

Crop Circles... and Their Message

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**Fig. 0.1 Milk Hill, Wiltshire,
12 August 2001.**

The largest crop pattern of all time, 800 feet across, consisting of 409 circles.

1. Introduction

Every year over 200 designs appear in crops around the world. These patterns of flattened plants have been reported on every continent, in around 30 countries, but the majority have appeared in southern England.

Since the early 1990s, the original simple circles have developed into huge, intricate, geometrical patterns of stunning precision and beauty. Most appear in wheat, barley and oil-seed rape, but they have also been reported in rye, oats, flax, maize, sugar cane, peas, potatoes, sunflowers, grass, fruit orchards, rice paddies, snow, and ice.

Over the years, crop formations have been attributed to a variety of mundane causes: drunks armed with string and boards, wild young farmers, disillusioned art students, out-of-work journalists, over-application of fertilizer, interference from mobile phones, squabbling birds, geometrically-gifted cows, and sex-mad hedgehogs.

Although the general public, mass media and scientific establishment tend to dismiss the entire phenomenon as the work of human pranksters, there is strong evidence that an unexplained force and guiding intelligence are at work.

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2. The Doug and Dave scam

On 9 September 1991, the British tabloid *Today* ran a front-page story headlined: 'The men who conned the world'. The story claimed that all the crop circles in England were the work of two pensioners, Doug Bower and David Chorley, aged 67 and 62 respectively. Their tools included a four-foot plank of wood and a ball of string, along with a piece of wire dangling from a baseball cap to serve as a sighting device, enabling them to construct perfectly straight lines by focusing on a distant object – at dead of night!

To flatten the crop in areas that did not overlap tramlines (the tracks made by tractors when spraying crops), they said they had stood inside a tramline and then jumped or pole-vaulted into the standing crop; this would involve pole-vaulting a distance of up to 35 feet – an Olympian achievement! They said that the idea of making crop circles had come to them after a boring evening at the pub in 1978, and their only motive was to 'have a laugh'.

Not only had they never been caught in the act, but their wives had never even noticed their nocturnal absence.



Fig. 2.1 Doug and Dave demonstrated their skills with this 1991 crop formation – after a pint of beer too many by the looks of things.

They showed that they could create crude circular designs in broad daylight – but lacking the geometrical precision, complexity and beautiful crop lays found in the finest formations. At that time, the ‘circles’ had already evolved into complex pictograms, but Doug and Dave could not convincingly explain how they had created these. They could not even duplicate on paper a Celtic cross design they claimed to have made.

Confronted with evidence that they had nothing to do with certain formations, they began to backtrack. Even if their grossly exaggerated claim to have made 250 crop circles in England since 1978 were true, that would still leave 1750 formations in England and other countries unaccounted for, as well as numerous pre-1978 formations.

This did not stop the public at large swallowing the idea that all crop circles were made by humans. Many people find this far more palatable than the possibility that unsolved mysteries are taking place in the fields. So Doug and Dave certainly ‘conned the world’ – though not in the way most people think!

Despite their ‘retirement’, the crop circles were back as usual in 1992 – but without the intense media interest.

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3. Crop-circle evolution

When Doug and Dave claimed to have invented the crop circle phenomenon as a joke in 1978, they weren’t aware that almost 300 documented formations predated their alleged exploits. There are sporadic reports of crop circles being found in England throughout the 20th century. But reports actually go back several centuries earlier.

In 16th and 17th century folklore we find stories about fairies and elves seen dancing in the fields and leaving circles of trodden grass. The earliest representation of a crop circle occurs in a woodcut from 1678, which depicts the ‘Mowing Devil’ reaping a field of oats into a flattened circle. The story behind it is that a farmer refused to pay the amount asked by a particular reaper, muttering that he would rather the Devil took his oats.

During the night strange sounds and lights were heard and seen, and the following morning the farmer found part of his crop lying in neat circles.

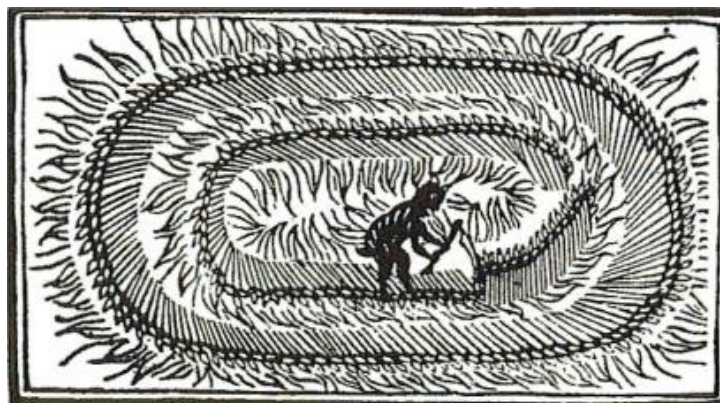


Fig. 3.1 The Mowing Devil.

In 1686 a British scientist, **Robert Plot**, published a book entitled *A Natural History of Staffordshire*, which contained accounts of geometric areas of flattened plants found on both arable land and pastureland. He describes not only circles but also spirals and squares within rings, up to 150 feet across. He reports that the soil under them was much looser and drier than normal, and that a whitish, musty substance or hoar, 'like that in mouldy bread', was sometimes found on the plants.

He hypothesized that the designs were created by lightning exploding from the clouds. In July 1880 the science journal *Nature* published a letter from a scientist who described finding multiple circular areas of flattened wheat on a farm in southern England.

He suggested they were the result of 'some cyclonic wind action'.



Fig. 3.2 One of Robert Plot's illustrations of a crop design.

Since the late 1970s the number of circles has increased dramatically, especially in the southern English counties of Wiltshire and Hampshire, and the designs have become increasingly elaborate. Single swirled circles gave way to multiple circles, sometimes arranged non-randomly. The first quintuplet (a circle surrounded by four smaller, evenly-spaced satellite circles) appeared in 1978. Later, quintuplets appeared with rings connecting their outer satellites, creating 'Celtic crosses'.

Circles with multiple concentric rings around them also started to appear.



Fig. 3.3 A quintuplet, Beckhampton, Wiltshire, 3 August 1988.



Fig. 3.4 Triple ringer, Warminster, Wiltshire, July 1990.
Note the seemingly randomly-placed mini-circles or 'grapeshot', a common feature in the early days.

1990 saw the first pictograms, consisting of long chains of circles, rings, rectangles, straight lines, and tridents, 'keys' or 'claws'. Whales/dolphins and *insectograms* began to appear the following year. Crop glyphs from 1994 included 'thought bubbles', which by incorporating crescents mutated into glyphs resembling spiders and scorpions.

That year also saw the first astronomy-related glyphs, which include galaxies, asteroid belts and planetary orbits. Since the late 1990s the formations have developed into spectacular and incredibly complex geometrical designs or *mandalas*. Sevenfold geometry first appeared in 1998, nine-fold geometry in 1999 and eleven-fold geometry in 2000.

Since 1999 several crop formations have created the illusion of being three-dimensional.



Fig. 3.5 Alton Barnes, Wiltshire, 11 July 1990.
This huge pictogram gained worldwide publicity and attracted thousands of visitors.

In total, over 10,000 crop formations have been documented worldwide. Over 700 of them appeared in 1991. Of the 229 formations reported from around the world in 2004, 33.9% of them appeared in England, where crop circles tend to cluster around sacred megalithic sites such as Stonehenge, Avebury and Silbury Hill.

Other countries with crop circles included Germany (13.2%), the USA (9.2%), the Czech Republic (8.4%), and Italy (8.4%).



Fig. 3.6 The 'Tetrahedron', Barbury Castle, Wiltshire, 17 July 1991.
The day after it appeared, a British newspaper ran a photo of the design with the headline, 'Now explain this one'.

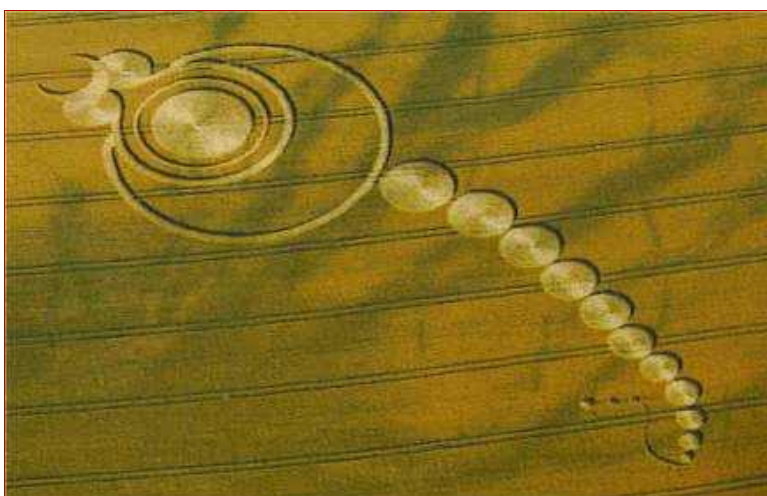


Fig. 3.7 'Scorpion' or 'dragonfly', Bishops Cannings, Wiltshire, 15 July 1994.

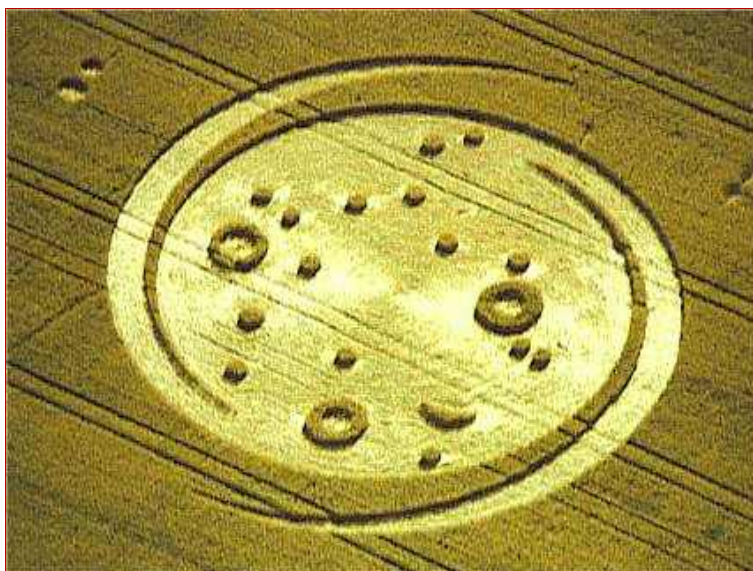


Fig. 3.8 Galaxy design, West Stowell, Wiltshire, 23 July 1994.

It has been interpreted as showing a conjunction of planets in the constellation Cetus that occurred in April 2000.

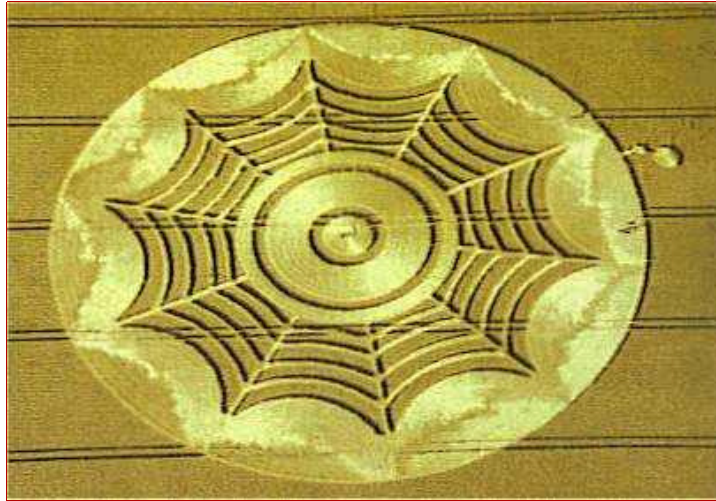


Fig. 3.9 'Spiderweb', Avebury, Wiltshire, 11/12 August 1994.

The shimmering effect is created by the crop being laid in opposing directions.



Fig. 3.10 Solar system glyph, Longwood Warren, Hampshire, 22 June 1995.

It depicts the Sun, Mercury, Venus, the Earth's orbit, Mars, and Jupiter's orbit.

According to Gerald Hawkins, it shows a planetary alignment that occurred on 6 November 1903, the day the Wright brothers proved that man could fly, and again on 11 July 1971, during Mariner 9's journey to Mars.



Fig. 3.11 'Julia Set', Stonehenge, Wiltshire, 7 July 1996.

This 115-metre-wide spiral of 151 circles appeared in broad daylight in full view of a busy road, just opposite Stonehenge, within a 15-minute time-window (according to testimony from pilots, a farmer, a security guard, and motorists calling the police). A professional surveying engineer said it would take him about two full days to lay out the design.

