

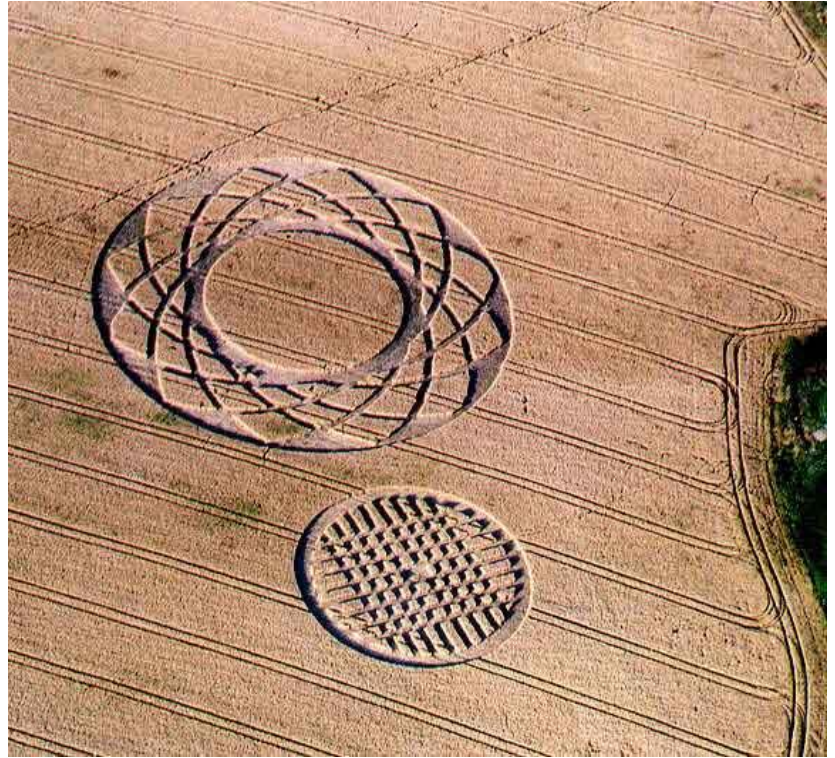
THE MYSTERIOUS CROP CIRCLES PHENOMENON, THEY APPEAR AT LAST IN YORKSHIRE

By Marcus Grant

The crop circle phenomenon first began to be noticed in Britain in the late 1970s and became widely known in the 1980s after the media started to report crop circles in Hampshire and Wiltshire. But it was not until 1999 that the first crop circles were first reported in Yorkshire. What took them so long to get here I wonder?

The first crop circle to be recognised was discovered in a field near Barnsley in South Yorkshire and was reported on the 29th July 1999. Since then the mysterious crop circle phenomenon has been revisiting the areas around Barnsley South Yorkshire which seems to be a favourite place to locate them.

One of the best crop circles to be discovered was at Dodworth near Barnsley, it appeared on 30th July 2000 and 15 days later a smaller second circle appeared next to it. These two circles were in a wheat field that was ready for harvesting. The first one to emerge, which was the larger of the two was of a circle which had a series of intersecting triangular shaped curves outside it and a second ring enclosing the whole formation. The second smaller circle contained a grid of lines, leaving rows of squares of standing crops.



Above: Two crop circles at Dodworth near Barnsley



Another interesting sighting of a crop circle was also made near Dodworth on 27th June 2002; it was of a large pentagonal design, a five point star inside a large circle. In fact the circle appeared in a field next to a church and graveyard and created quite a stir amongst the local community.

Left: A Five point star circle near Dodworth, Barnsley

At Darfield, also near Barnsley, South Yorkshire a large 'galaxy' type circle was reported on 19th July 2002. One large ring, made up of approximately twenty-six circles. The circle enclosed two concentric rings, plus an unusual extended antennae type feature of two circles connected by a line.



*Right: The large 'galaxy type' crop circle at Darfield, near Barnsley.
Photo Google Earth*



*Left: View of the same circle taken from the ground.
Photo James Pierce*

Further south at St Catherine's Well, Loversall near Doncaster a formation of three plan interlocking circles gradually decreasing in size, although the largest one is more square than circular, was reported on the 19th April 2005.



