

# JEAN ROOK ON THE TRAIL OF THE BIG 'UFO' MYSTERY



Jean marks the eerie spot... 'what in heaven made it, if it wasn't a four-legged spaceship?'

Picture: CHRIS WOOD

IT'S four days since the Express riddled a nation with curiosity by printing the first pictures of Britain's mysterious White Holes.

Like Black Holes, except that they appear, overnight, in corfields.

Since then, people have gone round in circles — the windier ones in a flat spin—trying to work out who made them. Or what?

Some say the perfectly round 14ft to 50ft wide holes which have opened up in corn and barley fields in Hampshire and Wiltshire are caused by whirlwinds.

Farmers with their feet on the ground claim it's been trampled by hoaxes, and are at the end of their tether, trying to catch the "vandalising little buggers" whirling derisively round a stake, attached to a length of string.

Some rather wetly put down the holes in the flattened corn to hailstones. People with steamier imaginations say they've been ecstatically thrashed out by rutting deer, overheated mating hedgehogs, or lovers making hay in the wrong crop.

UFO spotters and folk who are way out, if not spaced out, are hailing The Return of ET, and standing, strain-

# I enter the White Hole of Warmminster

(AND COME OUT WITH A BUTTONHOLE FROM E.T.)



Poppy... flower power



E.T.... hasn't phoned

as the local hang-giders (a thought, but they'd make messy triangles rather than holes) it hits you that the four smaller rings are at the corners, and precisely equidistant from the main circle.

So what in the name of Heaven that sent it made that, if it wasn't a four-legged spaceship?

I'm pictured here standing in the hell of a hot 50ft wide hole. The temperature at a record 92 degrees, and me sweating even more over what caused the 360 degrees of flattened barley fanning round me.

Because what makes your hair stand up like the untouched crop round them is the absolute symmetry of the rings. They seem to have been cut out of an otherwise perfectly upstanding field with an electric tin opener.

It didn't help that the ears of barley, though swirled flat clockwise round my feet, hadn't been crushed or trodden by any other human foot.

Or as local farmer's wife, Mrs Petronel Payne, pricked my spine:—

"There are no entry or exit marks round the rings. Nobody's been in there, and nobody's come out. Those things seem to have been made by something that's come down, rotating very slowly."

You could tell by the way she dropped her voice that she didn't mean a bloody great Wessex chopper.

Actually, you can enter the magic circle, if you've the guts you nearly spill climbing

two high barbed wire fences and inching your way along the tyre tracks left by fertiliser-spraying tractors.

But to crash across to the "feet" of the spaceship—by now I was in speculative orbit—you're forced to flatten the crop.

A tractor driver chewing my ear with a corn husk, told me: "There's some funny things round here. They say we even had Boadicea."

Maybe she dropped her bra, I suggested.

Meanwhile Mrs Payne welcomed me back from Outer Space and inner speculation with a cup of tea.

"The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Agriculture keep saying they're just 'the weather.' But that's not a logical explanation. All we've ever wanted, since they first appeared in 1980, is an explanation."

I clutched at the flying saucer I'd nearly dropped. Do THEY come here often, apart from the hedgehog mating season?

"THEY usually come in August," said Mrs Payne levelly. "It's the first time we've had THEM in July, and the first time in barley—in other years it's always been corn. THEY could have been coming for ages, but we didn't notice THEM until 1980—they make their rings well off the road where fast passing cars wouldn't notice. We didn't tell anyone at first because we felt so foolish."

"THEY are very friendly," Mrs Payne added. "THEY give off good vibes. The first time I saw one this year, I said, 'oh, you're here to have another look at us,' and felt quite peaceful."

Over in the village of Batton, they were keeping an equally admirably low temperature and flattened profile in view from the windows of The Duke of Wellington—of a whacking great 50ft hole which appeared in a cornfield two nights ago.

The landlord of The Duke, who argues, "if it's a hoax, it's very elaborate, it takes a

hell of a lot of stamina in this weather," is offering a pint to the first little green man to claim it.

A heavily pregnant tumescent young girl, with no magic circle on her finger, said it was all a load of manure, the whole blown-up story. "Then would you stand in The Ring alone, at night?", I asked her.

She looked at me, like Mother Earth, over her mighty, swelling earthwork. "I never go anywhere alone at night," she said.

Like a lot about this area, there was no answer to that. At the end of the long, mind-scorching day, I was irresistibly drawn back into the vortex. I sat in the middle of the Batton Hole. I quivered. I was alone, if not exactly frightened, and three million light years from ET, who hadn't phoned.

He'd taken his little earthly pot of flowers with him, and was never, never coming back.

The setting sun, now a vast Red Hole in the evening, struck a tiny red circle in the flattened corn. Full 50ft in diameter, nothing but waste, but for one solitary red-blooded poppy.

I had reached the centre of the vortex. The focus of the cosmos. I had solved the problem, and plucked the flower of universal truth.

Oh wow, ET. Thanks for the buttonhole.



ing skywards, by their phones. One local pub philosopher, surrounded by rings of best bitter, keeps telling everyone who isn't listening for ET's call, "It was a bloody great Wessex chopper, and that's the end of it."

To get to the bottom of the White Holes, and to fill in open-minded readers, I yesterday flew over the notorious "Warmminster Triangle," which, for 10 years, has been to stray UFOs what the Bermuda Triangle is to vanishing ships.

Dropped on from the air, the Holes look like five perfectly formed spots on a dice. Then a handful of 10ps. Then a set of saucers (but the ordinary kind you wash up).

It's only when you're low