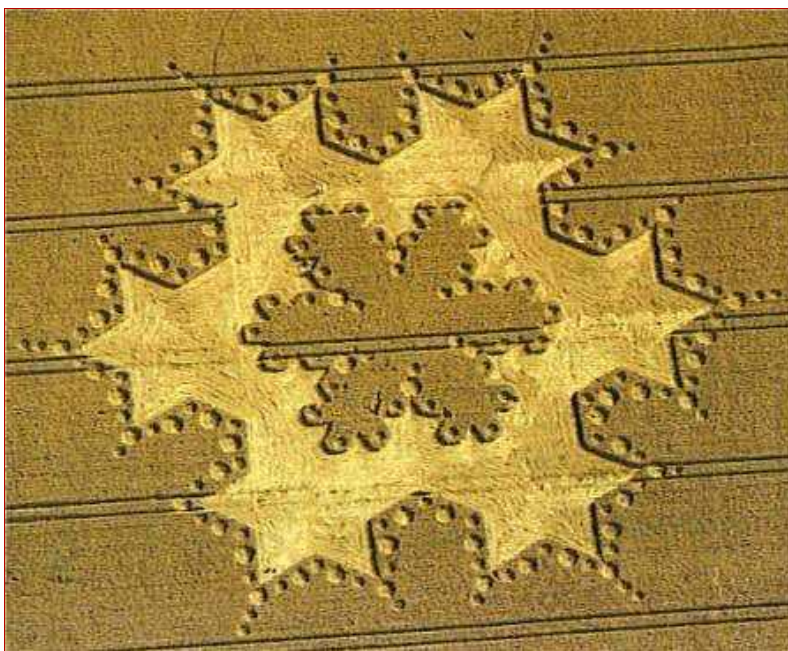


Fig. 3.12 'Koch fractal', Milk Hill, Wiltshire, 8 August 1997.

Two engineering firms estimated that staking out the 346 reference points required to construct the design prior to flattening the wheat would take 6.5 to 7.5 days, or 11 days if done under cover of darkness. Yet the formation had definitely appeared overnight.



Fig. 3.13 The 'Flower' and 'Grid square' appeared on the same night, Etchilhampton, Wiltshire, 1 August 1997. The square within the circle is gridded with 28 by 25 narrow, ruler-straight channels.



Fig. 3.14 Hackpen Hill, Wiltshire, 4 July 1999.

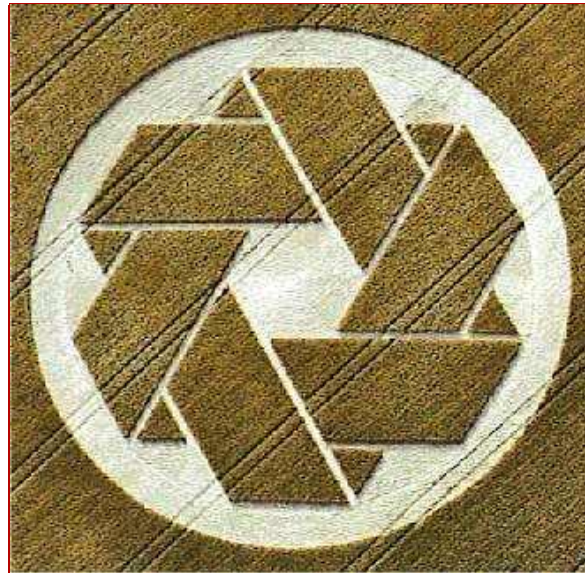


Fig. 3.15 3-D 'ribbon', Beckhampton, Wiltshire, 28 July 1999.

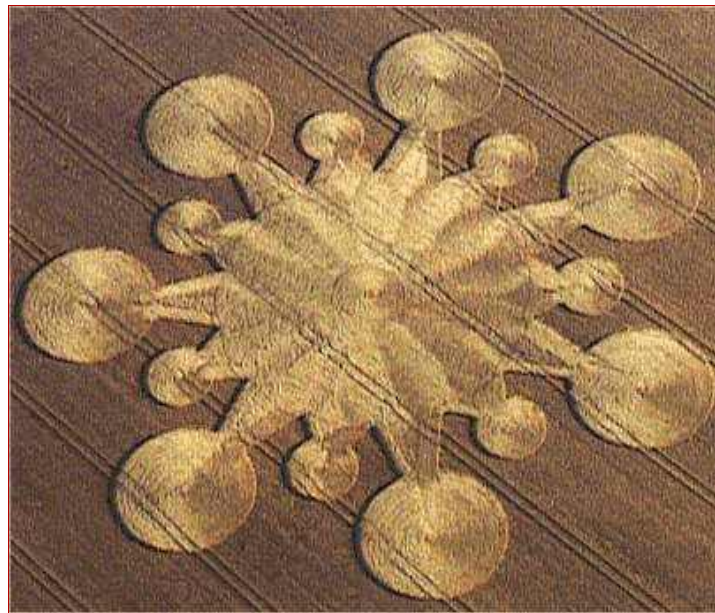


Fig. 3.16 14-pointed star, Roundway, Wiltshire, 31 July 1999.

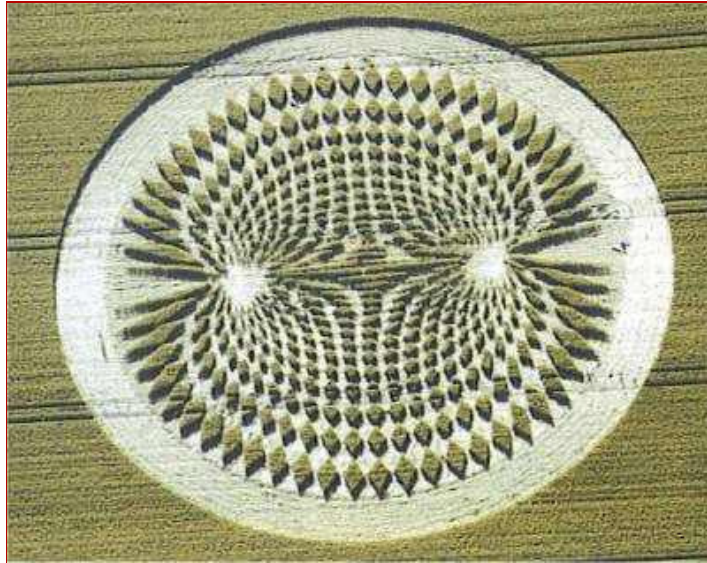


Fig. 3.17 'Magnetic fields', Avebury Trusloe, Wiltshire, 22 July 2000.

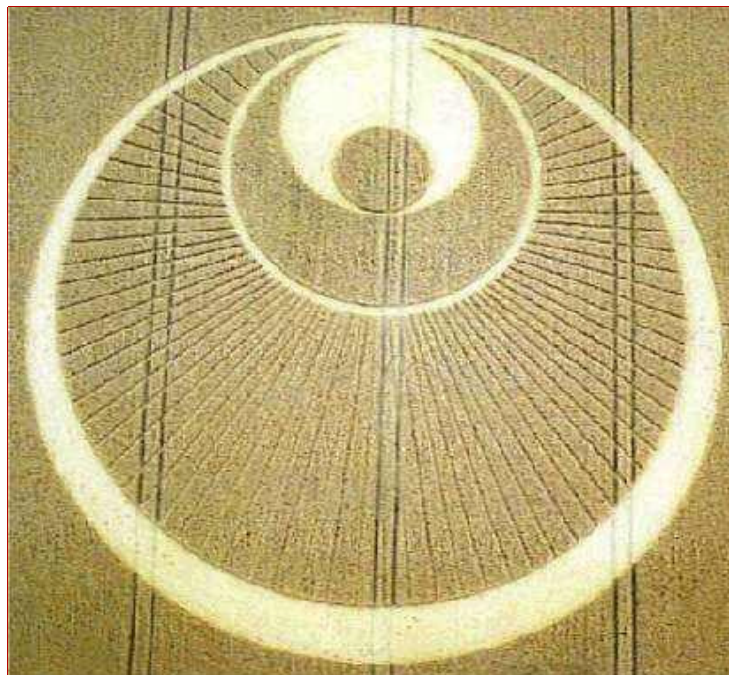


Fig. 3.18 'The angel', Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire, 25 July 2001.



Fig. 3.19 Ribbon design, Stonehenge, Wiltshire, 4 July 2002.



Fig. 3.20 Petal design, West Overton, 21 May 2003.
The plants in this glyph had been gently brushed over into a near-vertical position, so that from the air the formation is barely visible. As the undamaged plants recovered and rose towards their normal, upright position, they did so in alternate bundles, producing a rippling, standing-wave pattern.

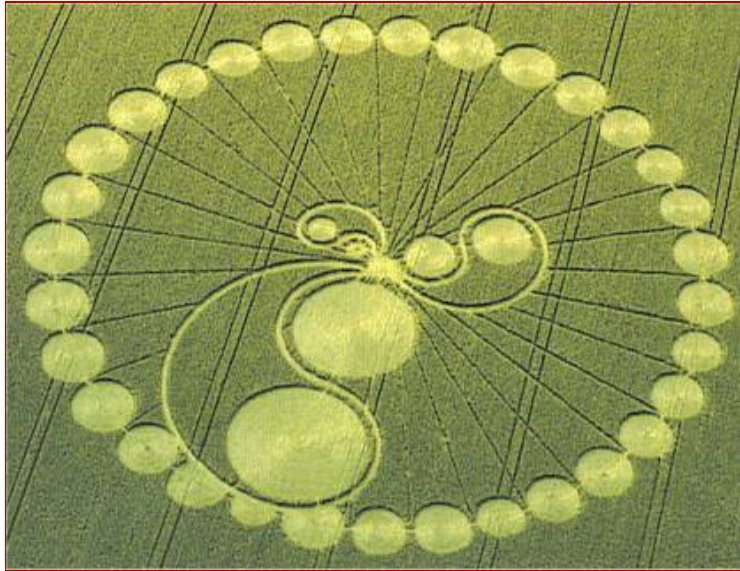


Fig. 3.21 Hackpen Hill, Wiltshire, 20 July 2003.

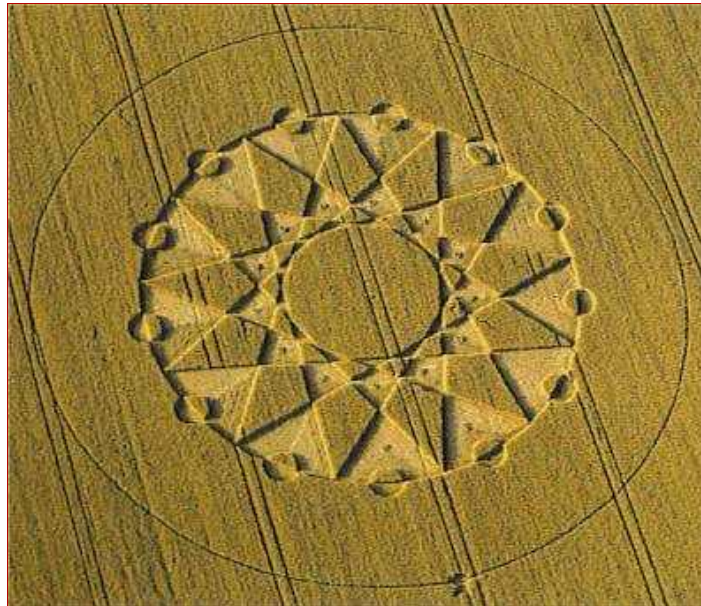


Fig. 3.22 Huish, Wiltshire, 20 July 2003.

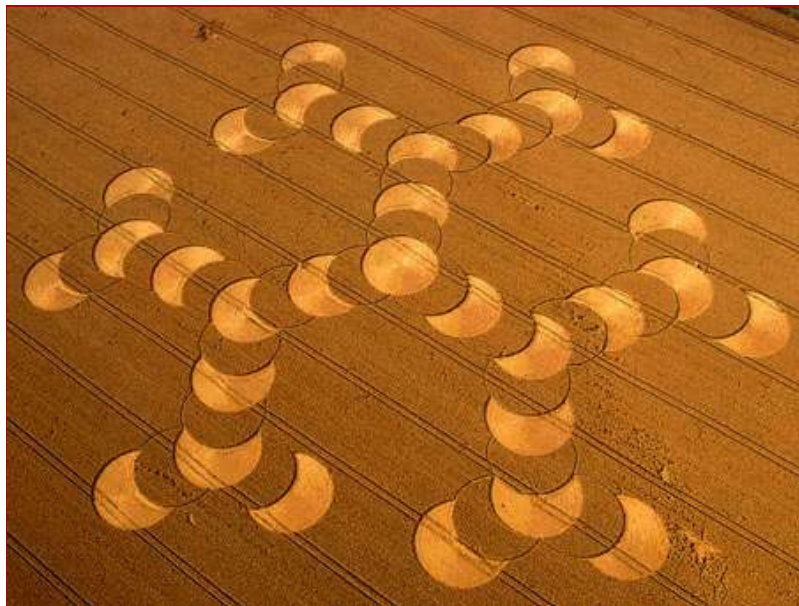


Fig. 3.23 North Down, Wiltshire, 10 August 2003.

