ABOVE & BELOW: Ehlen, Kassel, Germany. Two of the best German formations from 1999, these appeared very close to each other on the same night, 26th June. (Report, page 5) Photos: FRANK LAUMEN





ABOVE: Avebury, Wiltshire, 1st September. The last English large formation of the year (report: SC 86). Coincidentally or not, the newly discovered second avenue of stones, reported last issue, was found buried very close by. Photo: LUCY PRINGLE BELOW: Penton Grafon, Hampshire, 30th May (report: SC 85). A beautiful continuation of an old theme. Photo: STEVE ALEXANDER



FORMATIONS

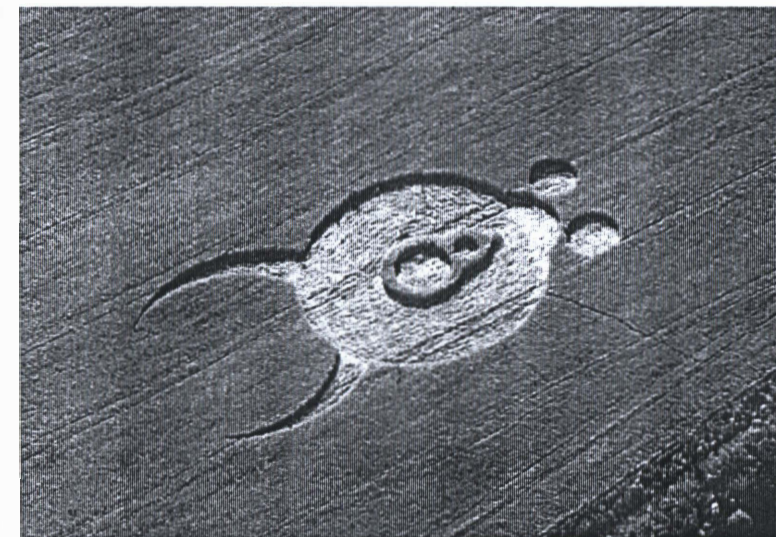
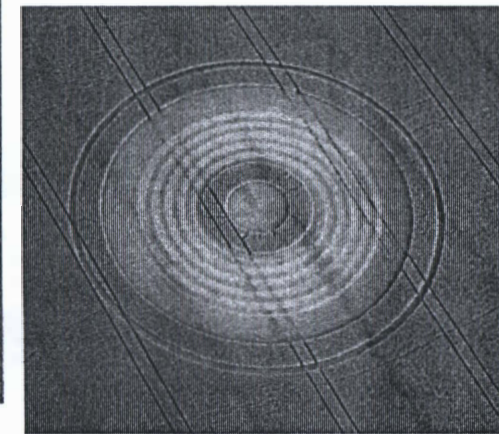
1999

Gallery #4

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



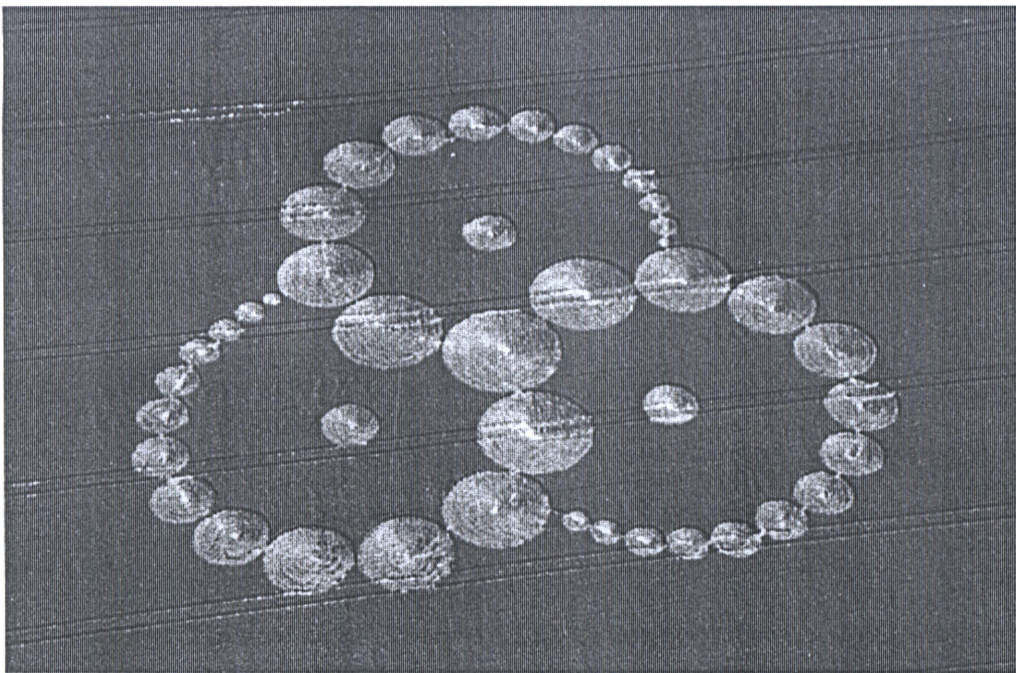
TOP LEFT: Poynings, near Devil's Dyke, West Sussex, 1st August. The same field played host to a dumbbell in 1991. Photo: MICHAEL HUBBARD

