

**THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF
CROP CIRCLES AND BEYOND**

SC

38

FEBRUARY 1995

£1.00

**Circles in the US, Australia and... Africa! - The X Files -
Michael Green - Paganism Lives! - Stargate - And More..!**

"People want lectures; I give them silence. For the mind to flower it has to go beyond what it knows" MOTHER MEERA



The Monthly Magazine of
Crop Circles and Beyond

Editor: ANDY THOMAS

**14 Bishops Drive
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 1HA**

Tel: 01273 474711

SC: Edited and produced by ANDY THOMAS. Articles, letters and contributions to the editorial address please. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and not SC as a whole, unless otherwise stated.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MAILING ADDRESS:

**Debbie Pardoe
42 Croxden Way
Willingdon Trees
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN22 0UJ**

Tel: 01323 520054

Front cover: Cheesefoot Head Punchbowl, July 1994. Photograph by Steve Alexander.

Next month we hope to debut in detail the results of Dr Levengood's analysis on crop samples sent to him by CCCS Sussex in the last couple of years - the results are exciting. Anyone who can't wait that long might like to pick up a copy of *Farmers Weekly* on March 3rd which will cover Levengood's work on crop formations! Items in *The Times* and other newspapers are expected to follow soon after...

Were you watching the recent broadcast of the Woodstock II rock festival? No, I wasn't either, but I am reliably informed that the lead singer of, er, *Pomo For Pyros* (ex-Jane's Addiction) at one point launched into a three-minute sermon about the huge significance of crop circles, UFOs and world change. Given that tens of millions supposedly watched this event throughout the world, this is probably the most publicity the circles have ever had in one go, knocking our man Reg Presley's efforts into a cocked hat. Not that Reg is perturbed by any of this, appearing on the ghastly *Good Morning With Anne and Nick* show the other week with Busty Taylor, promoting a film he claims is now in his possession of the alien bodies from the Roswell UFO crash of 1947. Reg reportedly paid a lot of money for this from some dodgy guy in America, so let us hope for his sake that he hasn't been set up by some amateur film-maker... ITV and BBC have both helpfully shown no interest in broadcasting the film as yet, so let us also hope that Reg will find a public outlet for it soon, where we can make our own minds up about its validity without having to pay extortionate amounts ourselves to see it... Actually Reg's enthusiasm for his new acquisition got a little carried away on the said TV show, as they kept trying to get him to talk about crop circles and he kept trying to talk about alien bodies - which are not necessarily the same thing at all.

Talking of UFOs, anyone living in the Sussex area with such an interest will want to know that the next branch meeting of CCCS Sussex, on **Thursday 16th March** will be host to Ted Richards, talking about *South Coast UFOs*. His talk will include photographs of alleged craft and first-hand accounts of close encounters...

ANDY THOMAS

Michael Green is probably not aware - until now - that in some circles he is known affectionately as 'The Headmaster'. This is probably an apt title for the man who has, since its birth in 1989, led the Centre for Crop Circle Studies as Chairman and acted as its omnipresent mouthpiece with his towering and pleasantly formal presence. If Stanley Messenger resembles William Hartnell's *Dr Who*, then Michael is somewhere between Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker, with an almost Victorian air, virtues of old-fashioned manners and decency intact. He has a gentle, and perhaps surprisingly shy demeanour, given his chosen role, which I find rather endearing, his eyes kept firmly on the ceiling while lecturing.

Anyone familiar with Michael's presentations will know that his speciality is the symbolism of the crop circles and their association with ancient art and inscriptions. Inspired by the recent film, Michael had retitled his contribution to the London Winter Lectures 'Stargate' and began with the pyramids of Giza and the recent discoveries that the whole complex might well have been designed as an earthly representation of, and indeed a 'gateway' to, the stars (see SC 27), using thin shafts that project out of the Great Pyramid itself. However, Michael differs from the idea that the deceased pharaoh's soul was intended to travel up the shafts, and believes they were intended to bring energy down from the stars instead. Energy from the cosmos was a central part of his lecture, energy that makes up the arteries of a huge living entity that comprises several star systems. As Earth is a living being in its own right, Gaia, so it is also just one cell of a much larger being, referred to as 'Archon' (meaning 'The Ancient One'). Seven systems make up Archon; Merak, Sirius, the Pleiades, Aldebaran, Thuban, Betelgeuse and our solar system, separate beings with a corporate intelligence. Each one represents a chakra point as with the seven chakras of the body, or the "seven great initiations". According to Michael, the crop formations are expressing aspects of this concept and are concerned wholly with the destiny of Mankind. When quizzed more closely later as to the force behind the