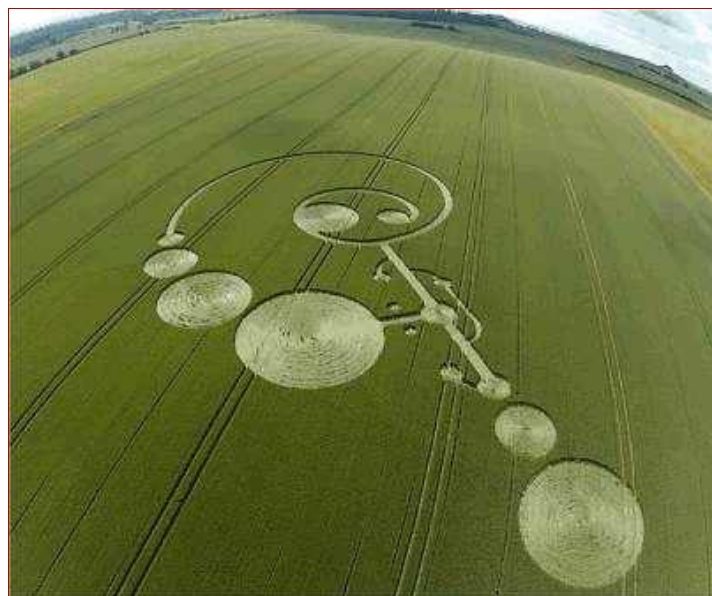


Fig. 3.24 600-ft-long formation, East Field, Alton Barnes, Wiltshire, 20 June 2004.



Fig. 3.25 'Sun wheel', 350 feet across, Silbury Hill, 19/20 June 2004.

This formation appeared in outline the first night, and was completed the next night. Some researchers assume that this means it must be man-made, but there is no conclusive evidence of this.



Fig. 3.26 West Kennett, Avebury, Wiltshire, 30 July 2004.



Fig. 3.27 Golden Ball Hill, Wiltshire, 1 May 2005.

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4. Characteristics

In authentic crop circles, the flattened plants are largely undamaged (until visitors arrive!) and tend to continue growing, whereas in hoaxed circles the stalks are generally broken, crushed and often killed. The stalks of flattened vegetation in genuine circles are bent at angles of up to 90 degrees, and are often laid in a strikingly intricate and beautifully woven fashion.

Circular components of a design are usually swirled clockwise or anticlockwise from a centre point outwards. But instead of the swirl going round and round out from the centre in a tight spiral, as tends to be the case in man-made formations, it often flows widely outwards, sometimes in a distinct S-shape. Spirals are often made of thin strips, not 3-ft-wide swaths, as when planks or garden rollers are used.

Where different flows merge, the plants tend to be plaited over and under, suggesting that all the plants have collapsed in opposing directions simultaneously.



Fig. 4.1 Crop lay resembling rippling water, typical of large, complex glyphs. Note how the crop is elegantly laid in thin bundles. Roundway, 1999.



Fig. 4.2 Mini-circle or 'bird's nest' in the 1997 Milk Hill formation (fig. 3.12).

The centre of a swirl of crop is often marked by a bare area of soil or a 'hole' in the middle of a whorl of stems, and is frequently offset from the mathematical centre, sometimes by several feet. In some formations individual stems have been drawn into the outer edges of circles from behind standing crop, which clearly precludes the use of physical implements. The direction of crop flow is often different below the top layer of flattened crop.

Multi-tiered, multi-directional layering has never been replicated by the use of feet, planks, garden rollers or plastic pipes.



Fig. 4.3 The floor lay of the 1994 galaxy formation (fig. 3.8) showcases the circlemakers' precision.

The circle-making force can apparently discriminate between the maturity of plants, for less mature plants, whether standing in a row or scattered throughout the flattened area, are sometimes left standing. The force also seems to be able to select between plant species, for red poppies or thistles may be left standing amid flattened barley or wheat. This feature, too, rules out the use of planks and garden rollers.

The force is so precise that curtains of wheat one stalk wide are sometimes all that separate one circle from another.



Fig. 4.4 A discolored and stretched node with a 90-degree bend.

Biophysicist **William Levegood** and a number of other researchers have discovered that flattened plants frequently have enlarged nodes (the little 'knuckles' along the stems of corn-type plants) and sometimes have 'expulsion cavities' in the same areas, where moisture seems to have exploded outwards. Seed germination trials have shown that when a formation occurs in immature crop, the seedlings usually do not develop, or their growth is severely reduced, but if a formation occurs in more mature crop, the seeds grow at up to five times the normal rate. (See next section.)

60% of circles appear on rainy nights. Yet farmers and researchers often notice that there is no mud on flattened crop, which there would have been if it had been flattened by humans using mechanical implements. Moreover, readily crushable balls of chalk are sometimes found intact beneath the flattened plants. And when a formation occurs on soil containing small, sharp rocks such as flint, the stems rest on top of the rocks without leaving crease marks, showing that no weight has been applied.

The soil inside crop circles often shows differences with the soil outside them. In one Canadian formation, for example, the soil had been baked as hard as cement, whereas the rest of field was moist and muddy. Reports of baked soil under flattened plants in crop circles also come from other countries, such as Russia. In 50% of crop circles the soil inside is noticeably drier than outside. (As indicated in section 3, this was also reported by **Robert Plot** in 1686.) Many of the effects on plants and soil are consistent with the generation of intense heat during the creation of crop circles.

Strange substances, such as jelly-like or powdery deposits, are sometimes found on the plants and soil inside crop circles. Powdery deposits that have been identified include high-purity silicon dioxide, magnesium oxide, and magnetite (magnetic iron ore). The latter may be meteoric dust, which is constantly drifting down through the atmosphere to the earth's surface; the concentration in circles is up to 600 times higher than the normal value, indicating the presence of strong magnetic fields around crop circles.

Nearly 90% of crop circles appear over aquifers and/or over chalk and greensand (an olive-green sandstone). They are often aligned with ancient sacred sites and with [ley lines or lines of earth energy](#), as detected by dowsing. The positioning of crop circles is sometimes undeniably nonrandom. For instance, three identical whale-like pictograms from 1991 formed a perfect isosceles triangle across several miles when linked with lines on a map.

Some formations seem to make use of tractor tramlines as guidelines, but others don't. Many formations have appeared in Canada, yet Canadian fields are sprayed by airplanes so there are no tramlines to provide hoaxers with easy access to the fields. In the UK, pictograms often used to be surrounded with dozens of mini-circles, or 'grapeshot', a couple of feet in diameter, located in places that cannot be reached on foot without leaving obvious traces. Doug and Dave's pole-vaulting yarns have become comedy legend.

In the case of a small percentage of formations, both simple circles and complex designs, there is clear visual evidence in the newly-planted field of the previous summer's crop circle. The new plants in the area where the previous circle was located may be shorter or taller than the surrounding crop or slightly different in color. This effect usually lasts no more than two years after the original formation.

Dead wild animals are rarely found in crop formations, but there have been a few exceptions.

Some birds had apparently been caught up in the creation of a 1993 formation, and had been blown apart and disintegrated by the force. Mixed in with the blood and feathers were minute bits of flesh, but there were no bones, or any distinguishable or recognizable parts. Laboratory tests on some of the remains confirmed that they belonged to an 'exploded bird'.

Two dead porcupines were found in two different Canadian crop circles. One had almost disintegrated into blackened parts and the other had been squashed like a pancake. Scrape marks and a row of standing broken quills indicated that the latter porcupine had been dragged to the centre of the formation from the perimeter. The flow of flattened quills on its body went in the same direction as the lay of the fallen crop. Analysis of the other porcupine showed that the blackness of the remains was not due to burning. Most animals probably sense something is about to happen and run away, but porcupines respond to danger by simply raising their spines and sitting tight.

In one crop formation, numerous dead flies were found stuck by their tongues to the seed heads of the plants, with their legs and wings spread out widely, as if in a spasm. Some appeared to have exploded. Other flies were still in a perfect state, but most were nevertheless

dead. Some were still alive but stunned, and after being liberated from the plants, they flew away.

[F. Grassi argues](#) that a fungus (*Entomophthora muscae*) is the most likely explanation, rather than some *mysterious circle-forming mechanism*.

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5. Scientific research

The work of the BLT research team (consisting of **John Burke**, **William Levensgood**, and **Nancy Talbott**) has placed crop-circle research on a firm scientific footing. Of the 300 or so crop formations sampled and examined since 1990, more than 90% showed anomalous effects in plant tissues and/or the soil. During this period, [three research papers have been published](#) in peer-reviewed scientific journals,* establishing that the creation of many crop formations involves something much more intriguing than human pranksters with planks and boards.

Skeptics have objected that much of the BLT's work has not been conducted in a double-blind manner (so that experimenter bias might have influenced the results), but they haven't been able to show that the anomalous effects in question can be produced by flattening crop by mechanical means.

* W.C. Levensgood, 'Anatomical anomalies in crop formation plants', *Physiologia Plantarum*, vol. 92, 1994, pp. 356-63; W.C. Levensgood, 'Semi-molten meteoric iron associated with a crop formation', *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, vol. 9, 1995, pp. 191-9; W.C. Levensgood and Nancy P. Talbott, 'Dispersion of energies in worldwide crop formations', *Physiologia Plantarum*, vol. 105, 1999, pp. 615-24.

As already mentioned, the forces involved in creating crop formations physically alter the tissue of the flattened (and sometimes the internal, upright) plants in several ways. Stalks are bent up to 90 degrees without being broken, particularly at the nodes, as if the plant tissue softened significantly at the moment of flattening.

This is even true of oil-seed rape (canola), which is normally as stiff and brittle as celery, and snaps if bent more than 40 degrees.



Fig. 5.1 Marked bending at the base of oil-seed rape plants.

Stalks of flattened crop are usually enlarged and stretched, as if they have been heated from the inside. Sometimes this effect is so powerful that the node literally explodes, blowing holes in the node walls and spewing sap outside the stalk. Node expansion is not always entirely confined to plants within the flattened area of crop, as if some spillover of the energy involved has occurred.

There are known mechanisms that explain an increase in node length after a crop is flattened, such as gravitropism (whereby a plant tries to straighten itself after being pressed down), but some studies suggest that this mechanism cannot account for node-length increases of more than about 20%, whereas increases of up to 200% have been measured in crop formations.

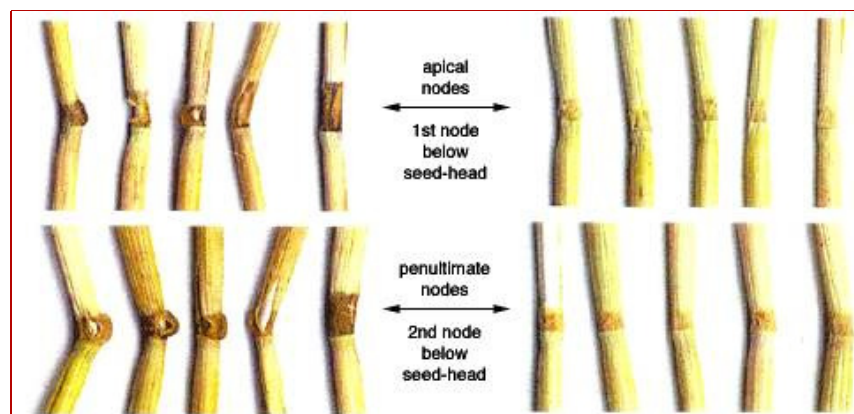


Fig. 5.2 Comparison of nodes within a crop formation (left) and from 75 feet outside it (right).

Node elongation and expulsion cavities have been induced in plants in the laboratory by placing them in a microwave oven for 20 to 30 seconds. Microwave radiation heats the moisture inside the stem which, as it turns into steam and expands, either stretches the more elastic fibres at the top of the plant, or blows holes in the tougher nodes farther down the stem.



Fig. 5.3 Expulsion cavities in wheat.