MIDDLE LEFT: Mill Hill, Shoreham, West Sussex, 22nd August. A much visited field for crop formations. Photo: DAVID RUSSELL

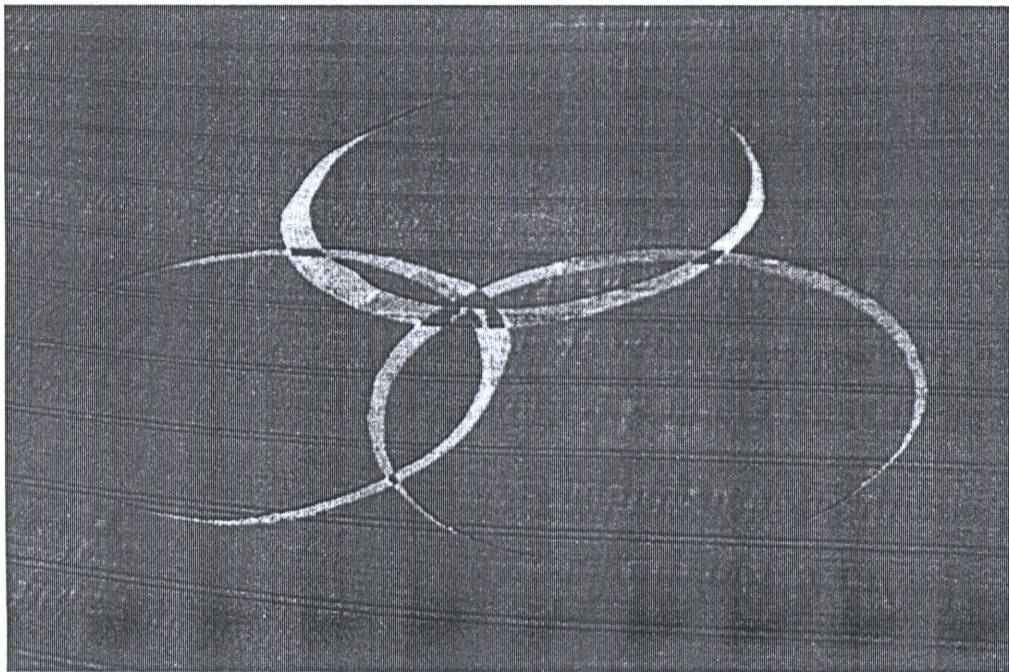
MIDDLE RIGHT: Morcott, Leicestershire, 17th July. The internal rings were originally standing, but flattened themselves one night! Photo: P J BROOKMAN

RIGHT: Hardstoft, near Chesterfield, Derbyshire, 16th June. Photo: P J BROOKMAN

(Reports for the above: SC 86)



ABOVE & BELOW: Trottiscliffe, near Maidstone, Kent, 20th June. These formations, both hugely ambitious for Kent, which had a very good year in 1999, appeared in adjacent fields on the same night. The total diameter of the crescents formation is about 600'. Photos by ANDREW KING



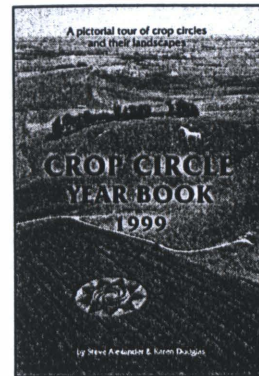
REVIEWS

There's been all sorts of cerealogical paraphernalia released in the last few months, as follows...

Crop Circle Year Book 1999 A Pictorial Tour of Crop Circles and Their Landscapes

by Steve Alexander & Karen Douglas

Book Review by ANDY THOMAS



When I was a child, there was a tradition in my family that each Christmas I would receive a copy of the *Beano* comic annual from my grandparents, all my favourite characters held within a book one could keep and treasure, with more colour pages than usual in a format which

wouldn't fall apart or get screwed up like the more ephemeral weekly edition.

There's something of this concept in Steve Alexander and Karen Douglas's new *Crop Circle Year Book 1999*, the first in a proposed series of annual collections of the finest crop formations from the previous season, more glossy magazine than book, but none the worse for it. All of a sudden, that unruly pile of postcards and cuttings is redundant. This will be the answer to the prayers of many, who each year desperately seek a compiled visual record of the year's main events. Until now, the best option has been to obtain a copy of a crop circle calendar, which, to all intents and purposes, has always served a similar function.

Indeed, this project is very much the descendant of Steve and Karen's previous efforts in the calendar world, evolved here to become something more substantial, if pricier, having a similar amount of pages to a calendar, but with the layout tipped up into portrait mode and rather

more in the way of photos and captions. The book is very well designed and each page leaps up to the eye with a very attractive full colour barrage of carefully co-ordinated montages, superimposed harmoniously onto related images. The reproduction is excellent and only a few overly pale titles fail to strike.