circles, "God" was the answer. Using slides, we were taken through several well-known formations and recurring symbols in the crops and had their significance explained in this light, although as Michael himself admitted later, "there isn't a single, simple truth here". The formations show us the many stages of Mankind's future paths and their

purpose; "the cosmic paths of service". As humanity passes through each stage, energy from certain stars within Archon is utilised to aid us, and the crop formations themselves harness and radiate this energy. Some formations even picture these stars as actual maps, as with the 'galaxy' formations of 1994 and apparently random grape-shot often make sense in this context. Eventually, our souls will reincarnate

- REPORTS -

THE GREEN REVOLUTION

Michael Green is one of the forefathers of cerealogy as we know it, but what exactly are his own views? ANDY THOMAS pops along to the London Winter Lectures and finds out...

in various locations throughout Archon as we learn, but "most of humanity will end up on Sirius", our spiritual home. Unfortunately, we were warned that Mankind is very low down the ladder in its journey toward this ultimate destiny.

As the bemused looks from one or two members of the audience illustrated ("you don't have to believe a word of it - and some of you won't!"), some of Michael's concepts are difficult to get to grips with for the uninitiated but his views are well-researched and solidly presented, and he drew the biggest crowd the Winter Lectures have seen yet. His work with archaeology and studies of ancient magic have given him valuable insights into the significance of symbolism, insights which deserve our respect and attention, whatever one's own interpretations. Symbolism is after all the most important aspect of the agriglyph phenomenon. An awkward moment passed when Michael included the Julian Richardson-created flower formation, as filmed for television, in his interpretations, but perhaps this in itself says something about the phenomenon and its effect on copy-cat humans, although Michael Glickman went for Michael's jugular at this point, for attempting "the acrobatics of trying to justify human activity" when challenged to explain himself. In fact the banter between the friends-but-chalk-and-cheese duo of Green and Glickman has been a highlight of the entire Winter

Lecture series. Perhaps they should form a double act; 'The Two Michaels'.

We learnt a little more about Michael the Green during the discussion afterwards. For instance, if Michael ever says "I hear what you say", this is a polite way of saying that he doesn't agree with you! We did not however, get to the bottom of a "naughty story" involving he and the Dean of Winchester, which we were promised couldn't be revealed unless Michael was "well-lubricated". The mind boggles.

Michael the Glickman was treated to a spot all to himself after the break, to update us on his latest findings since his talk two months previously (SC 36). This time, Michael had overlaid diagrams of the Bythorn Mandala onto the Barbury Castle triangle and found more astounding correlations - the rings of both fit perfectly around each other. More controversially, the Woodford rings formation of 1991 (claimed by Julian Richardson and believed by many despite no evidence whatsoever) also fits this template with proportions "so immaculate, they sing". In a major hoax-debunking step forward, Michael had also been experimenting with the weight and stress of tape measures when used to survey crop formations. As I can testify, keeping a steel tape measure above the heads of crop when at full stretch is no mean feat with two

people. How then, could one person in the case of Julian, who claims Bythorn also, manage to lift a rope, several times heavier than thin steel, above the crop without leaving tell-tale damage, and keep a broken camera tripod to which it was supposedly attached, standing upright? It's hard to hold up one end of a long piece of rope at any height in your hands. So for a tripod - even of the heaviest design - not falling over... forget it. AT

POSTSCRIPT: *Remember the fuss over the secret door discovered inside one of the Great Pyramid's star-shafts? Ever wonder what they discovered behind it? If you did, you'll be disappointed - the door has still not been investigated further, two years after the discovery, due to supposed bureaucratic wranglings between the Egyptian authorities and the German Archaeological Institute which funded the project - neither of whom seem very keen for the truth to be uncovered. Indeed, lack of support - and active opposition - from Egyptologists in general for further research leads one to suspect that a very real fear exists that something important may be discovered behind the door (a chamber is likely) which could threaten... something. What are Egyptologists and officials who could influence a decision afraid of?*

Anyone with a passing interest in the old Extra-Terrestrial/Egyptian connection might like to check out the movie *Stargate*, currently on release in England, which features this idea very heavily, if rather unsatisfactorily. Archaeologists uncover what looks like a huge ring doughnut near the pyramids of Giza, only to find it is in fact a gateway to another world where a tyrannical alien who set up ancient Egyptian civilisation as we knew it gets a good thrashing from humans

James Spader and Kurt Russell, who have in fact been sent to destroy the stargate, if unwittingly on Spader's part.