In their 1999 article, Levensgood and Talbot argue that crop formations are created by plasma vortices, which emit microwave radiation and thereby produce heat. In 2001 Eltjo Haselhoff wrote a comment on their article, pointing out a couple of serious errors and arguing that crop formations were created by a point-like or spherical source of radiation rather than a plasma vortex.*

* E.H. Haselhoff, 'Dispersion of energies in worldwide crop formations' (Opinions and comments), *Physiologia Plantarum*, vol. 111, 2001, pp. 123-4; Haselhoff, 2001, pp. 71-81.

He reported a study of plant samples from two circles in the Netherlands, which appeared after lights were seen above the field. Samples were taken along three diameters. The greatest node lengthening was measured at the centre of the formation and declined towards the rim. He concluded that this was consistent with heat being induced by a small electromagnetic source 4.1 meters above the field.

A curious and unexplained finding was that the node-length changes along each sampled diameter, on either side of the circle's centre, precisely mirrored each other, but each diameter's node-length changes differed from those found along the other two diameters.

Grassi et al. have attempted to debunk the articles by Levensgood, Talbot and Haselhoff and their claim that electromagnetic radiation is involved in the creation of crop circles. In particular, the three researchers are accused of following flawed sampling and analytical procedures, and of data selection. Grassi et al. also contend that heating alone could not produce the node elongations measured. Haselhoff has published a rebuttal of some of their criticisms.*

* F. Grassi, C. Cocheo and P. Russo, 'Balls of light: the questionable science of crop circles', *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, vol. 19, 2005, pp. 159-70; www.cicap.org/crops/en. Response by Haselhoff and further response by Grassi et al., *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, vol. 21, 2007, pp. 576-82.

[Germination tests](#) show tremendous differences in the development of seeds from flattened and non-flattened plants. If a crop circle occurs before the flowering of the plant and the development of the seed, the plant's somatic (non-reproductive) tissue continues to develop normally, but seed development ceases or is impaired. If a circle occurs at a slightly later growth stage in young crop where the seed is still forming, the seeds are smaller and stunted and exhibit reduced or repressed germination.

In more mature plants, seeds are visually stunted, but the effects on reproduction vary. In mature plants with fully formed seeds, seeds often exhibit a massive increase in vigor and a growth rate up to five times that of control seeds.

Measurements in two crop formations only a few hours old revealed that the stalks of flattened plants were left with a surface electric charge. The degree to which the stalks were bent over was proportional to the degree of electric charge on them. Studies show that the cell wall pits in the thin bract tissue surrounding wheat seed are abnormally enlarged and that bract tissue shows increased electrical conductivity, consistent with exposure to an electric charge.

[Microscopic particles](#) of unusually pure iron (assumed to be meteoric dust) have been found in two thirds of the 32 formations from which soil has been sampled. Sometimes clusters of these very small, spherical, magnetic particles are found; sometimes larger spheres are discovered adhering to bits of soil covered or intermixed with a partially-melted glaze of the same material.

The particles are usually found clustered around, or just outside, the perimeters of circular crop formations, as if the centrifugal force from a spinning vortex is distributing this material to the edges. But sometimes the particles are concentrated in soil at the centers of circles, with amounts dropping off toward the perimeters, while in other cases the material is deposited linearly, usually in increasing amounts toward the perimeters.

If crop circles are made by plasma systems, this would explain the attraction of magnetic dust particles, since plasma spiraling around geomagnetic field lines creates its own magnetic field. But the different distribution patterns of the magnetic dust are puzzling.

An [X-Ray diffraction study](#) of clay minerals in crop-circle soils, conducted by the BLT team from 1999 to 2001 with the assistance of independent scientists, revealed that specific clay minerals (illite/smectites) exhibit a subtle but statistically significant increase in the degree of crystallization (i.e. greater ordering of the atoms). Increased crystallization has never been reported previously in surface soils. It has been seen only in sedimentary rock that has been exposed to the pressure of tons of overlying rock and to heat from the earth's interior for hundreds or thousands of years.

Clearly, if geologic pressure had been present, the crop-circle plants would have been obliterated. The crystalline change could also be produced by intense heat (at least 6-8000 °C over a period of many hours), but this would have incinerated the plants.

The plants in the sampled circles showed the well-documented changes (elongated nodes, expulsion cavities) regularly found in crop circles not created by mechanical flattening. The plant changes and increased crystallization occurred at the same sampling locations, suggesting that whatever caused the plant changes, also caused the soil changes. Yet the intense energy required to produce the soil effects would have destroyed the plants altogether.

A mineralogist involved in the study concluded that an energy currently unknown to science must be involved.



Fig. 5.4 Geometric and nongeometrically downed crop in the same field.

Areas of randomly flattened cereal crops – called 'lodging' by farmers – are a common occurrence worldwide, and are usually attributed to over-fertilization and/or weather damage. Aerial photos frequently reveal areas of irregularly flattened crops in the same fields as geometrically flattened patterns. A very significant finding by the BLT team is that non-geometrically downed crop sometimes shows the same bent and elongated nodes that are found in crop circles.

This suggests that the same formative forces are involved, but that sometimes they act chaotically rather than in an ordered fashion.

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6. Eyewitness reports

There are many reports of balls of light, or discs or columns of light being observed over fields in which crop formations are subsequently found. Balls of light, usually varying from egg-size to football-size, are often observed flying over circles already present, sometimes weaving back and forth as if inspecting the formation.

In one videotape shot in daytime, a hawk dives straight down towards a fairly opaque ball of light, only to veer away at the last moment when it realizes that the light is not edible. Military jets and helicopters have been seen trying to intercept balls of light, which then proceed to toy with their chasers, sometimes blinking out and reappearing behind the craft giving chase.

There are also several dozen accounts of a trilling sound being heard prior to crop circles forming, and other reports mention the sudden absence of the usual dawn chorus of birds and insects. In July 1989 a BBC crew recorded a trilling sound with a frequency of 5.2 kHz in a crop circle. Other noises heard inside them include buzzing, humming, hissing and high-pitched whistling.

Over the years, some 70 people have said they have witnessed the formation of a crop circle. In almost every case only simple crop circles are seen forming; virtually no one has witnessed the appearance of a highly sophisticated pictogram. Most eyewitnesses speak of a very powerful but localized force like a wind hitting the field and spinning the crop down extremely rapidly, within about 10 to 20 seconds,

usually in the early morning or early evening.

In 1931 a boy and a farmer in Essex, UK, witnessed a crop circle form in a matter of seconds. The farmer attributed it to the 'Devil's twist', a kind of whirlwind blamed for similar manifestations in the area since at least 1830 (Silva, 2002, p. 4). In July 1934, a woman was gazing over a field of corn when she heard a fire-like crackling sound and saw a whirlwind in the centre of the field, spinning stalks, seeds and dust up into the air for about 100 feet (Corliss, 1994, p. 270).

She found a perfect circle of flattened corn, hot to the touch, the plant stalks being interlaced or even plaited. The same whirlwind created a second circle about four meters in diameter in the corner of the same field. The plaiting or braiding of flattened vegetation is also observed in modern crop formations.

One evening in July 1981, Ray Barnes witnessed a 'wave' or 'line' moving through the heads of a cereal crop in Wiltshire. After travelling across the field in an arc, the line dropped to the ground and radially described a 75-foot circle in a clockwise direction in a single sweep in about four seconds, accompanied by a hissing noise.

The crop went down as neatly as if it had been cut by a giant flail cutter, and the plants showed absolutely no spring-back (Corliss, p. 268; Pringle, 1999, p. 6). In June 1989 a witness saw a big orange ball of light, about 30-40 feet in diameter, descend into a wheat field in England. The bottom flattened as it touched the crop and the ground, and disappeared a few seconds later after a single bounce. The next morning a ringed circle was found at the same spot (Haselhoff, 2000, p. 20).

Gary and Vivienne Tomlinson witnessed a circle forming at Hambledon, Surrey, in May 1990 (Pringle, pp. 3-5). One evening, they were walking by a wheat field when a whirlwind appeared, looking like a shimmering mist, and making a tremendous noise. A strong gust of wind pushed them from the side and above. They both felt tingly all over and their hair was standing on end.

All at once the wind scooped them off the path into the field. A two-meter-diameter circle formed around them within a couple of seconds, growing outwards from the centre in an anti-clockwise spiral. The whirlwind then split into two: the first zigzagged into the distance over the top of the wheat while the second formed a second circle nearby. It looked like a transparent glowing tube stretching endlessly into the sky.

Miniature whirlwinds – small, glistening vortices about four inches apart – had meanwhile appeared in the circle they were standing in. They whirled around the crop in small bunches towards the perimeter, gently laying the wheat down and enlarging the circle. The whole episode lasted about seven minutes. The couple felt lethargic and nauseous for a week afterwards, and Vivienne suffered perforated ear drums.

In 1991 Martin Sohn-Rethel and his family, walking on downland near Ilford in East Sussex, were almost knocked off their feet by an invisible force, which then moved into the adjacent field, and swept down a perfect circle in no more than 5 to 10 seconds (Thomas, 2002, p. 29).



Fig. 6.1 Two formations at West Overton, Wiltshire (July 1993).
The large ring encircling the T-junction appeared first. Subsequently, the long pictogram appeared, and gained another circle the next night.
Witnesses who were watching the field at about 2 am the night before the extra circle appeared observed a white mist move slowly across the field containing the pictogram.
The next day the witnesses returned and saw that a new circle had been added (top of the photo).
The new circle had a standing centre of wheat stalks but, while they were examining this new addition, the plants in the centre suddenly twisted around themselves and went down.
Nothing was heard or seen to indicate what caused this.

In the night of 7 June 1999 a young Dutchman noticed a small, pinkish-white light in the sky, which was moving and seemed quite close. In just a few seconds it took on an elliptical shape, and hovered about three meters above the ground, while the faint light shone down on a field. The surrounding air was trembling as if it were hot. Then the light slowly faded and disappeared.

The young man ran into the field, and discovered a fresh circle of flattened crop. He noticed that the crop, the soil, and the air felt warm. Less than a week later, a second formation appeared not far from the first. This time, a brief flash of bright white, slightly bluish light was seen, which seemed to emerge from a single point above the field.

Upon inspection, another circle was found, which also felt warm (Haselhoff, p. 72).



Fig. 6.2 Tawsmead Copse, Alton Priors, Wiltshire, 9 August 1998.
Two women saw luminosities spiralling over the field where this formation was found the next morning.
Four independent witnesses, from a different vantage point, saw a light split into three and move around the field;
in the moonlight they could make out a shape appearing in the field (Thomas, p. 71).

In April 1991 a man heard a high-pitched humming sound and saw a stationary silver bell-shaped 'craft' project a spiralling vortex of aura-like light into a field and make a 29-ft crop circle. The event occurred in broad daylight and was over in a few seconds.

In June 1996, intrigued by a buzzing sound, a couple went out of their house at about midnight and saw coloured lights swirling in the pitch-black sky above the East Field (Alton Barnes). 20 minutes later the lights congealed into one object from which a beam of white light descended onto the field.

Five hours later the 'DNA' crop glyph was discovered (Silva, p. 140).



Fig. 6.3 The 'DNA' formation, Alton Barnes, Wiltshire, 17 June 1996.

In 1966, not far from the white cliffs of Dover, a man saw a 'translucent glass tube' descend from the sky. With the rain visibly deflecting off its surface and the nearby livestock 'seemingly transfixed' by loud hissing sounds, the tube created a circle in the grass. In 1990 a farmer tending his field of barely found himself standing 10 feet from a 3-ft-thick rotating, perpendicular tube whose earth-bound end stopped short of the ground, while the other rose to a point out of view.

The tube remained stationary as a swirling motion manifested in the crop. In August 2001 [Nancy Talbott](#) and [Robert van den Broeke](#) saw a series of three tubes of brilliant white light, eight inches to a foot in diameter, flash down from the sky to the ground within about six seconds, leaving a steaming ellipse with a T-shaped appendage in a Dutch bean field (Silva, pp. 138-9).

On 11 August 1996, a man came forward with a video that he claimed to have shot that morning during a crop-watch near Oliver's Castle, a fort in Wiltshire. It showed a 'snowflake' design forming while balls of light circled overhead. The footage provoked bitter controversy among crop-circle researchers. One group insists that the crop design is man-made and the video a fake, and claims to have obtained a confession from the person who made it, while others still think that both are genuine (Andrews, 2003, pp. 139-43; Thomas, pp. 60-1).

Whatever its true status, the video is at the very least a good representation of what many witnesses have described.