It will come as no surprise to those familiar with Steve's burgeoning showcase of fine aerial crop circle images to find that this book is largely photographic in content, with restrained textual contributions from Karen threading the pictorial seams together. It's easy to overlook the value of Karen's contributions to the success of the Alexander/Douglas partnership, which, both personally and professionally, has blossomed into a well-balanced team. The fruits of this relationship are well in evidence here. The high quality of Steve's photographs, both the aeriels and the less-seen but spectacular pole shots included in the Year Book, now taken using a detail-capturing large-format camera, are renowned and speak for themselves. However, Karen's words - which gave us the bravely alliterative phrase "temporary temples for the modern age", since quoted widely elsewhere - though concise, have many times provided a crucial supportive context around which Steve's photos thrive, both at lectures and in print. It would be nice to see this expanded in future editions.

There's an air of mystique to the text, particularly in the introduction, which does away with any pretence of trying to give the perhaps expected potted guide to crop circles, and substitutes something more cryptic instead, describing itself as "a quiet prayer, in pictures, for the future of beauty, mystery and spirit in our every day lives". Steve's additional portraits of ancient stones and sacred sites, which permeate the book, pick up this thread, and the importance of the *landscape* within which crop formations appear, as suggested by the subtitle, is implied throughout, hinting at future directions for the authors.

The mystical landscape celebrated is almost exclusively Wiltshire, with a couple of pages of Hampshire thrown in for good measure, and this, perhaps, is the only department in which the book doesn't quite fulfil its contract. The book exists, according to the back cover, to record "the unfolding of the crop circle phenomenon in the UK", but there are no photographs nor mention of any crop formations outside of Wiltshire and Hampshire (and the Hampshire record is highly selective). There is, of course, no way in which an annual booklet can hope to photographically cover every En-

glish formation, but some mention or at least allusion to the events of the many other counties which received notable glyphs in 1999 would have increased the profile of this book significantly. Perhaps necessarily, it's the most striking formations in the most active area which receive the coverage here, but some kind of reference to events elsewhere would, in future, make something good even better, perhaps even utilising one or two photos by others for the sake of coverage (this could have added to the Wiltshire reports too, as one or two important formations Steve couldn't get to, such as the 'basket-weave', are notably absent). A list in table form, however brief, of every formation to have appeared in the year across the country would make the year book utterly indispensable.

As it is, what we have now is a very well packaged souvenir which will more than satisfy the curiosity of those who seek to be reassured that the crop circle phenomenon is alive and well for another season. The Year Book is an instant answer and you'd be hard pushed to find a better compact visual record this side of the Internet. If you want a grown-up version of that *Beano* annual feeling, looking forward to the next Year Book each autumn could be a worthy substitute. And if you want to impress your friends, leave this on the coffee table when visitors come around and you'll ensure yourself an interesting evening's conversation.

The quite breathtaking imagery on display here, presented so well, is impossible to view passively and reminds us all that we have a very special phenomenon at our fingertips, and that while the world as a whole may ignore it, we have the privilege of being aware here and now, which is where it matters most. **AT**

Crop Circle Year Book 1999, by Steve Alexander & Karen Douglas. Published by Temporary Temple Press 1999, ISBN 0 9537446 0 4, 28 pages, full colour, price £12.00 (UK), £14.00 (Europe), £15.00 (non-US overseas), \$25.00 (USA). Prices include p&p. Cheques payable to 'S Alexander'. Available from: 27 St Francis Road, Gosport, Hampshire, PO12 2UG, England. Tel/fax: 01705 352867.

Crop Circles The Greatest Mystery of Modern Times by Lucy Pringle

Book Review by MARCUS ALLEN

Lucy Pringle has written a most timely book. Her 10 years of research are now told in this book, which deserves to become a valuable

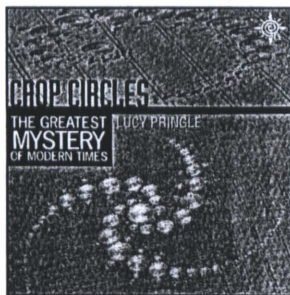
historical record.

About this phenomenon only two things can really be agreed upon: crop circles appear, and many of them are very beautiful. Everything else is hotly debated: who makes them and why, what do they mean and will they reappear next year? From being a founder member of the CCCS, Lucy has had first hand experience of many aspects of crop circles. She has photographed them, recorded their effects on people, animals and equipment, interviewed witnesses to their creation and generally been a constant presence trying to understand the impact the circles have had on so many who become involved.

It is a matter of personal choice which aspect of crop circles catches anyone's attention. They are all here, the personal, the scientific, the photographs, and are written about in straightforward language. The accounts of many witnesses to effects experienced are told in their own words, in sometimes lengthy sections.