Above: Aerial view of interlocking crop circles at Loversall, Doncaster

Over in Humberside, crop circles appeared at Boothferry Bridge near Hull on the 18th August 2000. The most interesting one was found at Howden near the Ouse Bridge, which had six smaller circles radiating from the main centre circle, which had six curved spokes inside the main circle and was found on 11th July 2003.

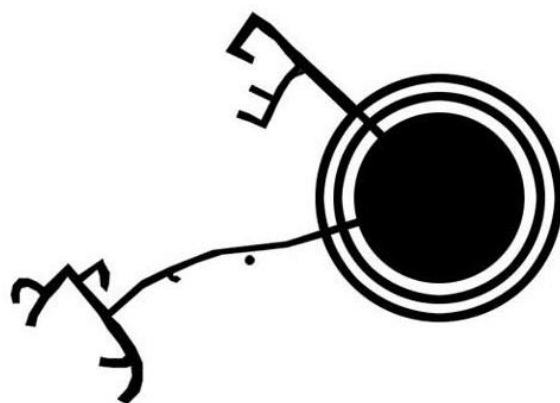


Left: Boothferry Bridge circle, near Hull, taken from the ground

A number of crop circles have been reported in West Yorkshire. The best ones appeared at Sandal Castle near Wakefield on the 25th June 2003 and at Collingham near Bardsey on the 23rd of July 2007. The Sandal Castle crop circle had three rings around it and the Collingham circle enclosed two concentric rings and an unusual extended antennae type feature.



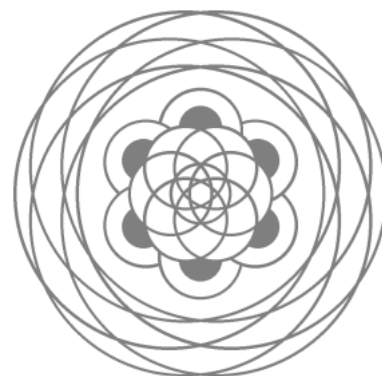
Above: Crop Circle at Sandal Castle, near Wakefield



Above: Diagram of the Collingham circle

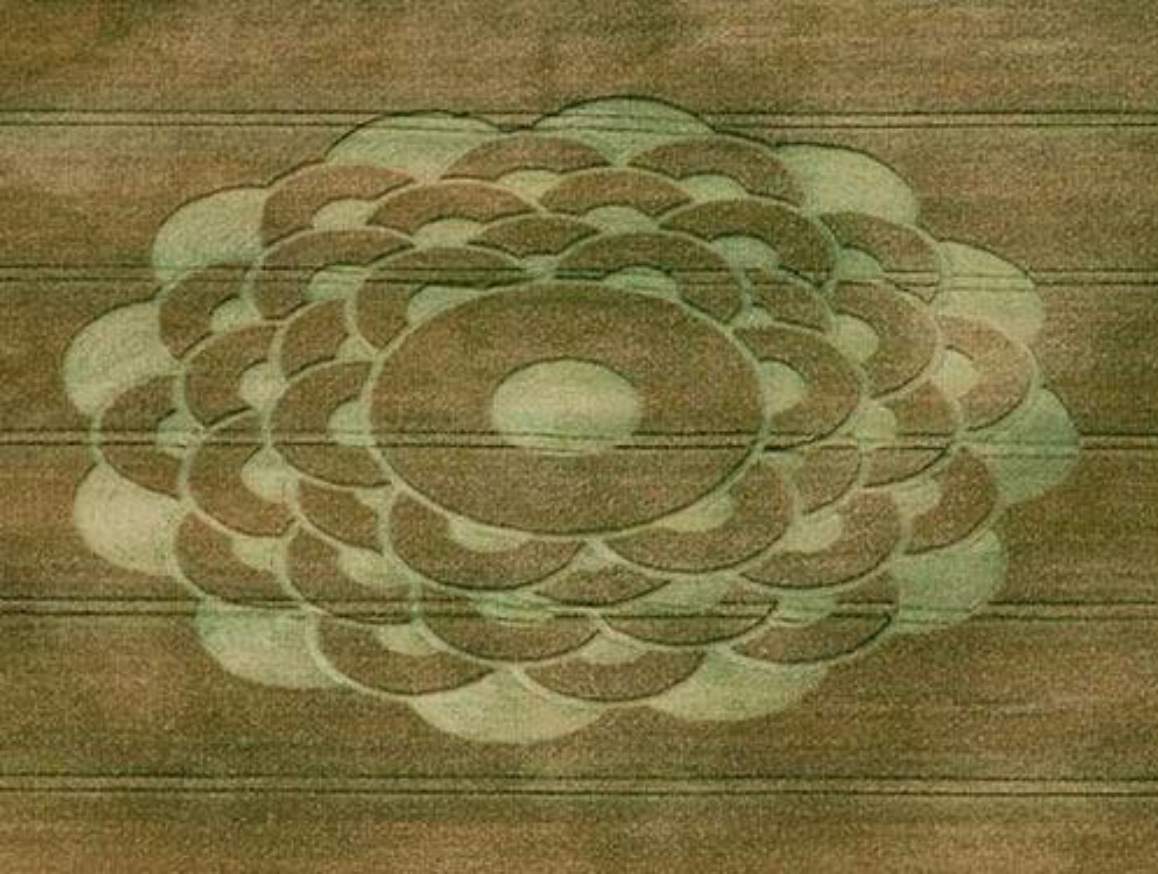
Left: Collingham circle, near Bardsey.