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7. Anomalous effects

There are numerous reports of electronic and mechanical equipment breaking down in crop circles. Cameras frequently malfunction, and even when they do work, the results may be overexposed, streaked, smeared, or entirely black. Video equipment is also very vulnerable, and often picks up severe interference. Battery draining is quite common, and even fresh power packs can die. Cell phones often fail to operate within a formation but sometimes work perfectly again if taken outside it.

A combine harvester short-circuited as it crossed the Milk Hill Koch fractal (fig. 3.12). At Warminster, a tractor's entire electrical system failed the moment it crossed a circle's perimeter, but sprang back to life as it was towed out of the circle. In another incident, a tractor was seized by 'static discharges which shone like sparks over the body of the vehicle'. The next day, a circle appeared at the same spot in the field. Farmers have also reported the deflating of perfectly sound, heavy-duty tyres inside crop circles.

The morning after the appearance of the 'Beltane wheel' (fig. 9.2), the BBC was conducting a radio interview inside the glyph but the tape speeded up so much that it stopped. When the interview was continued 50 yards outside the formation, the equipment worked normally again. The experiment was then repeated inside the formation, but the technical problems returned. Later in the day a crew from ITV Bristol Television arrived, but their sound system later turned out to have been so disrupted that most of the recording was unable to be broadcast that evening.

Magnetic compasses frequently behave erratically both inside crop formations and when flying directly over them. Witnesses sometimes report TV, cell phone, smoke alarm and security device interference or malfunctions during nights when a crop circle forms nearby. The night before the appearance of the 1991 Barbury Castle tetrahedron (fig. 3.6), residents in the nearby village of Broughton experienced a power blackout and many residents reported balls of coloured light flying above the field where the formation later manifested, along with a low rumbling noise.

Watches and clocks may run fast or slow in crop circles. Some writers see this as evidence that 'time itself' has slowed down or speeded up, and have linked crop circles to 'time warps' and 'space warps'!

Certain photographic distortions have been attributed to the same alleged causes. It's quite conceivable that anomalous energies and atmospheric conditions can affect the behavior of watches, clocks, cameras and also light. But warped notions such as '[bent space and time](#)' are simply mathematical abstractions and explain nothing. There is also a case of a pendulum being pulled 15 to 20 degrees off the vertical in the centre of a crop formation by some unknown force.

The effects of crop circles on humans vary widely. Many people experience heightened awareness, elation, and a sense of peace and wellbeing inside crop formations, and there are also many reports of healing. But in certain formations some people experience nausea, headaches, dizziness, disorientation, abnormal menopausal bleeding, lack of mental clarity, and excessive fatigue. However, both positive and negative effects have also been experienced in man-made formations. Distinguishing subjective, psychosomatic factors from possible objective factors (ranging from pesticide residues to unusual energies) is no easy matter.

Unlike humans, animals are not very susceptible to suggestion, but there are many accounts of them behaving strangely in or near crop formations. Dogs sometimes refuse to enter crop circles, others become either cowed and nervous or uncontrollable inside them, and some become sick afterwards. Other dogs show no adverse effects at all. Before the manifestation of a nearby crop circle, dogs have been known to bark incessantly in the early morning hours, and in one case a sheepdog tried to bite a hole through a thick wooden door.

Sheep sometimes try and move as far away as possible from a field where a crop formation later appears. Horses may refuse to cross the perimeter of crop circles, or become nervous in their vicinity. Flocks of geese have been observed to break formation directly over crop circles, and deer have been seen avoiding crop circles blocking game trails.

Birds, too, tend to stay away from genuine crop circles, even though the downed plants offer easy access to seeds.

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8. Geometry

In the early 1990s astronomer Gerald Hawkins (who died in 2004) discovered that the ratios between the areas or diameters of the various elements making up crop patterns clustered around certain whole numbers: 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 12. These are the numbers used to generate the diatonic ratios that define the relative frequency of the white notes of a piano keyboard.*

* Starting with middle C on the piano, the frequency of each succeeding white note of the musical scale increases according to the following ratios: C 1, D 9/8, E 5/4, F 4/3, G 3/2, A 5/3, B 15/8, C' 2. The ratio $r = 2^{n/12}$, where n is a number between 0 and 12. The white-note diatonic ratios occur when n is 0, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12, while numbers 1, 3, 6, 8, and 10 generate the black-note diatonic ratios.

Based on an analysis of the ratios embodied in 25 crop circles, he calculated that there was a 1 in 400,000 chance of them arising by chance. Apart from bird calls and the song of a whale, diatonic ratios do not occur in nature. Hawkins concluded that crop designs demonstrated the remarkable mathematical ability of their creators. He wrote to Doug and Dave to ask them why they'd used the diatonic ratios – but never received a reply! (See Haselhoff, 2000, pp. 57-61, 139-40; Silva, 2002, pp. 193-200.)

Hawkins discovered that the various ratios could be expressed in the form of four mathematical theorems based on the principles of Euclidean geometry, though they are not to be found in Euclid's own work. He also discovered a fifth, more general theorem, from which the other four could be derived. He challenged the readers of *Science News* and *The Mathematics Teacher* to come up with his unpublished theorem, given only the four variants, but no one succeeded. In July 1995 a version of the theorem appeared, encoded in the Litchfield 'Torque' crop circle.

The fifth theorem involves concentric circles which touch the sides of a triangle, and as the triangle changes shape, it generates the special crop-circle geometric ratios.

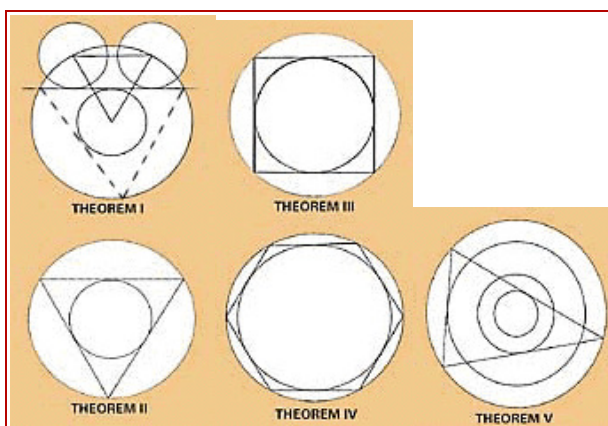
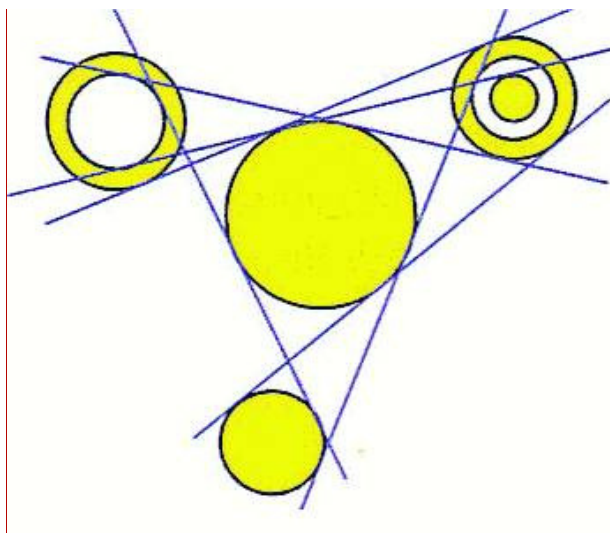


Fig. 8.1 Hawkins' five theorems:
 1. tangent theorem, 2. triangle theorem,
 3. square theorem, 4. hexagon theorem,
 5. general theorem, where expanding and contracting concentric circles give all the diatonic ratios.

It's difficult to make crop formations that obey the theorems in the dark, but the makers of authentic crop formations manage to work to a tolerance of 1%. Hawkins' work was published during the early phase of the phenomenon, but he found that later, more elaborate designs still yielded the diatonic ratios.



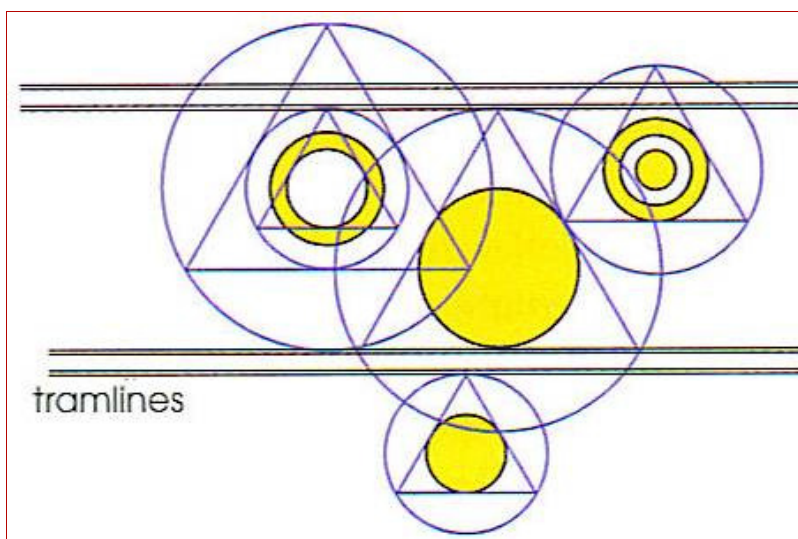
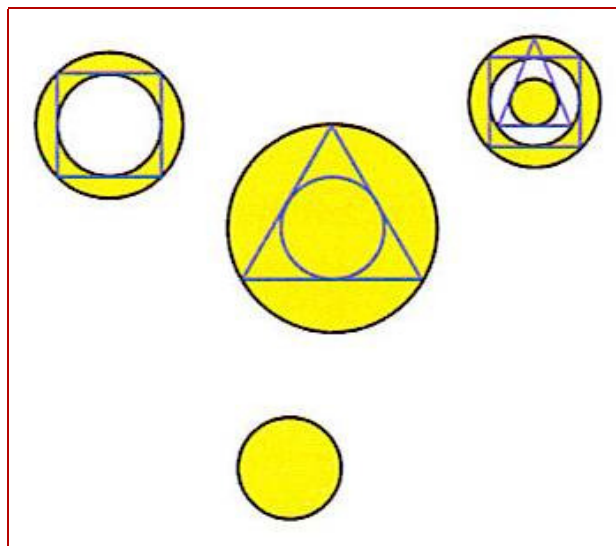


Fig. 8.2 The positions and sizes of all the elements of this crop formation (Oud-Beijerland, the Netherlands, 1998) are harmoniously related to one another and/or to the tramlines, in accordance with Hawkins' theorems. Flattened crop is coloured yellow. (Janssen, 2004, pp. 83-4; Haselhoff, pp. 61-3)

The following reconstructions illustrate the highly complex geometry embodied in many modern crop formations. (For further examples, [click here](#).)

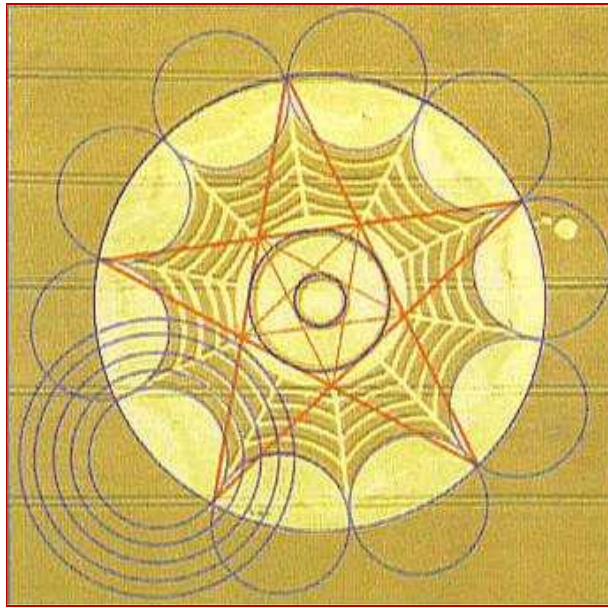


Fig. 8.3 The 1994 'Web' (fig. 3.9) is based on fivefold geometry. Two pentagrams fit perfectly into the formation (Janssen, pp. 77-80).