In many ways this is one of the strengths of this book. It is like hearing many different accounts of similar events. Their impact is greater as the author stands back, using her overall knowledge to guide the reader through initially separate stories to produce her coherent viewpoint. Some will dismiss all this as anecdotal. That would be easy, but wrong. When so many anecdotes all reach a similar conclusion, then other researchers should take note and start digging deeper. It is the debate which is important, not the personalities. Read the message, don't shoot the messenger! Hoaxers come in for a good slagging from Lucy. With good reason. Her personal experience of dealing with the BBC TV *Country File* programme lends a degree of credibility to the allegation that so much of the reporting of crop circles on TV is done with sensation high on the agenda rather than simply informing viewers of the facts of the phenomenon. There was nothing about the research, nothing about the history. Just a few hired feet crushing crops. Not so much a conspiracy as crass incompetence (with licence payers' money too!).

As well as the wide-ranging descriptions of the varied effects crop circles have, there is a large selection of nearly 100 colour photographs, and as many black and white. Every year from



1987 - 1998 is covered. Terence Meaden, whose records of the emerging phenomenon brought it to a wider audience, is given due credit by Lucy for his pioneering investigations. That so few other scientists have had the courage and integrity to become involved is a sad reflection on their profession and their much-vaunted insistence on the pursuit of new evidence to understand the natural world.

Lucy's own pictures do vary in quality, from the superb to the average (the back cover is an example of the latter). This only shows how technically demanding aerial photography can be. So much depends on sun angles and brightness in relation to aircraft speed and direction. We observers tend to take for granted that we will only see perfect images of all formations. The commercial and logistic pressures to fly over and photograph so many formations each year is something we hardly consider. Yet such records of formations are all that remain for future study. We should be grateful that a few committed individuals are prepared to hang out of steeply banking aircraft to bring back those little coloured images we so eagerly await.

The stylish foreword by Professor Archie Roy puts into very clear perspective the various attitudes adopted by the sceptics. He calls them 'Goldwyns', after the late Sam Goldwyn who once memorably remarked: "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts." His pertinent point that theory should follow evidence, not the other way around, is well made. Ian Baillie's drawings illustrating how certain crop circles show "elegant, correct geometry", yet others are "a hoax of limited intelligence! Nothing ties up, it's just a load of circles", show just how sophisticated the use of geometry can be when applied to crop circles. Another indication of the wide-ranging subjects tackled. The inclusion of so many different aspects and viewpoints in this book gives it its strength. Read as a compilation and explanation it works well.

When researchers like Lucy Pringle commit themselves to writing a book such as this, its publication should be welcomed and encouraged. It is personal. It has not been peer-reviewed. But it does now exist and in years to come will be referred to and looked upon as one of the very few sources recording this most enigmatic of mysteries at the close of the 20th Century. **MA**

Crop Circles - The Greatest Mystery of Modern Times, by Lucy Pringle. Published by Thorsons 1999, ISBN 0 7225 3855 3, price £16.99. 144 pages, hardback, black and white/colour. Available through bookshops or from: 5 Town Lane, Sheet, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 2AF. Tel/fax: 01730 263454.

Crop Circles - The Research
Video by Bert Janssen

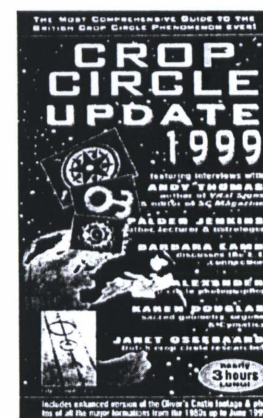
Crop Circle Update 1999
Video by Chris Everard

Reviewed by JASON PORTHOUSE

No ardent croppie should be without a good documentary or three cluttering up their bookshelves. With this in mind, our esteemed editor saw fit to ask me to review two of the latest offerings to tempt the faithful into parting with their hard-earned. *Crop Circles - The Research* is the snappily-titled second film in a series by Dutch researcher Bert Janssen (the first being *Crop Circles - What on Earth is Going On?*), and *Crop Circle Update 1999* is part of the prodigious output of director/producer/researcher Chris Everard and his 'Enigma TV' channel (who gave us *The Crop Circle Enigma* Glickman/Messenger interview, reviewed SC 84).

So what do you get for your money? Initial impressions favour Chris's film - the box is colourful, professional and looks just like a 'proper' video, whereas Bert's offering is a little more plain and workmanlike, if not pleasing. Start to watch them, though, and you realise first impressions are not always right...

Crop Circles - The Research is snappy, informative and generally entertaining. Narrated by Bert's colleague Janet Ossebaard, it covers a lot of the areas of scientific endeavour with clarity and enough depth to be informative



without getting bogged down in minutiae. Various subjects are covered – from anomalous substances to light phenomena to the work of the BLT Research team. There are some good aerial shots, some photos, and some nice footage taken inside formations. The interviews are clear and concise, and overall the film flows quite nicely from beginning to end. It's well edited, the accompanying music is pleasant enough, if a little 'New Agey', and often complements the imagery well. Throw in some geometry (clearly illustrated) and a smattering of anecdotes from eyewitnesses, and you have a very enjoyable hour's viewing. Even experienced croppies will find interesting points and new information – the (all too brief) coverage of tree circles, dead flies (you need to see it, really) and the illustrations of blown nodes (hard pore corn to croppies) all spring to mind. Enjoyable and informative.

