

# MYSTERY CRATER COULD HAVE BEEN A METEORITE

Sunday Express Reporter

**T**HE mystery crater which suddenly appeared in Farmer Roy Blanchard's barley field at Charlton, Wiltshire, may have been caused by a meteorite, after all.

An Army bomb disposal unit dug six feet down to uncover a fist-sized stone which the Natural History Museum said was not a meteorite.

But yesterday Mr. Kenneth Gatland, aged 39, vice-president of the Interplanetary Society, said: "A meteorite which fragmented on hitting the earth's surface could be the explanation."

He added: "Most meteorites break up coming through the earth's atmosphere. But they can reach the earth's surface, although this is rare."

Mr. Gatland said it would be difficult to identify the fragments of the meteorite. But his theory could explain the shallow crater, he said.

He added: "If a meteorite did reach the earth's surface, it would still have a lot of heat and residual energy left."

## 'Not a hoax'

Farmer Blanchard was still puzzled yesterday. He said: "I think the theory it might have been a spacecraft is a bit tall. On the other hand I don't think it was a hoax."

Dr. Robert Randall, 44, the astrophysicist who said the crater could have been caused by a spaceship from another planet, was not available for comment yesterday.