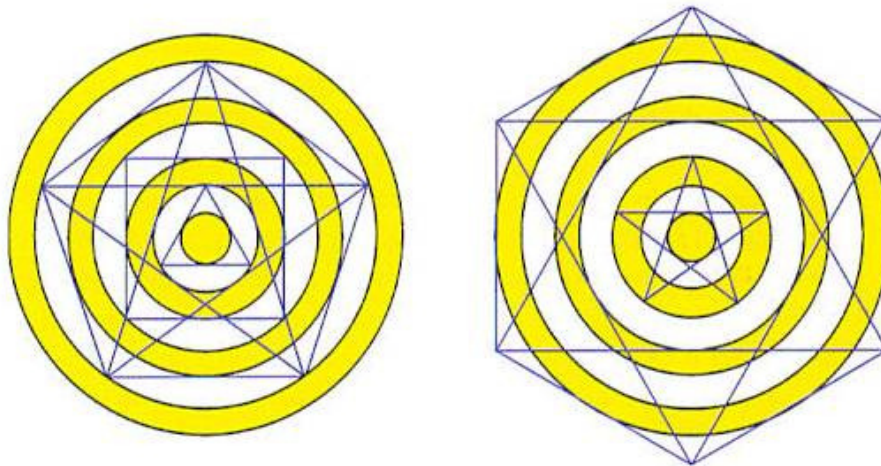
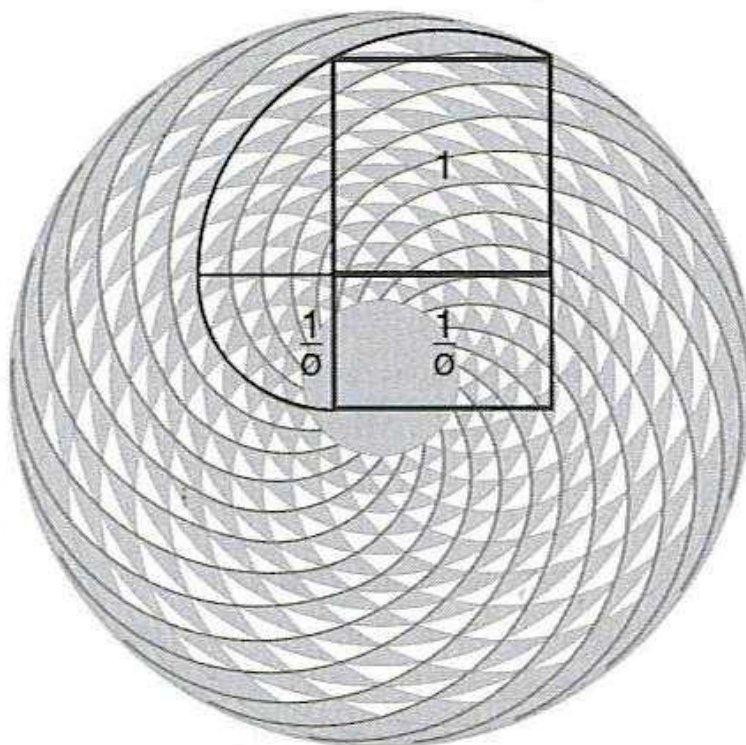
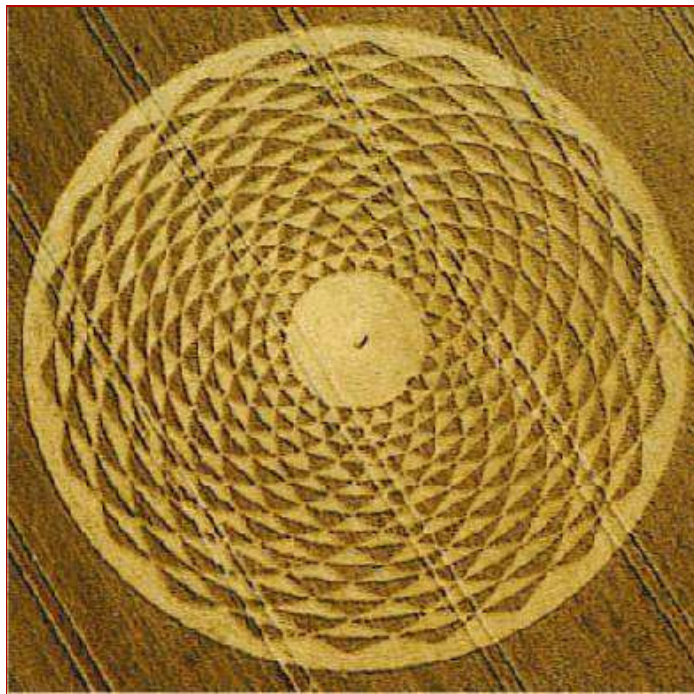


Fig. 8.4 Melick, the Netherlands, 18 July 1997. Threefold, fourfold, fivefold, and sixfold geometry are hidden between the circle and its three successive rings (Janssen, pp. 22-3; Haselhoff, pp. 64-7).



**Fig. 8.5 Sunflower, Woodborough Hill, Wiltshire, 13 August 2000,
made out of 308 triangles of standing crop.
It is composed of 44 spirals based on phi (ϕ) or the golden mean (ratio 1:1.618),
a spiral that is difficult to draw, even on paper (Silva, p. 111).**

If the lay of the flattened plants in a crop formation is examined closely, pathways of crop about a foot wide are often found beneath the general lay. They tend to have a different flow direction, and look like 'construction lines'. Clearly, the lines must have been put there by some intelligence, but this does not automatically mean the patterns were made by humans using mechanical implements. It's interesting to note that the guidelines needed to reconstruct crop patterns on paper pass through areas of what, in the fields, would be standing crop.

These sections of the construction lines can be rubbed out on paper, but not in the crop itself.

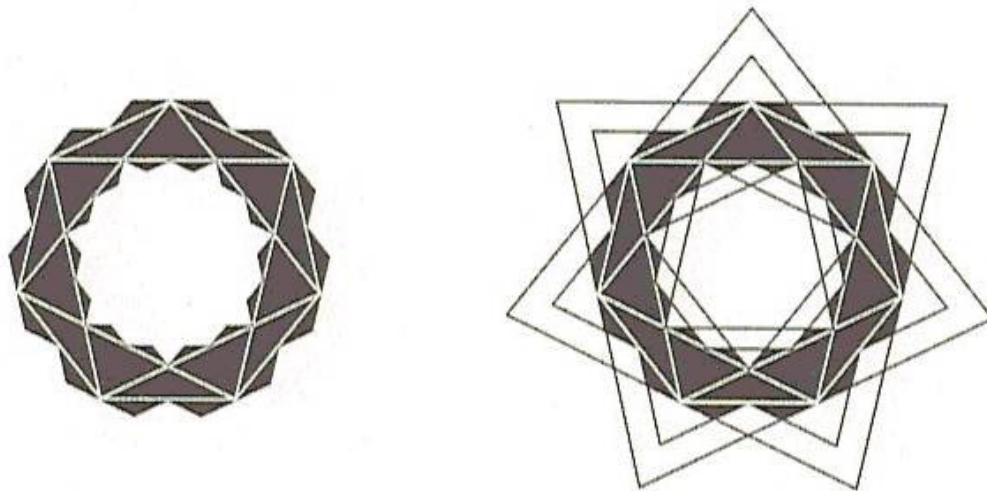


Fig. 8.6 One of the first crop circles based on sevenfold geometry appeared at Tawsmead Copse, near Alton Barnes, Wiltshire, 9 August 1998 (fig. 6.2).

The white lines in the diagram on the left represent the construction lines found in the actual formation. The diagram on the right shows the same formation but with all the heptagrams and heptagons needed to reconstruct it. In other words, only two of the many heptagrams and heptagons were present in the final design (Janssen, pp. 66-72).

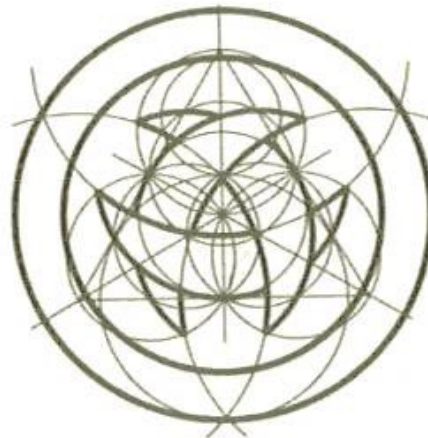


Fig. 8.7 Final stage in Bert Janssen's reconstruction of the 'dolphins' formation, Barbury Castle, Wiltshire, 23 July 1999 (pp. 47-9); for photo, see below.

Two triangles are absolutely necessary to align and construct the crescents, but both are missing in the final design.



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9. Hoaxers and debunkers

On the whole, the mass media have mis-educated and misinformed the public with their negative and biased coverage of the crop-circle phenomenon. The emphasis has been on dramatic stories about hoaxes rather than serious investigation.

Crop-circle researchers have sometimes been induced to visit fake circles and when some fell into the trap of rashly pronouncing the formation to be authentic, this was used to ridicule the entire phenomenon. This is like saying that since some people have been deceived by imitation pearls, no genuine pearls exist!

Researcher **Eitjo Haselhoff** was once interviewed inside a crop circle. Part of the interview went like this:

Q: Is this a simple natural phenomenon, you think?

A: Not likely. The design is too complex and unlike anything else we see in nature.

Q: Could it be man-made?

A: Of course.

Haselhoff carefully avoided saying anything definite about the authenticity of the formation. At the end of the interview, the three men who had made the formation in collaboration with the landowner turned up, and Haselhoff congratulated them on their efforts.

This was not the scenario the program-makers had in mind, so the interview was edited before the documentary was broadcast so that Haselhoff appeared to say the exact opposite of what he actually said:

Q: Could it be man-made?

A: Not likely. The design is too complex and unlike anything else we see in nature.

Some crop-circle debunkers have even resorted to sabotage. In one incident, iron filings were sprinkled on the flattened stems inside a crop circle, after which the chemical analyses performed on the plants and soil were ridiculed. Such desperate and unscrupulous tactics are perhaps a sign of how insecure some debunkers feel. There are also cases where mischief-makers have added post holes in formations that were probably authentic to make them look man-made.

A crop-circle surveillance operation called Operation Blackbird, organized by Colin Andrews and Pat Delgado, was carried out in July 1990 near Bratton Castle, where many crop circles had appeared. The land is owned by the British Ministry of Defense, and two army officers with high-tech cameras assisted the operation.

On the second night, Andrews received a call saying that a complex crop design had appeared and been captured on film. Even before

examining the formation, he unwisely announced to the media that the formation was authentic. Upon inspection, however, it turned out to be a poorly-made fake; a horoscope game board and wooden cross had even been left in the middle of the main circle, presumably to point the finger at new-agers.

Evidence later emerged to suggest that the British Ministry of Defense had ordered the creation of a hoax pattern in an effort to discredit the phenomenon and the researchers. Ten days after the fake formation had been made, a real crop circle appeared in the field below Bratton Castle in a swirling motion lasting less than 15 seconds, but the video tape was later removed from a locked box by persons unknown (Andrews, 2003, pp. 131-6).

In the immediate aftermath of the Doug and Dave scam in 1991, the number of hoaxes rose sharply. The next couple of years saw numerous pale imitations of genuine designs, including smiley faces, obscene words, stick figures, and an ejaculating penis. Since then, several groups of hoaxers have developed more impressive circle-making skills. But even the better man-made efforts lack the complexity of lay, layering and flow observed in genuine formations. Hoaxes can be neat, but usually lack harmonious geometrical proportions; hoaxers tend to dismiss the sacred geometry found in many crop circles as coincidental and insignificant.

Hoaxers are also unable to reproduce the biophysical anomalies found in genuine crop formations, such as unbroken stalks with elongated nodes and explosion cavities. Man-made formations all have weight applied in some degree to the crop, leading to broken and damaged plants. In a genuine formation, the seeds are not knocked out of the seed heads and the plants seem to continue growing as normal.

Another major problem is the amount of time available to make formations. Even just drawing some of the more complex designs on paper requires great time and effort. Transferring these out in the fields would demand extensive measurements – and surveyors have estimated that it would take several days to stake out the most sophisticated patterns. Yet crop formations normally appear overnight, and half-finished or abandoned formations are relatively few in number even though the fields of southern England are scoured from the air every day during the crop-circle season.

The Stonehenge Julia Set (fig. 3.11) appeared in broad daylight within a 15-minute time-window. Eyewitnesses report seeing simple crop circles form in under 20 seconds, and it may be that the flattening process in authentic complex crop glyphs takes the same amount of time, though how long it takes to prepare them (and by what means) is unknown.

Several major crop glyphs, sometimes almost identical, have been known to appear over fairly wide areas on the same night.



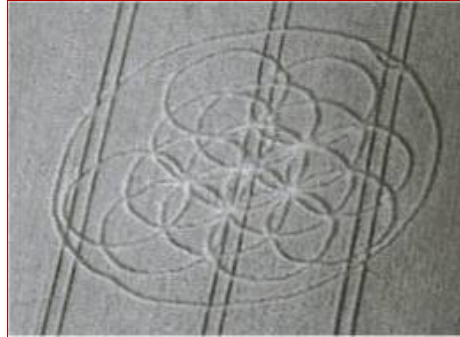
Fig. 9.1 'Triple Julia Set', Avebury Trusloe, Wiltshire, 29 July 1996.
196 perfectly graded circles spiral out from the centre and extend to a diameter of over 1000 ft.
Joining the centres of corresponding circles in each of the three arms
with three lines generates a series of equilateral triangles, spiralling, rotating
and expanding from the centre outwards with awesome precision.
A US surveying company stated that to mark out the Triple Julia Set
to this degree of accuracy would take three to five days,
adding two days for calculation time and another three if working at night.



