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# Scientists to investigate sudden rash of field circles

A GLASGOW University astronomer is among a team of scientists who will investigate mysterious circles which have appeared in fields throughout the country. The members of the team will travel to Wales this week to study marks in the Black Mountains.

They include Dr Archie Roy, head of astronomy at Glasgow University; plant expert Dr Mark Glover; meteorologist Dr Terrence Meaden, head of the Tornado and Storm Research Centre; Mr George Wingfield, from the computer company IBM; and Sussex University researchers.

The discovery of 98 circles which appeared within a week on two hill tops near Llanthony, Gwent, brings the total found across Britain to more than 250. The phenomenon has baffled experts in the West Country, who have been studying the circles since 1976.

Scientific spokesman Mr Colin Andrews said the latest find could prove vital in solving the riddle of

the circles. "We believe we have something of major proportions," he said.

The exact location of the twin hills is being kept secret to stop tourists and sightseers walking over the perfectly-formed shapes.

In the past, the circles have appeared in arable crop fields, but in the latest — and so far the largest — discovery, acres of heather have been shredded into what scientists refer to as tadpole-shaped circles, marked by a five metre-long, curling line which clips the outer perimeter.

Mr Andrews said the new variation of shape and plant victim could provide with important clues. "Heather is much better at holding in radiation than most living organisms and this is one area we shall be studying," he said.

"In the past, the circles have flattened six types of soft arable crops which slowly undergo a molecular change. However, heather, which is much tougher and fibrous, has been snapped at the stem.

"Because of the scale of the formations, we are sure there is no human involvement in the phenomenon. We can eliminate the hoax theory once and for all."

The circles had been found near ley lines, believed to be energy forces under the earth's surface. The circles in Wales all follow straight lines, said Mr Andrews. "They literally follow the contours of the hill in lines. These are sometimes dissected by other lines of differing size," he said.

Mr Andrews said English Heritage had contacted the researchers about other circles which had appeared on some of its Welsh properties.

Work at Sussex University had shown that high-pitched sounds recorded during a 24-hour examination of a field near Winchester, Hampshire, while a circle was being formed, had been divided into four blocks of sound each of which contained 25 peaks of noise which were indistinguishable to human ears.