Two complex designed crop circles appeared in North Yorkshire at Devils Arrows near Boroughbridge on the 3rd August 2003 and at the Thornborough Henge near Ripon on 22nd June 2003. The Devils Arrows circle is a complex 'spirograph' design consisting of overlapping circular paths and the Thornborough Henge circle is a complex mandala design consisting of numerous petals and segments in a circular design



Above: Detailed diagram of the same circle at Devils Arrows

Left: The complex 'spirograph' circle at Devils Arrows, near Boroughbridge



Left: Thornborough Henge circle, near Ripon.

The complex mandala design consisting of numerous petals and segments in a circular design can clearly be seen in the photo

In East Yorkshire, at Rudston near Bridlington a crop circle appeared on 19th July which had 24 segments arranged around three circles. But no photos were taken of this crop circle.

The most recent crop circle and the last one to appear in Yorkshire was at High Kingthorp near Pickering in North Yorkshire on 29th July 2008. It was discovered in a field next to the main Pickering to Whitby road A169 and consists of a circle surrounded by 5 concentric rings, with additional paths joining each ring.



Left and Below: Pickering crop circle, this is the last crop circle to appear in Yorkshire

Photos: Win Keech



Most of the crop circles that have appeared in Yorkshire seem to be around the Barnsley area, in particular at Dodworth, South Yorkshire, but they only represent a small number compared with the 1,000s that have appeared in the South of England. So why did the crop circle phenomenon start and who or what is responsible for creating them? To answer these questions we must go back in time.

HISTORY OF CROP CIRCLES

Many believe that the crop circle phenomenon is a relatively modern occurrence beginning in the mid-1970s when the first circle was photographed in 1976. But many farmers have reported circles in their fields going back considerably further than this date.

But no one knows just how far back in history crop circle sightings go, probably the first recorded image of what appears to be a crop circle is illustrated in a 17th century woodcut entitled 'The Devil Mower'.

