

IS THIS A CORMY JOKE?

By DICK DURHAM

THE great corn circle mystery that is baffling police, scientists and farmers, has taken on a new sinister shape.

Whoever — or whatever — has been forming the perfect rings in British cornfields, silently and secretly in the dead of night, is now branching out into key patterns.

Experts have no explanation and there's a £5,000 reward to anyone who can solve the mystery. Some say the circles are messages from aliens. Others put them down to mini whirlwinds, electro-magnetic fields, helicopters, hedgehogs, rutting deer, or jet aircraft.

Even corn disease has been blamed.

When the first circle was recorded in 1678, people said it was the work of the Devil.

Now they believe it could all be a practical joke.

But there are too many — 320 mysterious circles have appeared so far this year — and they are too big and too perfectly formed to be man-made.

And for farmer David Carson it's no laughing matter.

Bizarre

"If this is ET ringing home, I hope he uses someone else's cornfield next time," he says.

For this latest bizarre message, if that's what it is, has cost David more than £200 in lost crops.

The circles have flattened half an acre and over 1,000 sightseers, who have flocked in to try to decipher the code, have flattened even more.

David's family has worked the land around Manor Farm, Alton Priors, Wiltshire, for over 100 years, and these are the first corn circles they've ever had.

But David, 32, doesn't believe they're a hoax. "It would take ten people several hours to do. It's too symmetrical and we would have heard them."

Circle expert Jenny Randles claims the rings are formed by a powerful electronic force field which gives out dangerous radiation waves.

"We have 12 eye-witness accounts of the rings forming and the witnesses have experienced burning skin, hair standing on end, ears pop-

Mystery has the scientists going round in circles



FIELDWORK. Colin Andrew of Operation Cropwatch gets down to some close investigation in one of the corn rings

ping, and in some cases people's cars have stopped.

The rings always form between May and mid-August and have been found in other countries in sand, snow and rice-paddies fields.

Jenny, a member of the British UFO Research Association, says: "It is not a space-ship but it is something dangerous and fascinating."

Now a nationwide investi-

gation, Operation Cropwatch, has started, masterminded by Colin Andrew, who believes the circles are the handwriting of aliens.

"The circles seem to be elaborate pictograms created by some sort of intelligent life force as an attempt to communicate with mankind."

But Dr Terence Meaden, director of the Tornado and

Storm Research Organisation, reckons it's all down to freak whirlwinds. Experts at the Bracknell Weather Centre have ruled that out.

Derek Hardy, a spokesman for Bracknell, says: "We don't know what is causing these circles."

"I suspect, however, that if little green men are involved, they're the ones from the local pub!"