**Fig. 9.2 'Beltane wheel', oil-seed rape, Silbury Hill, Wiltshire, 14 May 1998.
This 33-flame design appeared between 3 and 5 am. Its centre lies 20 feet into undisturbed crop.**

Claiming to have made a crop formation is always a lot easier than actually making one. Hoaxers have laid claim to highly complex authentic formations they had nothing to do with. For instance, three pranksters calling themselves 'Team Satan/Circle-makers' claim to have made the Stonehenge Julia Set.

Hoaxers rarely provide any evidence of their supposed exploits, and sometimes they discredit their claims by exposing their ignorance about certain features of the formations they supposedly made.



**Fig. 9.3 Hoaxed 'Flower of life', Alton Priors, 1997.
Measuring errors have produced a total mess.**

Some hoaxers concede that there is a genuinely paranormal crop-circle phenomenon at work, alongside the hoaxing, and even claim to be inspired by the real circle-making forces. Some of them have experienced anomalous sounds and lights out in the fields.

On one occasion, when a team went back to check a circle they had made earlier, they discovered a new circle in the same field and saw an orange ball of light emanating from it. Another group had just started making a crop formation when two balls of light appeared and chased them out of the field. Additions made to hoaxed formations sometimes result in them complying with the sacred geometry ratios found in real formations.

In the summer of 1991, Terence Meaden and a team of Japanese scientists had a field under surveillance with electronic equipment, including radar, magnetometers, night-vision video, and motion sensors. Obscured by mist, a small dumbbell formation appeared, yet none of the sensing equipment registered any intruders. An army officer stationed in the training grounds of Salisbury Plain once came across a crop circle in an active minefield.

In 1995, a five-petaled star appeared at composer Andrew Lloyd Webber's country residence at Kingsclere, despite the property being manned by a 24-hour security team. With the extensive grounds rigged with sensors and microphones, a research team looking for the pictogram was apprehended within minutes of their arrival. But nobody had been caught making the pattern. Webber was on holiday at the time and his security staff rang to tell him what had happened. Convinced that all crop circles were fakes, he was furious, and demanded to know how the hoaxers had got in.

When he was told that it seemed there had not been any hoaxers, he burst out crying!



**Fig. 9.4 The beautiful crop formation
that moved Andrew Lloyd Webber to tears – even though he never bothered to look at it.**



Fig. 9.5 Complex design of crescents based on eight-fold geometry, Ogbourne St. George, Wiltshire Downs, 15 June 2003.

As with the West Overton glyph (fig. 3.20), the plants were unusually laid: in the central circle, a central spiral motion rotated outwards in eight movements, with stems barely touching the ground; in between, the remaining plants appeared to have been gently pushed approximately 20 degrees from the vertical. It was as if someone had simply brushed their hand lightly over the young wheat. As the plants recovered, they rose in alternate segments along different nodes, producing a ripple effect that seems to be unhoaxable.

It is notable that there are relatively few cases of hoaxers being caught in action. Only one man has ever been prosecuted for making a crop circle, because usually no satisfactory evidence of hoaxing is ever produced to justify a prosecution. The man in question was fined 140 pounds in 2001 after making the mistake of faxing a copy of his design to a US radio talk show host before making it.

Some hoaxers obtain farmers' permission for their 'crop art' beforehand and pay them a sum of money.

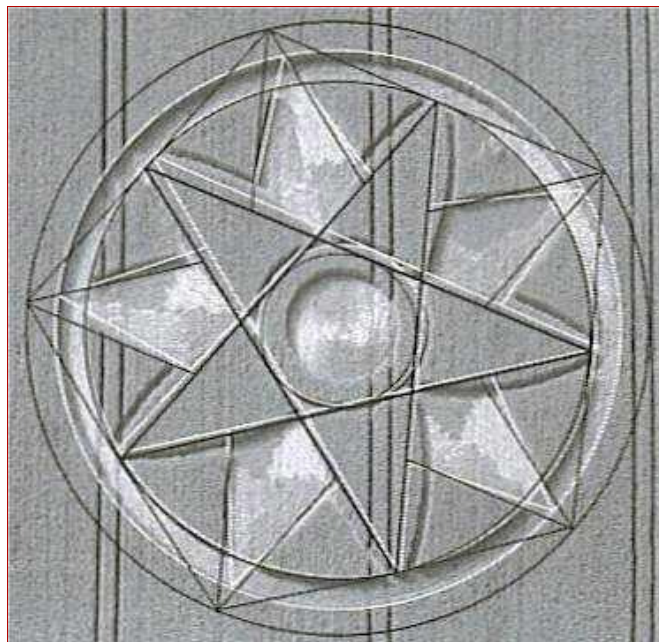


Fig. 9.6 In 1994 science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke hired five artists to make a 90-ft, 10-petalled flower for a documentary debunking crop circles. It took two days to make the small design in bright sunlight, leaving every plant crushed and dozens of holes pockmarking the clay soil. The above reconstruction by Freddy Silva (2002, p. 194) reveals the discrepancies between the geometry on the ground (white) and that required by the pentagonal design (black).

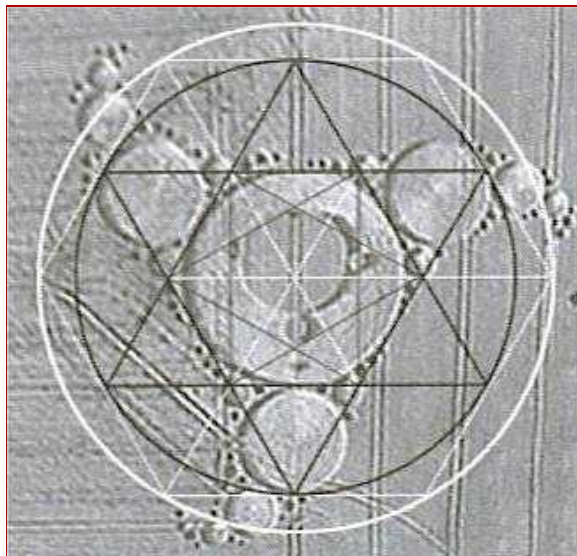


Fig. 9.7 In 1998 the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) paid Team Satan to make a crop circle in New Zealand. The finished result looked impressive from the air. But the formation was harvested as soon as filming stopped, and not a single researcher was allowed to inspect the lay of the crop. Ground photographs showed a mess of broken and crushed stems; they were so revealing that they were quickly removed from the internet. The above picture shows how the whole design fails to hit much of the triangular/hexagonal geometry (Silva, p. 92).

The NBC documentary failed to show, or even mention, that the hoaxers had used artificial lighting suspended from two 40-ton cranes. Nor did it mention that the entire design had been marked out with stakes and string prior to filming. Even then, it took over five hours to make – longer than the number of hours of concealing darkness in summer.

The level of hoaxing fluctuates considerably. In recent years, it seems to have been on the increase, especially after the release of several films and documentaries about crop circles in 2002. Estimates by different crop researchers of what percentage of each season's formations are hoaxes can vary enormously, from just a few per cent being hoaxes to just a few per cent being genuine! The formations that hoaxers claim to have made usually make up around 10% of a season's glyphs, but the percentage of formations that can be proven to be man-made on the basis of solid facts is often far smaller. In 2004, 14% of worldwide crop formations are known for certain to have been man-made.

It is noteworthy that Levengood and his team have found biophysical anomalies that cannot be explained by mechanical flattening in 90% of the 300 or so formations they have examined, which include complex glyphs as well as simple circles.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to take samples from every crop formation to check for such anomalies, because this is a very time-consuming and extremely costly process which needs to be conducted according to strict scientific protocols.



Fig. 9.8 West Kennett Long Barrow, Wiltshire, 10 August 2004. National Geographic hired Team Satan to make this formation for another [program debunking crop circles](#). It took the three men five hours to make in broad daylight. Their work was filmed by a time-lapse camera on a crane.

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10. Human interaction

In several instances, crop circles seem to have appeared in direct response to the wishes of individuals or groups of individuals, or to comments made by them. The forces or intelligences behind the phenomenon seem to be aware of or influenced by what certain people are saying and thinking.



Fig. 10.1 One night in 1988 Colin Andrews asked silently for a Celtic cross to appear as close to his home in southern England as possible. The exact formation he had visualized appeared the next day in the closest unharvested field, four or five miles from where he lived (Andrews, 2003, pp. 32-3).

On 24 July 1992, 18 members of the US-based alien contact group CSETI conducted an outdoor experiment in which they visualized the CSETI logo appearing in the sky and in a field; the logo consisted of three circles in a triangular pattern connected with paths. The same symbol manifested in a wheat field at Oliver's Castle the next day.

A meditation experiment on top of Wolstonbury Hill, West Sussex, on 28 June 1995 by members of Southern Circular Research was followed by the appearance that night of a formation having the shape they had projected. It appeared at Felbridge, in the same county but not exactly where it had been predicted (Thomas, 2002, pp. 44, 151-2).

When filmmaker William Gazecki arrived in England to start filming his documentary *Crop Circles: quest for truth* (2002), he asked for a crop circle to appear. One appeared right outside his bedroom window that night. On another occasion, inventor and engineer Mike Curry left a surveillance operation at Blackland, Wiltshire, after witnessing a dumbbell crop formation appear in a field fully monitored and protected by cameras and infrared beams. The pattern appeared in a small bank of fog without any intruders being detected. Curry left the site asking himself whether this could happen anywhere and at any time. He woke up the next day to find the identical crop design in the field outside his bedroom window.

One day, while flying over southern England, pilot Busty Taylor commented to **Colin Andrews** that he would love to someday find all the previous crop designs wrapped into one stunning new formation. Such a formation appeared the next day, just below where the aircraft had been when Taylor expressed his wish (Andrews, p. 162).

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11. Explanations

In the 1980s meteorologist Terence Meaden suggested that small, local whirlwinds of ionized air, or plasma vortices, created by freak weather, were responsible for making crop patterns. As multiple circles with multiple rings began to appear, often arranged symmetrically and with their relative sizes displaying diatonic ratios, Meaden's theory began to look increasingly far-fetched. He held that spinning vortices would form in dry, quiet weather and only on the leeward sides of hills. But new crop formations soon contradicted this by appearing in all manner of topographical and weather conditions.

Intricate crop lays presented further problems. In one 54-ft-diameter circle, for example, the plants were whirled in standard clockwise motion, but this time laid toward the centre, with a thin band around the perimeter swirled anticlockwise and pointing away from the centre. Furthermore, when the stems were lifted, a second layer was found underneath, flattened counter to the top one. Meaden stuck to the weather explanation, arguing that the whirlwind had abruptly switched its rotation direction.

The circle-makers later replied by creating a formation with two annular rings around a circle, each element in contra-rotation to the next.



Fig. 11.1 'Swastika' design, Winterbourne Stoke, Wiltshire, 12 August 1989.
It was laid in four quarters, each segment swept outwards in a different direction.
Overlaid in the centre was 9-ft-diameter swirl whose plants abruptly
changed direction three times before reaching the quadrants.
Around the perimeter a 3-ft-wide clockwise band lay partly beneath the quadrants.
Given this woven effect, the circular patch of plants was seemingly synchronized to collapse simultaneously.
This formation dealt another severe blow to Meaden's theory.

In early 1990, a 300-ft-diameter circle orbited by 3 rings, each 6 inches wide, developed a fourth ring several days later, making a pattern 1000 ft wide. It is highly unlikely that a descending plasma vortex could have returned to add a perfectly sited geometric feature to a week-old design. The arrival of the pictograms in 1990, comprising straight lines, rectangular boxes, semi-circles and 'claws', posed even greater challenges to Meaden's theory.

By the time of the Barbury Castle tetrahedron of 1991 (fig. 3.6), the theory that all crop circles were made by simple, natural vortices, without any guiding intelligence, was essentially dead. Instead of admitting this, Meaden chose to dismiss any formations his theory couldn't explain as hoaxes!

The BLT research team's theory of how crop patterns are made agrees with Meaden's in several respects. They propose that patterns are formed by self-organized ion plasma vortices, but that these are non-meteorological plasma systems which originate in the ionosphere, a region of low-energy plasma beginning about 40 miles up in our atmosphere. It was long believed that the ionosphere and the earth's surface were completely unconnected, but electrical flashes (or sprites) are now known to occur commonly between thunderheads (8 miles high) and the ionosphere.