Crop Circle Update 1999 is an epic. Well, it is of epic proportions, anyway. For a professional documentary to hold the attention for three hours it has to be something really special – I can think of only a few. Unfortunately, *CCU 99* fails. It certainly is comprehensive – interviewees include Karen Douglas, Palden Jenkins and our very own Andy Thomas – and over 45 minutes are devoted to analysis of the Oliver's Castle video. Chris's computer enhancement suggests anomalies at the top of the field – an area not many have studied. I'll save my comments on the analysis itself, and why I believe it to be flawed, for an article in the next *SC*, but regardless, it's just too long to hold attention.

Sadly, all the interviews are almost entirely uncut, and the experience of watching a static camera shot for ten minutes at a time, often with extremely poor sound, makes it very difficult to keep focussed on the information being delivered. Also, the discussions are not intercut with one another. Whilst this may be a stylistic decision, hearing different opinions juxtaposed is often more enlightening, and keeps the pace of a film 'up'. It's a little too conversational as well – though a chat with any of the people involved would be an interesting and stimulating experience, this doesn't come over on screen. I know that people bemoan the soundbite mentality, but this is a case where less would definitely be more. On the up side, the music is good, if somewhat overblown at times (some of it produced by Chris himself), and many of the 1999 formations are featured.

Both these videos were produced on shoestring budgets, for the love of the subject. On one level, criticising any aspect of these films is churlish. However, either may be the first source of information many will see on the

subject. Whilst the dedicated croppie will be able to extract the nuggets from *Crop Circle Update 1999*, for repeat viewing potential and the opportunity to amaze your friends for an hour, *Crop Circles – The Research* wins. **JP**

Crop Circles – The Research, by Bert Janssen, is available from PO Box 10, 9460 AA Geiten, The Netherlands. E-mail: mailto:ossebaard@wxss.nl *Crop Circle Update 1999*, by Chris Everard, £16.99, is available from 163 Churchbury Road, London, SE9 5JB.

Legendary Landscapes

Secrets of Ancient Wiltshire Revealed
by J D Wakefield

Book Review by **ANDY THOMAS**

John and Julie Wakefield were familiar faces in the days of the 'dreads' (as in long hair) community who spent their time in and around the first pictograms of Alton Barnes in the early 90's. Though their interests appear to have moved on from crop circles, the husband and wife team (no relation to *Croppies* video Grant Wakefield), now seemingly amalgamated into the initials 'J D', clearly haven't lost their fascination with the Alton Barnes and Avebury area.

Legendary Landscapes is a love letter to this endlessly mysterious and very beautiful part of England, of which the circles are just one in a series of enigmas that create the region's air of mystique. The book is concerned with the pagan history of the place and the many clues it may hold to its true nature and purpose, hidden not only in local folklore and beliefs, but also in the very shape of the landscape itself.

According to this book, nearly every cut and curve in the entire Vale of Pewsey and the complex of Avebury is meaningful and symbolic, shaped with purpose aeons ago.

Anyone familiar with this gorgeous corner of the English countryside, through cerealogy or otherwise, will find themselves looking at it with new eyes after reading this well-researched, if sometimes dense volume, packed with details of pre-Christian rituals and Goddess-type religions. Perhaps the only disappointment is that crop circles themselves – for many, the reason for their discovery of the area in question – don't even warrant the briefest of mentions; strange given the previous interests of the authors. That aside, an insightful read. **AT**

Legendary Landscapes, by J D Wakefield. Published by Nod Press, 1999, ISBN 0 9536301 0 2, £8.95. Paperback, b&w photos & illustrations. Available from: Nod Press, PO Box 338, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 4PW.

In April and May of 1999, there was much talk about the coming eclipse to be seen in western England on August 11th. When a crop formation at Middle Wallop arrived on 2nd May, the series of nine elements in this

design looked very much as if the August eclipse was being displayed in the rape, even though by May this coming event was old news. It was all too easy for the early assessors to refer to this pattern as 'the eclipse'. On further review, however, you may have had second thoughts about the message at Middle Wallop, as did I. Just in case you have been focusing your thoughts on other designs, and are about to go along with the crowd, you might consider these observations about the May 2nd formation...

Have a look at a photo of the formation, holding the arrangement of nine elements so that they appear with the smallest dark circle to your left, and you 'read' the design from left to right (or top to bottom as the accompanying photo shows). The four circles of standing bright yellow rape plants in the central portion of this progression, all of the same diameter, are the important elements of the design. Everything that happens in this design, involves these four circles. Arriving from a distance, at the left, 'something' approaches these central four circles. We have seen this use of small-to-large dark circles before, all to indicate movement from a distant point toward a local point. The 'something' approaches the first of the four bright yellow circles, then proceeds to slide in behind this circle, as displayed in the next three elements. Note that four dark circles were used to convey this thought of movement from a distance. The idea might have been conveyed with just three circles rising in diameter from left to right. Evidently that idea wasn't good enough and four circles were used so that no confusion could arise about what was going on here. Our visiting artists wanted us to under-

stand the concept of movement. If that thought was to be lost, the whole exercise would mean little or nothing.

