

Theories on Crop Rings

Your description of the mysterious circles of flattened crops found in southern England and elsewhere [WORLD, Sept. 18] cites the opinion of Dr. Terence Meaden that the rings have nothing to do with extraterrestrial activity. As a member of a UFO-investigation organization, I firmly believe an outside intelligence not related to our planet is the sole cause of this phenomenon. Meaden's view that the circular depressions are created by atmospheric disturbances has little substance, as the formations are geometrically precise and the likelihood of random vortices creating such patterns time and time again is small.

*Richard Tarr
Bristol, England*

There is no need to look for a "spinning ball of air" or extraterrestrials to explain crop rings. Any gardener will tell you that poor or excessive drainage of water from the soil surrounding plants will cause them to lie down. Ah, you say, why are these formations so perfectly symmetrical and geometric? Again the answer is simple. There are man-made structures—foundations or monuments—lying just underground that block the growth of roots or impede drainage or prevent water's getting to the roots of the vegetation. The result is that these plants collapse and assume the shape of whatever is under-

ground. Try this: put a round plate below the surface of your lawn and see what happens after a few days. Then you too can claim that a UFO has landed.

*Robert Grant Wealleans
Encino, Calif.*

Similar formations were photographed more than 20 years ago in Australia. They were described in the late Raymond Palmer's U.S. *Flying Saucers* magazine in April 1968. Called Tully nests, the circular and swirled depressions (one was 30 ft. in diameter) appeared to have resulted from terrific rotary forces and were attributed to meteorological whirlwinds, small tornadoes or UFOs.

*Kenneth Lloyd Larson
Los Angeles*

The crop rings depicted are larger than but similar to the fairy rings that occur on lawns in Europe and the U.S. The cause of fairy rings is a fungus that starts at the center and works outward into a beautifully precise circular ring; the outer edge of the grass becomes much greener, as if fairies had danced in a circle there. I suggest that the investigation be centered on the plants or soil instead of on the atmosphere or UFOs. I saw fairy rings some 6 ft. to 8 ft. in diameter in Portage County, Ohio, during the 1980s.

*Shirley A. Riemenschneider
Rootstown, Ohio*

TIME 10/9/89

TIME MAGAZINE

10-9-89

CR/DS

DENNIS STACY VIA COUD—!