The BLT team suggests that such plasmoids sometimes reach the ground, especially in the predawn hours, and that as they descend, the magnetic pinch effect causes them to shrink in size and spin faster.

The team proposes that the same causative agency lies behind the creation of non-geometric crop designs, where the same bent and elongated plant nodes are found as in genuine crop circles. Although plasma spontaneously organizes itself into a vortex, if the energy level gets too high the vortex pattern breaks down, and the forces discharge unstably and chaotically.

The team argues that certain crop lays can be explained as a result of two interacting plasma vortices with opposing rotation. But what about all the numerous other intricate and multi-tiered lays? It's doubtful whether very brief bursts of intense microwaves emitted by plasma systems can fully explain elongated nodes and expulsion cavities, and they certainly cannot explain the increased degree of crystallization of clay minerals in crop-circle soils. The correlation between these two phenomena strongly suggests that whatever caused the increased crystal growth in the clay minerals was also responsible for the plant abnormalities. Moreover, microwaves can render soil and plants sterile, but this is very rarely observed in crop circles.

Freddy Silva has suggested that ultrasound and infrasound may be involved in making crop formations. Sound waves could trigger vapour cavitation inside plant stems, creating local temperature increases of 5000 K for a fraction of a second. Silva argues that this could bend stems, especially around the base where water concentration is highest. This hypothesis has not yet been tested.

The clear evolution of crop-circle designs over the past two or three decades cannot be explained by a purely natural, random phenomenon. Even simple designs display geometric ratios that are unlikely to be entirely coincidental.

And a purely spontaneous energy system is hardly likely to add geometric features that complement an earlier design. Plasma most commonly organizes itself into a spiral, and the next most common pattern is a swirled disc surrounded by concentric rings. But as the BLT team concedes, 'It strains the imagination to think how some of the more elaborate patterns might arise from sheer plasma physics.'

Eyewitness reports of crop circles forming, together with the varying effects crop formations have on humans, animals and equipment, suggest that crop circles are not all created by exactly the same mechanism. Sometimes crop is flattened by the violent movement of air, and funnels or tubes of light reaching down from the sky are seen, sometimes lights are seen in the absence of any whirlwind, and sometimes crop is seen to collapse without any clues as to the nature of the forces involved.

The fact that plant tissues seem to become supple at the moment of flattening and that clay minerals in the soils undergo enhanced crystallization indicates that unconventional energies are involved. Spontaneous plasma vortices might be responsible for

non-geometrically downed crop and for some of the plain, unadorned circles. But there appears to be some form of intelligence involved in planning and executing complex designs.

As for the balls of light often seen around crop circles, the question remains as to whether they are making them (guided perhaps by some higher intelligence), exploring them, or utilizing their energy. Some light-forms act like inquisitive creatures or [bioforms](#). Tubes of light might indicate that crop patterns are projected down onto the ground from above. Some formations appear without any strange luminosities being observed, but it should be borne in mind that psychics report seeing lights that are invisible to our physical senses.

Some people have argued that crop circles are communications from extraterrestrials. Flattened crop was once attributed to the landing of flying saucers. When it was noted that crops were swirled down instead of being crushed, the effect was attributed to the energy fields of the crafts' drive systems. When the formations became more complicated it was suggested the aliens might be using energy beams to create them, or sending out probes, in the form of balls of light, to make them.

There are reasons to think that the UFO phenomenon has more to do with interaction between our physical level of reality and the forces and entities of the astral or etheric realms surrounding and interpenetrating our earth, than with visiting 'flesh-and-blood' creatures from other planets (see [UFOs: the psychic dimension](#)).

There are certainly parallels with the crop-circle phenomenon – the involvement of luminous aerial phenomena being the most obvious example. As with certain crop circles, highly compacted soil has sometimes been reported in locations where UFOs have landed, and intense bursts of microwaves have been proposed as a potential candidate for the energies involved. Both UFOs and crop circles can cause malfunctions in electrical equipment. And animals often react strangely at or near the scene of UFO encounters, just as they do in the case of crop circles.

Both crop-circle and UFO manifestations tend to cluster in certain locations, e.g. near geological fault lines and water sources. A large proportion of UFO sightings occur over the chalk lands and aquifers of the Wessex triangle in southern England – which is also the main centre of crop-circle activity. According to dowsers, formations tend to be located in areas where lines of earth energy cross or are very strong, and these energy-rich sites seem to facilitate the manifestation of crop circles.

Some people believe that many crop formations are made not by aliens but by the military, using secret energy-beam technology. The military have certainly shown an interest in crop glyphs and the mysterious balls of light (and in UFOs in general). But there is no reason to think they have any greater understanding of such phenomena than the public at large.

A more promising line of enquiry, being pursued by many researchers, is to look towards unusual earth energies, etheric and psychic forces, and higher intelligences capable of interacting with our own individual and collective minds – but earth-bred and from inner space, rather than from outer space.

The intelligence involved could be human (whether manifest in physical form or not), but the beings concerned must in any event be able to exercise paranormal powers and control nature's subtler forces ('[elementals](#)' or '[nature spirits](#)') with the utmost precision. These subtler energies may in turn generate measurable electric and magnetic effects on our grosser, physical level.

The fact that deformed and expanded plant nodes are sometimes found in standing crop both within crop formations and just outside them, while the edges of a formation tend to be crisp and precise, indicates that the creation of a crop formation might involve two stages: first the crop is 'primed' or 'programmed' to fall in a particular direction, and then the energies are unleashed that cause the plants to collapse, and these energies may spill over the actual boundaries of downed crop.

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12. Meaning

Many people believe that crop formations carry a symbolically encoded message. As with mythology, symbolism appeals to our imagination and is open to different interpretations. But most researchers would agree that crop formations are 'mandalas of hope' for our troubled world.

The basic element of crop glyphs is the circle, which can symbolize unity, boundless space, and the universal creative spirit or god-force. Crop circles with rings and satellite circles sometimes resemble diagrams of the chemical elements, with their orbiting electrons. For instance, a central circle orbited by four satellites (quintuplet) symbolizes the carbon atom, with its four outer electrons, as well as being reminiscent of a Celtic cross.

Two circles of differing sizes joined by an avenue can signify communication between the physical and spiritual worlds, while the absence of a joining line may signify a broken connection. A solid circle sometimes represents the male principle, and a ring or a circle with a ring the female principle. Joined by an avenue, these become symbols of the sacred marriage. However, if the arrangements of circles, rings, bars, avenues, claws, etc. found in the complex pictograms of the early 1990s represent a precise symbolic language, no one has managed to decipher it.

It is noteworthy that some of these crop designs also appear in ancient petroglyphs (Silva, 2002, p. 146).

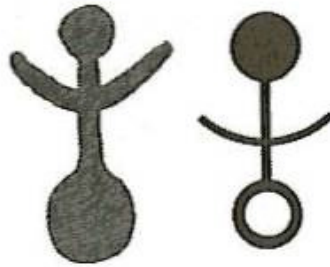


Fig. 12.1 Earth goddess symbol from 2000 BC and pictogram at Chilcomb, 1990 (Silva, p. 151).

Sacred geometry has taken on a key role in the increasingly complex crop glyphs that have appeared since the early 1990s. Two overlapping circles produce a *vesica piscis*, emblematic of the conjunction of spirit and matter, and associated with the Piscean Age.

Some glyphs represent the squaring of the circle, signifying the fusion of spirit and matter.



Fig. 12.2 Pentagram variation, Dadford, Buckinghamshire, 4 July 1998.

Spirals, triangles, pentagons and pentagrams, hexagons, heptagons, octagons, etc. are all found in crop formations, each with its own symbolic connotations. An equilateral triangle, for example, can represent completion. Three-dimensionally it becomes the tetrahedron (four-sided pyramid), a key hermetic symbol, and a prime bonding pattern of matter. One of its best-known crop-glyph representations is the 1991 Barbury Castle tetrahedron (fig. 3.6).

In ancient alchemy, balls on the tips of a tetrahedral triangle signify the three prime alchemical elements: salt, sulphur, mercury. The five-pointed star or pentagram (which, like the pentagon, displays the golden-mean ratio) symbolizes the human being, since a human figure with outstretched limbs fits within it.

The six-pointed star or interlaced triangles (also known as Solomon's seal or the sign of Vishnu) represents universal spirit and matter.

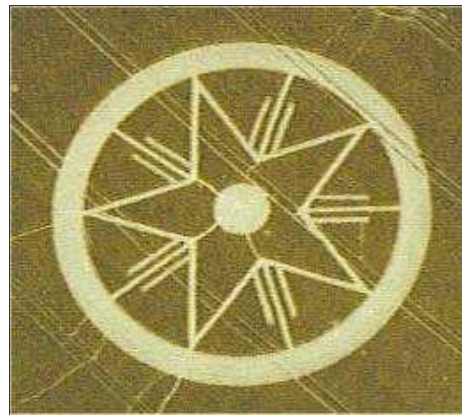


Fig. 12.3 The Pythagorean symbol of wellbeing, Bishops Cannings, Wiltshire, 12/13 July 1997.



Fig. 12.4 Ninefold formation with six-crescent vortex, Cherhill, Wiltshire, 18 July 1999.

The spiral-shaped Stonehenge glyph (fig. 3.11) can represent several things: the computer-generated fractal known as the Julia Set; the base clef symbol used in musical notation; the spiral shape found in the nautilus shell and many other natural forms; and a mammalian skeleton with the correct number of vertebrae.

Some have likened the interlocking spiral motif of the Triple Julia Set (fig. 9.1) to the Tibetan Buddhist symbol called the 'wheel of joy' (or gakyil), which symbolizes the primordial energy and also the three stages to enlightenment spoken of in Dzogchen teachings.

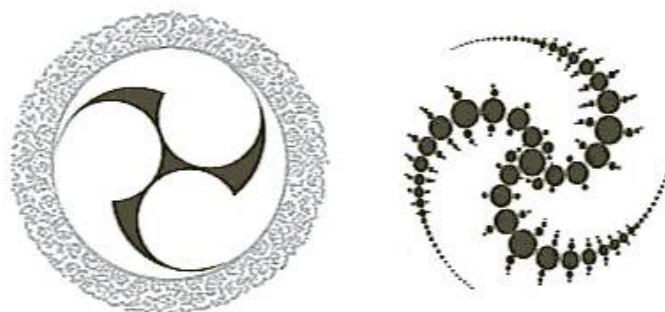


Fig. 12.5 The Tibetan wheel of joy and its crop-circle counterpart (Silva, p. 162).

Despite the widespread resistance to viewing crop formations as anything other than a man-made joke, they have left an indelible mark on our culture. Their stunning beauty, geometrical grace, multicultural symbolism and mysterious origins seem intended to intrigue, enchant and inspire us. There appears to be a creative intelligence behind the majority of crop formations, but one which prefers to remain anonymous, and to leave anyone who is paying attention to draw their own conclusions, like some sort of intelligence test or intuition test.

Crop formations have been called 'temporary temples', and it is fitting that they should show an affinity for places which for millennia have been centers of worship and spiritual focus. In South Africa, crop circles are called 'great circles of the gods'; when a circle appears, people erect a fence around it, and perform dances and other sacred rituals honoring the earth mother and the star gods.

Colin Andrews has said that 'crop circles are giving us all a spiritual nudge', 'a push towards the higher aspirations of peace and enlightenment'. 'We are being challenged to learn,' he says, 'and the tools of our instruction are ancient spiritual symbols, *mandalas*, and other innate, natural patterns. ... [W]e are being given a wake-up call and it is our responsibility to acknowledge the message, and take action' (2003, pp. 164-5).

There is no telling for how much longer crop formations will continue to manifest in such great numbers and in such complex forms. Will they continue to evolve? Each year people wonder just how much more complex they can get, and every year the glyph-makers continue to spring surprises with their inventive genius. At some point – when their purpose is done or the stimulus runs dry – the glyphs will probably wind down again to rare appearances. Andy Thomas (2002, p. 174) writes:

Let's enjoy the formations while we have them and validate their significance simply by the fact they are gorgeous to look at, having made many very happy and left us carved a little deeper and a little wiser by the questions and issues they have raised. ...

For one thing everyone agrees on, even the most committed skeptics, is that wherever they come from, the glyphs are art of the highest order. ...

If grace and beauty are all the crop circles have brought into our world, we have reason enough to be thankful.



Fig. 12.6 Flower with sixth petal not yet unfolded, Golden Ball Hill, Wiltshire, 14 July 2000.

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