My point... This design of May 2nd has nothing to do with the eclipse of August 11th.

It makes no difference what the standing rape yellow circles represent... a moon, or a sun. Whatever it is that approaches this bright circle, it moves in *behind* that representation, not across in front of it. We're not describing an eclipse of our sun here.

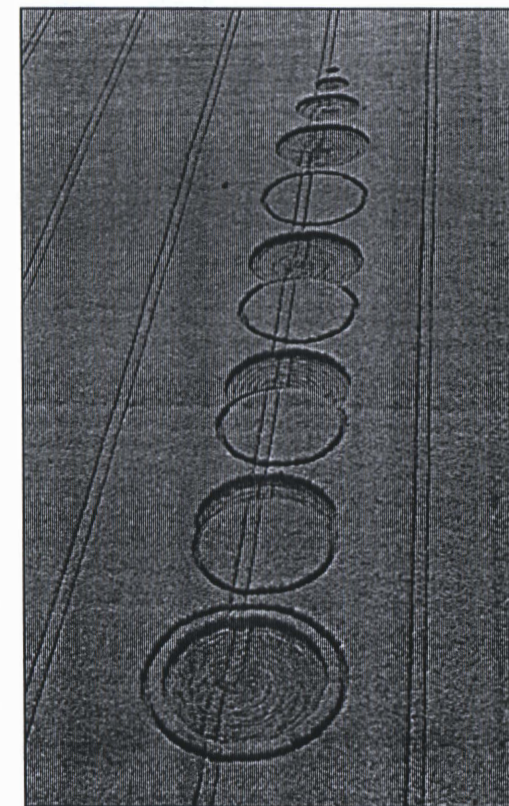
So, if not an eclipse of our sun, what's going on? What's the message? The ninth circle may hold the key to the

question. The bright yellow ring of standing

- FEATURES -

A-NOT-ECLIPSE NOW

The so-called 'eclipse' formation of May last year caused many to wonder if it was depicting the solar event of August 11th, which did seem to herald a quiet end to the circle season. However, **DOUG ROGERS** has an alternative view on the meaning of this most beautiful pattern...



rape, surrounding the circle of downed rape plants, may tell us that the 'something' that moves in behind the central yellow circle causes a change in the appearance of that circle. If we assume the central circle is our sun, the bright ring may indicate solar flare activity, or some other action. The only successful way to convey bright sunshine in elements 5,6,7 & 8, is to use the standing rape to show the intent of the design. The only way to show bright activity surrounding the sun in element 9, is to reverse the order of standing rape to downed rape. Element 9 displays downed rape in its centre only because our artist had no other choice of materials to work with. Understandable...

The timing of the arrival of this Middle Wallop design is interesting. No progressive design such as this one has been noticed before, clearly indicating movement from one situation to another. The design at Roundway Hill in July of 1994 appeared to tell the story of the coming total eclipse to be seen below the equator. There was much detail in that formation, and there was an indication of movement. This May 2nd design, however, is emphatic in its message. Its arrival at a time when two events were about to be recorded in our heavens, makes it doubly intriguing. If we put to one side the total eclipse, the other event involves Comet Lee. If we take the prediction of Nostradamus seriously, and if indeed there was/is something solid and large in the tail of Lee, the Middle Wallop design becomes absolutely fascinating!!

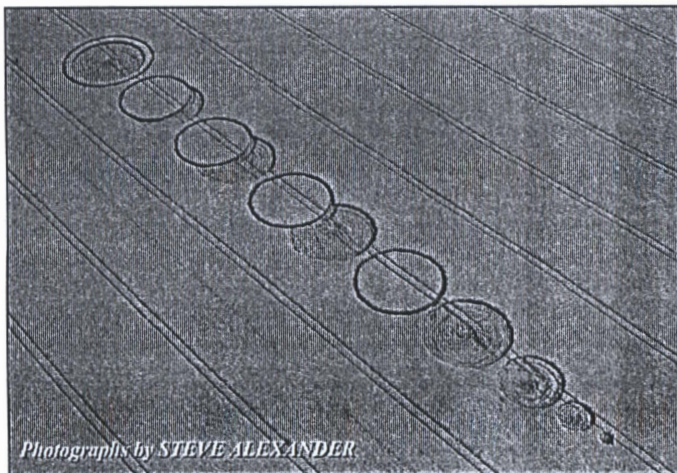
I am sure you recall the details. Comet Lee was to move around to the backside of our

sun, then emerge on July 28th. Its track thereafter has been something of a mystery because we haven't been able to get clear information about Lee's movement since late July last year. Whether or not there is something in the tail of Lee, perhaps coming our way, that matter should be dealt with in another commentary. What remains of interest, however, is the matter of the May 2nd message. The list of questions generated by its arrival in the brightly flowered rape might keep one busy....

