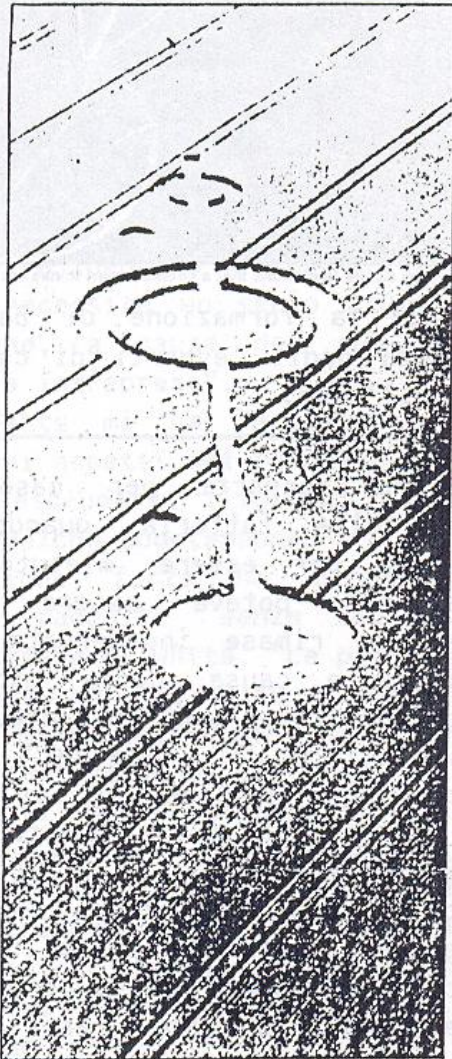


Meteorologist braves ridicule over rings theory

Corn circles are made by aliens, claims scientist



Corn circles at a farm in Wiltshire

IT TAKES courage for a man of science to admit publicly that he believes planet earth is being visited by unseen extra-terrestrial craft, and that their occupants are responsible for the mysterious rings and patterns in our cornfields.

Alan Watts is such a man, and he is well aware of the scepticism that will greet the theories he expounded to me in conversation at his home in Elmstead Market, near Colchester.

Because many people will give a wry smile or snigger at suggestions that corn circles are further evidence of alien contact, it is as well to state at the outset that Mr. Watts is a professional meteorologist and physicist.

He holds degrees in maths and physics, is a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society and the author of several books on the effect of wind turbulence. For 33 years he taught physics at Colchester Institute, retiring last year, and has carried out a good deal of scientific research.

Professional

It is a career which establishes him as a man of serious intent. His interest and investigative approach to the mystery of the corn circles is that of a professional with a desire to know the truth.

Yet the answer to the phenomena that has baffled many more scientists, does not, he says, lie in the wind.

By Peter Hopper

Mr. Watts said in a letter published last month in *Weather*, the official magazine of the RMS, "Anyone who has studied the latest aerial photographs of these phenomena must realise at once that they are wasting their time in a fruitless search for some mechanism that will allow a nice tidy explanation."

One of very few professional weather experts to examine a corn circle for himself, he took precise measurements of a dumbbell-shaped pattern which appeared in a field of unharvested wheat on a farm at Fordham, near Colchester.

The two rings, joined by a central swathe, were stumbled upon by the owners as the crop was about to be combined. The pattern could not be seen from a road and remained undetected until harvest because of the lack of surrounding elevation.

In his letter to *Weather*, a publication not given to flights of fancy, Mr. Watts said, "This was, by present standards, a simple pattern but there is no way a natural phenomenon could have formed these circles and the connecting swathe."

"The former were both of exactly 19 ft. 2 in. radius and the edges were sharp as if cut with a knife. There was, in the centre of each, a roughly 2 in. wide central hole which on probing with a rod proved to be 9½ in. deep.

"These holes were exactly central in

the two circles. The central connecting swathe was exactly 6 ft. wide throughout its length and it was obvious from the way the stalks had been laid that the southernmost of the circles had been drawn first; the connecting swathe had been started from the very edge of that circle and the northernmost had been drawn last."

He added, "No vortex (the theory of investigating scientist Terrance Meaden) could have formed such a pattern and, while the implications of this are not scientifically comfortable, it is obvious to me that this and the other most complex patterns that have been discovered are the result of some form of intelligence."

Intriguing

Mr. Watts agrees in his letter that a few, very few, circular or near-circular patterns may indeed be the result of local vortices.