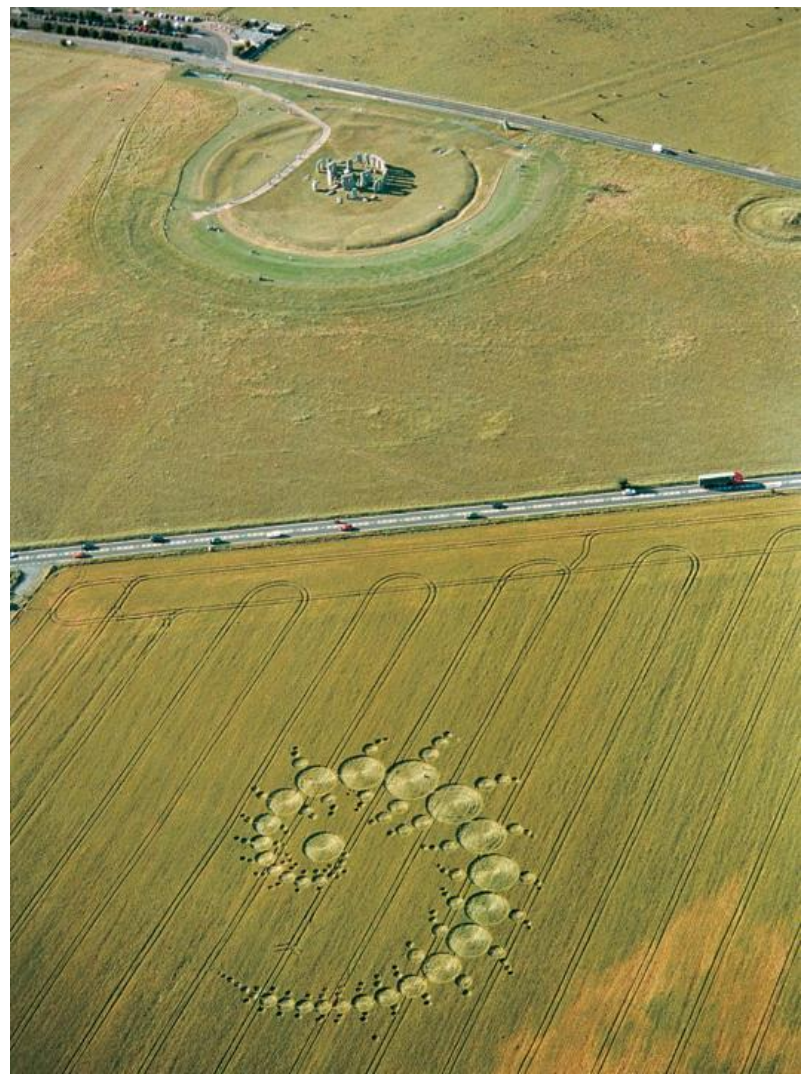


It depicts the Devil with a scythe cutting a circular design in a field of oats. This woodcut appeared in a Hertfordshire newspaper dated 22 August, 1678 with an article describing the apparition overnight of a strange design in a field of oats, so neatly pressed that 'no mortal man was able to do the like' so it was attributed to the 'devil or some infernal spirit'.

Left: The Devil Mower

Simple circles have appeared on farmland for generations but these mysterious formations were often not reported since they were considered by country folk to be the result of natural causes, such as rutting deer, hedgehogs, or crows feeding on ripened seed heads and trampling the crop in a ring. Circular damage has also been attributed to strange diseases, magic, fairies, and the intervention of demons. So consequently silence was guaranteed either for fear of ridicule and ostracism from the community, or fear of losing a buyer for the crop.

These days many farmers on whose land crop circles appear, rather than hush up and deny their existence, charge the public to access the site to compensate for any damaged crops and also making a profit too! In 1996 a circle appeared near Stonehenge, the farmer set up a booth and charged a fee for people to enter the field making £30,000 in 4 weeks!



Right: The most visited formation at Stonehenge in 1996. It is estimated around 10,000 people entered this pattern once it was opened to the public by the farmer who made £30,000 in 4 weeks, because it was visible from the road and appeared near Stonehenge

CROP CIRCLES TODAY

Crop circles are a global phenomenon, but mainly appear in the Northern Hemisphere, with southern England as the main centre of activity, mostly around Hampshire and Wiltshire. England has the most recorded crop circles formations so far, but places as varied as Germany, Canada, North America, The Netherlands, The Czech Republic and Russia, to name but a few, have also recorded many appearances.