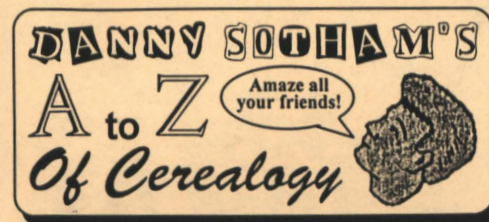
- 1) If no progressive design had ever been noticed before, why did the May 2nd design show up just a few weeks before the passage of Comet Lee behind our sun?
- 2) Should there be any question about the May 2nd design to cause us to believe that an object which approached the central circle slid in behind that circle, rather than crossed in front of it?
- 3) If the bright, contrasting, ring of standing rape surrounding element 9 represents radiation, or solar flare activity, what news did we hear in August of disrupted satellite operations, or interrupted communications of various kinds? (*Solar flare activity is reaching its 11-year cycle peak now, in the Spring months of 2000 - Ed.*)
- 4) If we are to give any credit at all to Nostradamus, how is it that he knew, some four hundred years ago, that a comet would arrive in our solar system at the same time as a total eclipse would be seen in his part of the world?

5) Assuming that the Middle Wallop formation is 'genuine', and that the above interpretation of its message is correct, how did our visiting artists know that, as viewed from Earth, Lee would disappear behind our sun, and show us in a crop design how perfectly Lee would align itself to affect that disappearance?

Of all the crop formations we have received to date, I have to view this May 2nd design at the top of those that are listed as mesmerising!! **DR**



Photographs by STEVE ALEXANDER



I-SPY: With all that satellite junk floating around up in orbit, capable of reading your newspaper from space, as technologists are so fond of telling us (why can't they just pop out to the newsagents like everyone else?), and with infra-red night-sights and the like, wouldn't you think one of them might have monitored the fields of England long enough to have a) captured the creation of a crop formation out of nowhere, or b) captured the activities of all these baseball-capped artists/students/pensioners/Young Farmers who we're constantly assured are out there thrashing away every night? Instead, a telling, deafening silence reigns. The only answer is going to be for CCCS or someone to save up enough to launch their own spy satellite. Now, I wonder what you can get for £37.50 these days...?

ICE CIRCLES: Strange phenomenon commonly sighted on screens at conferences or tucked away into paragraphs of books, but never actually seen in reality, rather like circles spun into the tops of pine trees, etc. Actually, a few photos have done the rounds over the years, and there is a neat picture of an American ice ring which looks just as if Wile E Coyote or some other such cartoon character has done the old sawing-through-from-beneath trick. Maybe we're missing all the best formations, down in Antarctica or something.

INDIAN TRACKING SKILLS: White man see footprints. White man think heap big hoaxers at large. White man need skills of red man. White man say "How?". See also INFRA-RED PHOTOGRAPHY.

THE INFORMER: Some modern wags would have you believe they purvey the best in humorous writings on cripplodum, but all (present company excepted) pale into vast insignificance when set against this rather charming publication of evil intent, which did the rounds back in the golden days of master hoaxing bullshitters like Jim Schnabel, *et al.* Cheaply photocopied and sent at random to leading cerealogists (as they were then almost respectably known, before someone stupidly coined the phrase 'croppie'), it was largely an exercise to stir up researchers against each other and promote the notion of hoaxing (as it was then almost respectably known, before someone stupidly coined the phrase 'Circlemakers'). However, its grasp on satire and humour, though cruel and cutting, was utterly hilarious and perhaps inadvertently entertained the 10 people who ever received it in the dark days of the *Round In Circles* fall-out, with gem headlines like *Vigay to Hoax Hoaxed Hoax* (don't ask) never bettered. Shame,

then, that such talents were wasted on spreading falsehoods, but there you go. Pale *Informer* imitations followed, this time by sad and bitter croppies themselves, writing anonymously, trying to plot revenge on hated foes (typically, not hoaxers, but other researchers), but the moment had passed. Mind you, *The Informer's* prophetic powers were less impressive, referring to SCR's esteemed leader Barry Reynolds as "*destined to be put down by a Sussex coup*". We're still waiting.

INFRA-RED PHOTOGRAPHY: Another in a long, long line of totally unproven and utterly baffling techniques wheeled out in moments of desperation as the crucial 'litmus test' of the genuineness of formations. Thus we know that *that Oliver's Castle formation* was faked because someone's infra-red pictures of, er, something or another, failed to show what, er, they should have done, or something. See also GIZMOS, INDIAN TRACKING SKILLS (qv), NODE LENGTH MEASURING, etc.

INSECTOGRAMS: Previously seen as the natural development of the long pictograms of 1990, these bug-like designs have somehow been retrospectively degraded in recent years to become associated with the formations Doug and Dave *did* actually make, purely because a) two semi-circular rings looking nothing like D's whatsoever have since been suggested to represent two D's (geddit?), and b) designs that look like insects are clearly stupid and therefore have no validity. What marvellous deductive skills we have, eh? No stone of logic unturned! The fact that discounting the insectograms leaves a vast gap in the apparent evolution of the pictograms doesn't seem to bother the same people who are quite happy to accept the pictograms of earlier and later years as genuine, but not the ones in-between. When insectoid aliens turn up and blast the hell out of us, or the Earth dies from genetically-engineered pesticides, they'll be laughing on the other side of their faces.