"However," he adds, "to attempt an explanation of the whole gamut of this intriguing phenomenon through meteorology is useless and will only serve to cover up the true identity of an important effect which needs some true scientific study but, because of its mystery, will not get it."

Mr. Watts told me there were several aspects which led him to believe that it was not the work of a hoaxer.

"Some force had bent the straw, it had not been trampled," said Mr. Watts. The pressure exerted on the crop had not only bent the straw down so that it would not get up again, but it was also bent around the centre.

The most likely explanation was that some form of electromagnetic energy had been used which entrained the irons in the straw to give a circuit effect much like a dynamo.

Mr. Watts said, "No human agency was involved, I don't see how it could be."

"With any meteorological phenomena there is turbulence; there was no sign of turbulence in this phenomenon."

The cause was, in his opinion, extra-terrestrial. "All my experience over the years has led me to that conclusion," he said.

Mr. Watts would not be drawn on why it was happening. "No one knows why," he replied to my question, "but the evidence is there."

As a founder member of the Unidentified Flying Objects Research Association in the late 1950s and early sixties, he took part in scientific investigations, until, he claimed, the organisation got into the hands of "weirdoes."

Mr. Watts thinks there is a good chance that the current corn circle investigations will suffer a similar fate, unless the whole thing is strictly controlled.

He believes that our alien visitors are playing an intellectual game with us, rather than attempting communication. "They are calling cards," he says.

"To describe the patterns or pictograms as communication was a bit far-fetched, as they seemed to follow no known language.

Phenomena in the fields

IT HAS to be said there are several theories about the origin of the celebrated corn circles, but so far no single one has emerged as the outright front runner.

With growing public interest in what is after all a good mystery, the media continues to be rather sceptical of explanations other than a freak of nature or a gigantic hoax.

Investigations are often hampered by people jumping on the handwagon with their own pet theories, hundreds of sightseers and even some farmers who make a charge to view circles found on their land.

When it was claimed earlier this month that self-styled "Son of God" David Icke was seen running around one of the new corn circles which had appeared in Wiltshire, investigation of one of the latest sightings was in danger of degenerating into another media circus.

Yet there is serious work going on to discover who or what is behind one of the most intriguing mysteries for many a year.

Even if it turns out to be a hoax in the end — it is one of enormous complexity.

This is increasingly the most unlikely explanation because of the vast number of circles and patterns discovered in Britain and other countries.

The two most serious contenders are the vortex theory of Dr. Terrance Meaden, whom I interviewed a couple

of years ago, and the views of researchers Pat Delgado and Colln Andrews which lean towards extraterrestrial visitations.

Dr. Meaden claims his wind theory is supported by the knowledge that stone circles and burial grounds were built on the side of neolithic crop circles.

There are 900 stone circles in Britain, mainly in the south of England.

Dr. Meaden, is well qualified as a physicist, meteorologist and archaeologist who heads the Tornado and Storm Research Association, and this year set up the Circles Effect Research, or CERES, to monitor the rings.

He claims to have investigated hundreds of the crop circles and says they have occurred for centuries and are created by the wind.

He has come to the conclusion that they are formed by a vortex or air which spins above the grain, leaving the impression of a symmetrical spiral.

The phenomenon occurs when the wind in a valley is still, usually at night, when an oncoming wind may strike a hillside in a certain way, producing a mass of spinning air, which will move toward the ground and create the shapes seen in crops.

According to Meaden, the vortex may also account for the theories about UFOs, which have become linked to the circles.



Scientist Mr. Alan Watts favours the alien theory

He states that the vortex could become electrically charged, causing it to appear as a ball of light. It could also make a humming or whistling sound and often is mistaken for a UFO.

However, the vortex theory does not seem to account for the increasing complexity of the patterns or pictograms which have appeared only over the last two years.

The team of Delgado and Andrews, revealed in their books *Circular Evidence* (1989) and its update *The Latest Evidence* (1990) their growing conviction that the energy being used is as yet undiscovered and possibly concerned with evolution.

Delgado concluded, "The incredible designs now appearing in fields, surpassing all subtleties of previous years,

are a demonstration of energies and an intelligence beyond the realms of scientific dogma."

Crop circles which have appeared in the past week in fields around Swindon, Wilts., and Dundry, near Bristol, are of graphic design and support the predictions that this year's versions would be more complex than ever before.

The saga continues...