

J. Hitchens

# U.F.O. hoax in Patching wheat field

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Pranksters have gone to elaborate lengths to suggest that an Unidentified Flying Object landed at Patching, writes Robin Alp.

They have made a huge circle in a field of wheat off the A280 Patching to Findon road. Perfectly placed around it are four smaller circles, as if made by the spaceship's legs when it touched down.

The hoax was discovered on Saturday morning by farm manager Mr. Anthony Wicks (51). "It looks quite realistic from the road," he said.

The pranksters tried to keep to tractor trails to hide their tracks, but they cut a visible path through the wheat after parking their car on the A280.

## TRAMPLED

Mr. Wicks said the main circle is so symmetrical that they must have used string or wire to pace it out. Then they trampled the wheat flat to make it look as if it had been scorched.

The main circle is about 16 yards in diameter, and the other four around it are about three yards across. Mr. Wicks said the damage caused to the crop will amount to about £100. A police spokesman said

Mr. Murray: "This is quite an elaborate hoax. It's a bit of an optical illusion, because from the road it looks as though the circles have been scorched out."

The circles were made about 200 yards from the road on a gently sloping hill, to give maximum vision to passers-by.

Mr. Wicks has been having to mount guard on the road to stop sight-seers walking through his fields to the circles.

"Once they know it's just a hoax I sincerely hope they'll stop doing that," he said.

● Pictures in P.2

## Murder charge

A Worthing youth has been charged with the murder of cab driver Albert "Ginger" Letten, who died from multiple stab wounds on Friday night.

Peter Michael Bruce (18), of Exmoor Drive, was remanded in custody for seven days when he made a brief appearance before Worthing magistrates on Monday.

There was no application for bail.

The exploratory drilling operation for oil or gas, attracted far fewer residents than expected.

Only 50 residents had taken advantage of the two open days set up by the company.

"We expected to have far more residents here asking questions about our plans, especially on Monday evening when we stayed open so that workers could come along," said a company spokesman on Tuesday.

## TRAFFIC

He added that residents who had visited the display had been chiefly concerned about any noise problems relating to the proposal.

"But having seen our display, including a video, on how drilling operations work, most residents have seemed to be fairly happy about the plans", he said.

The aim of the two open days had been to put the case of the project into perspective, explaining the plans and emphasize that the scheme would not bring any traffic in to Ashington itself.

Arrangements have been made to approach the site at Bowford Farm, off the B2133 from the Coolham direction.

The plane ploughed into 15ft. of water half a mile off the beach near the Bognor Regis Yacht Club at 6.15 p.m.

Rescuers and a Royal Navy helicopter from Lee-on-Solent were on the scene within ten minutes.

Watched anxiously from the promenade by his father, Mr. Charles Purley, a diver and three lifeboats

● Contd. in P.23

## Terrorism charges

Two men and a woman were remanded in custody on Tuesday for nine days on terrorism charges amid tight security precautions at Lambeth Magistrates' Court in South London.

And on Monday seven people were remanded on terrorist charges.

One of them, Patrick Joseph Magee (34), unemployed, from Belfast, is charged with carrying out the bomb attack at Brighton's Grand Hotel on October 12 when five people were killed.

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you will learn much more by listening to one of the knowledgeable guides.

The nature trail consists of 15 acres of woodland, meadow, marsh, streams and a lake where birds, butterflies and other insects may be seen in their natural surroundings.

We started out along a smooth grassy sward that ran beside a meandering stream, that had been dug out by hand and is now the home for newts and sticklebacks. We also saw where a

inace.

## CAREFUL

The lake is probably the favourite part of the trail for children, as it's here, under careful eye of a guide, they are allowed to feed the carp which abound in the lake, which boils as the small fish fight for the bread thrown to them. It is then the turn of the big carp, attracted by the furore, which glide up to the water's edge. Some of these fish weigh up to 10lb.

We didn't see a kingfisher, but were assured that they do sit on the overhanging branches, waiting to plunge into the well-stocked lake.

Sadly there were no ducks on the lake either. Apparently, the day before, there had been a pair of mallard with several newly-hatched youngsters, but they had vanished overnight. Our guide told us that they had probably been the victims of wild mink, which are killing off wildlife all over the country. He explained how misguided people had released mink from fur farms into the countryside. These vicious little creatures, not indigenous to Britain, have virtually wiped out the otter population, and have caused widespread havoc among the natural wildlife.

## CLEARED

A few coot could be seen swimming around the lake, but they were the only waterfowl in sight, which seems such a shame when this beautiful lake ought to abound with water-loving creatures.

After the heat of the open trail, it was pleasant to move into the cool wood. Much coppicing has taken place, and large areas have been cleared. This is the traditional form of woodland management and entails cutting the hazel near ground level in rotation. Freshly-coppiced



**What U.F.O.? Farm manager Mr. Tony Wicks (above) stands in the middle of a field at Tolmare Farm, Findon, where waist-high wheat has been flattened to form a five-ring pattern. Mr. Wicks believes it was the work of hoaxers, who wanted to give the impression that a space ship had landed. Our picture below shows the pattern from the top of Long Furlong. See story in Page 1. — Photo sales no. 054-2 and 1.**



Our regular Sussex Onlooker column will continue next week. We apologise for the omission in this week's issue.

# Hard