INTERNET: Never has such a better gift to help the art of bullshit flourish fallen into the laps of those who spew it forth than the Internet. There's some great info and great websites out there. It's just a shame one has to wade through such masses of unedited, ill-thought out, grammatically-challenged utter pants* along the way. As much a divine gift for the spread of bigotry and ignorance as it is for freedom of speech and democracy. We're given the gift of spel chquers and who'd ever know it? Ironically, some of the best written and presented circle pages are sceptic sites**. The Devil has all the best music, etc. If freedom of Information means this, God help us.

ISLAM: There's been a number of religious symbols out there in the fields over the years and the sects and denominations can fight over who's got the most. If you take crescent moons as Islamic, though, Muslims win hands down. And who's going to argue with that? Allah be praised! **DS**

* "Pants" (translation for US readers) = rubbish, garbage. See also "complete pony", etc. We'll train you up yet.

** Crop Circle Connector excluded, of course, before we start getting calls from Mark and Stuart - Ed.



CORNOGRAPHY

with Michael Glichman

I write this column, the first of the 21st Century, in Alton Barnes. I have returned to live in England and hope to spend the next hundred years or so in Wiltshire, close to the heart of this phenomenon which has moved so many of us.

My years in California have been wonderful and, I hope, productive. I have made many real and true friends and I have had some memorable times.

But my health, particularly the crisis of last summer, focussed my mind. After much heart searching I felt that it would be appropriate now to return to be closer to my family and to the circles themselves. I will continue to write and will lecture wherever I am invited. Hopefully I will be visiting the US for talks and conferences.

I had forgotten just how noisy those silly soldiers on Salisbury Plain can be. The sound of enormous explosions and astonishing bombardments are a counterpoint to the racket of low-flying military planes. It is remarkable that here, where we can witness the most mysterious, beautiful and optimistic events on the surface of the planet, we are within earshot of madness and destruction. I suppose it serves to remind us that on Planet Earth, we have choice. We are free to think or believe whatever we might wish.

And, of course, Colin Andrews (and Peter Sorensen) must do just that. No doubt they will.

Colin's response to my challenge (*letter, page 7*) is amusing, exasperating and, as always, superficial and evasive. I asked him and Peter simply to view the Everard Oliver's Castle analysis footage and to comment on it. I believe it is important, but - I reiterate - I could be wrong. Andrews and Sorensen carried out a strident debunking of the Oliver's Castle video. This carries with it a responsibility which they should accept. Having polluted public awareness of the video with an efficiency which would have done credit to the CIA's spin doctors, they must, surely, acknowledge their obligations to defend their position.

Peter has not responded at all, while Colin, happy as ever to reiterate the whole irrelevant detective,

confession, Japanese film-crew nonsense, simply does not engage the question that was put forward. Look at new evidence and comment! Shame on them both.

The truth is like a cork in the ocean. No matter how hard you try to hold it down, it must eventually bob to the surface.

The idea that I have the time or the remotest interest in a "public affray" indicates the extent to which Colin has isolated himself from reality. However, the Andrews reply has added gratifyingly to my collection of epithets. While I have clearly not yet attained the status of "bloody a**hole", I am pleased to learn that I am "not a rational person". What must I do to attain such a status? Agree with Colin, I suppose.

Few generations have lived through the passage between millennia and, some weeks after zero hour, there are compelling lessons for us all. There was, in America at least, a powerful industry set up to scare us. There would be no food or water, domestic energy supply would break down while petrol would be unavailable. Citizens should either head for the hills or arm themselves to protect their families against marauders. Roads would be blocked and airliners would plunge from the skies like zapped fruit-flies. In the event it was a hollow fraud, but hundreds of bewildered (and over-stocked) paranoiacs are now seriously considering their future. There were no apologies and nor will there be.

Like little kids desperate for frightening stories, we always seem to swallow it and, I suppose, our need to be scared is so fundamental a human urge that the tellers of fearful tales, the weavers of utterly hollow paranoias, the inventors of scary myths, will always find a willing audience.

Crop circle students might bear this in mind.

Like many of us, I find that this small area of Wiltshire has become, through our summer visits, remarkably familiar. It has taken on the comfortable outlines of dearly-loved childhood holiday places. Every road passes by fields which have been the site of significant and magical formations or memorable gatherings. Each field seems to carry a message.

I have visited in Winter but never lived here. The green or gold is comprehensively replaced - in the morning at least - with the white of vigorous frost, like powdered sugar. It melts off by lunchtime. This week Silbury Hill was virtually encircled by a frozen moat. And there was a Millennial surprise from Devizes Town Council! A new white horse, the eighth, has been cut into the hill overlooking Roundway.

The fields are pregnant. We are in for another amazing year. **MG**