Many people suspect that all crop circles are man-made but others believe that the majority of them are not man-made and that there is some transpersonal force at work. But who or what is responsible for them remains a mystery. It is undisputable that many crop circles are man-made, but not necessarily all. There is a possibility that unknown forces are at work!

The majority of crop circle activity takes place in the South of England within the down lands of Wiltshire and Hampshire. They have now come as far as Yorkshire in Northern England and in fact two or three have been reported in Scotland, so will they continue to spread? Only time will tell.



The Avebury Crop Circle 2008 Photo Steve Alexander

Crop circles also mainly occur in the vicinity of ancient sites like Stonehenge, Avebury and Silbury Hill which are revisited year after year. Such sites are said to derive their power by ley lines which are straight lines linking prehistoric landmarks and many dowsers have found these ley lines crossing within crop circles.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Crop Circles are beautiful, complex geometric patterns that appear mysteriously in crop fields. The crop is not cut, the stalks are gently bent down flat to the ground most often swirled into an attractive floor pattern and often with complicated multi-level layering and spiralling patterns. Most patterns appear in cereal crops such as wheat and barley.

The first circles can start to occur in April and May, reaching their height in late July and August. Crop circles are formed in all weather unheard and unseen. Several circles can appear in one night during the few short hours of darkness in the summer months and by first-light they are complete with no flaws in their designs!

Although prime areas for formations are extensively watched during the growing season, so far there have been no official sightings of a 'genuine' crop circle in the process of forming. The season ends with the harvest then the fields in which they occur are wiped clean for another year.

It is estimated that over ten thousand crop circles have been documented since the early 1980s the vast majority appearing in southern England.

In the early part of the 1980s crop circles started off as just one simple circular shape but over the years they have evolved to become more complex, escalating in size and with recognisable patterns. This is because they became more prominent, attracting worldwide media interest and bringing the subject to the forefront of public attention and debate.



Left: Milk Hill, Wiltshire crop circle made of 409 circles and all arranged in a circular spiral

Many crop circles in the last 10 years have been 200-300 feet or more in diameter, that's about the size of a football pitch. But perhaps the largest crop circle of all materialized over night in bad weather at Milk Hill, Wiltshire on 12th August 2001 and measured over 900 feet in diameter. The design was made from 409 circles all arranged in a circular spiral ranging in size from 70ft down to about a foot in diameter and looks like a unique jewel.

The most complex circle discovered so far was near Barbury Castle, an iron-age hill fort above Wroughton, Wiltshire on 1st June 2008. It appeared in a barley field and the formation was 150 feet in diameter and was a code, representing the first 10 digits, 3.141592654, of pi and has been described by astrophysicists as 'mind-boggling'.



Above: Diagram of the complex Barbury Castle crop circle

Left: Barbury Castle complex crop circle. Photo: Apex pictures



Above: The longest crop circle, Etchilhampton, Wiltshire. Insert: Diagram resembling DNA strand

The longest crop circle formation to date occurred at Etchilhampton, Wiltshire; in 1996. The formation was an elongated chain of circles and lines resembling the DNA strand, approximately 4100 feet long, that is over one kilometre crossed from one end of a field to another.

Most visited formation was at Stonehenge on 7th July 1996, it is estimated around 10,000 people entered this pattern once it was opened to the public by the farmer, because it was visible from the road and appeared near Stonehenge. It has been named the 'Julia Set', a staggering 915 foot long formation with 151 circles and appeared in broad daylight within a forty-five minute period.



Right: Crop circle near Stonehenge, named the 'Julia Set' with 151 circles

To fully appreciate the formation and pictorial design of crop circles they are best viewed from the air. This is usually undertaken by dedicated researchers who study and document crop circles every year.

Ever since crop circles became newsworthy in the early 1980s, they have aroused wonder, intrigue and scepticism. Many people believe crop circles to be the product of hoaxers but there are some groups like new age mystics and neo-scientists which attempt to find an explanation for the effects of 'genuine' circles. With so much interest generated it is not surprising to find diverse, and often contradictory, beliefs and theories concerning the mysterious crop circle phenomenon.

THE HOAXERS

Mass hoaxing has become the standard accepted explanation for crop circles, by the mainstream media and also the general public. In fact elaborate hoaxes continue by people trying to expose the phenomenon and perhaps to gain publicity for themselves. There are also circle makers who see it as an art form. In the art of circle making, the simplest technique is to flatten crops using a plank held with a piece of rope and with a garden roller.

The most infamous circle makers were retired Doug Bower and Dave Chorley, who claimed to have invented the crop circle phenomenon as a joke and in 1991 admitted to producing a great number of 'artworks' since 1978. They could not have been aware that almost 300 documented formations predated their alleged exploits. Dave Chorley died in 1996, but Doug Bower has alleged to have made crop circles since then.

They confessed when there was talk of the government commissioning some kind of inquiry into the whole thing. Doug and Dave did not want to see taxpayer's money wasted on so-called crop circle experts for a study that was going to be nothing but nonsense. They had had their laugh but enough was enough. They went public with radio and television interviews and did an exclusive in the Today newspaper for which they were paid £10,000. They even demonstrated how they made the crop circles with a plank of wood. At that time, Doug was 67 and Dave was 62. They could not have made all the crop circles they claimed, there were too many for two people and far apart, but they believed their efforts had inspired imitators elsewhere.

In July 2001, circle makers John Lundberg, Rod Dickinson and Will Russell were suspected to have created a complex 240-foot crop circle formation near Silbury Hill, Wiltshire, which took them four hours to construct under the cover of darkness. There have also been numerous cases in which researchers declared crop circles to be 'genuine' but were exposed along with the people who created the circle and documented the fraud.

A study of circle hoaxing in 1999 and 2000 concluded that 80% of all circles studied showed irrefutable signs of having been man-made in the way of post-holes used to layout circles and human tracks underlying the circle sites. No conclusion was reached of the remaining 20% of the crop circles studied.

So this does not prove that all crop circles are man-made, only that it is possible to create a copy. The existence of hoaxers is undisputed, but human intervention might seem unlikely an explanation for all crop circles given the sheer size, complexity and rapid appearance of many of them.



THEORIES AND BELIEFS

There are many theories about who or what makes crop circles including the plasma-vortex theory, a natural wind/electro-magnetic vortex but this theory became unsustainable with the appearance of complicated and very accurate pictograms in the 1990s.

Some circles were reported to contain swollen, stretched, burst or split nodes on plant stems in a manner similar to 'microwave energy effects', rapid, intense internal heating, dehydrated/shrunken seeds and significant changes in seed germination and growth rate either faster or slower than normal. These studies are scientific and have opened up new areas of research but they do not tell us how or why crop circles are made.

Balls of light the size of a football or larger have been seen and captured on film moving over formed crop circles, which may have something to do with crop circle formations. But some of these sightings that have been filmed during so called formations of crop circles, where a ball of light seems to make a circle appear in a field are in fact hoaxes.

Other favourite theories are telepathic communication, extraterrestrials and UFOs but non are satisfactorily explained and what makes the crop circle subject so fascinating is that anyone and everyone can take part in the search for answers.

CONTROVERSY

There is still no definitive explanation or consensus about who or what is creating these crop circles and everyone has a different view on the subject. To see crop circles as a mystery to be solved, as alien communications or transmissions to be deciphered for the sole benefit of humankind, is somewhat misleading.

Controversy about crop circles continues and many books have been produced on the subject containing beautiful aerial photos of the best designed crop circles found and there are a number of interesting documentary DVDs on the subject.

Whether you are convinced that crop circles are caused by some extraterrestrial force or believe it is all the work of humans, you have got to admit that some of the designs are amazingly incredible, let's hope they continue to materialise and fascinate us for a long time to come.

Below are five crop circles reported near Barnsley in South Yorkshire between 2000-2002 two from Kexbrough and three from Dodworth.



Above: Kexbrough 26 June 2000



Above: Kexbrough 2 Aug 2001



Above: Dodworth 30 July 2001



*Left: Dodworth 27 July 2002
Right: Dodworth 5 August 2002*

Below: Diagram of the crop circle on the left