The film lifts its plot directly from James Cameron's *The Abyss* (ie. anally-retentive military psychotic in alien environment has hidden agenda to blow everything up with nuclear bomb) and soon descends into standard shoot-'em-up fare but afficionados of possibly real paranormal ideas masquerading as fiction may find some aspects of in-

terest, especially the notion that the pyramids were built as docking bays and power supplies for spaceships.

Given the splendour and beauty of ancient Egyptian culture, the concept that all of this was set up by one ET as a slave-labour society to supply his needs seems rather depressing and a little unlikely given its extent. I prefer to think that if ancient Egypt was influenced by Extra-Terrestrial intervention, there would be a deeper motivation and aspiration than the one presented in *Stargate*, which makes surprisingly little of its themes given that it seems to be the central notion behind the film, in favour of an action plot that the one-brain-cell multiplex generation can get to grips with.

However, worth a look for the above reasons, but don't expect the ET-influencing-humanity-movie experience of a lifetime. That was *2001: A Space Odyssey*. AT

I was intrigued to read of Professor John Searl in back issues of SC (see SC 33; Searl spoke at last year's Glastonbury Symposium - Ed). In my own researches, in our group was one Peter Barrett, a physicist, who spent some time (and some of his own money) with John Searl. The excellent book *The Secret of the Creative Vacuum: Man and the Energy Dance* by John Davidson, published by C W Daniel Co. Ltd in 1989, mentions several people such as Eric Laithwaite and their researches into 'free' energies.

The John R R Searl mentioned in this book is the same Searl that Barrett contacted. Many months passed and Barrett was unable to obtain any definite information about the device(s) Searl claimed to operate. There was endless talking however. This Searl was employed in Birmingham as an electrical engineer. He had no formal training but was intrigued by electricity, being largely self-taught. Eventually, a description derived from a scientific report by Searl's associate P L Barrett B.Sc., was published in Rolf Schaffrankes' book *Ether Technology*. The report mentions a small EMF generated in spinning metal parts; negative at periphery, positive at central axis - production of electrical power from free electrons with unusual magnetic phenomena. Standard magnetic theory tells us not how magnetism arises, just how it behaves most of the time. Searl used bar magnets polarized top and bottom, not end to end. Cylindrical magnets with N and S end poles were induced to move round the bars by repulsion. An advance was made using a magnetic annulus. When rolling magnets go beyond a certain number, they continue indefinitely. Beyond a certain threshold of rotational speed and electric differential, Searl claims that *the whole device decreases in its effective weight* (see also Laithwaite's demonstration of reduced weight with a gyroscope spinning on a steel shaft held in the hand). That is, it interacts with the gravitational field.

Searl built a circular device in which the initial rotational movement was provided by a central motor. In addition, he used three concentric sets of

magnetic rings and rollers, like three ball-races, one inside the other. The rotating disc was set in motion, in the open. Nearby objects exhibited the effects of static electricity. Whilst still accelerating, the generator levitated of its own accord, breaking the connection between itself and the central driving motor. Air ionization occurred and nearby

radios went on of their own accord. Finally, the entire generator accelerated at such a speed that it disappeared from view at a fantastic velocity. More such craft have been constructed and all have been lost. Searl says that the greater the mass, the greater the levitational effect. Mass somehow begins to show anti-mass effects (Laithwaite's recent work appears to show a transference of mass being involved in a

motive force). The report in the above-mentioned book goes on at great length and is well worth reading.

Searl's obsession with his work led to a breakdown in his marriage in 1982-83. His enthusiasm appears to be tremendous; most appear convinced of his sincerity. He does not possess a detailed theoretical knowledge of how his devices worked. The same applies to all electrical devices today. The destruction of Searl's notes was disastrous as he cannot reproduce his work from first principles. His descriptions are largely general and non-technical (or were).

Searl commented that much of the intuition of how to proceed came to him in dreams. Concerning dreams, even the members of CSICOP must dream; and while they are in the dream-state they are quite sure that they are experiencing reality. Great danger experienced in the dream would produce fear; they would even sign a document to the effect that they were awake and in danger. Dreams can be superimposed one over the other. It is only during lucid dreams that we realize we are dreaming. Our waking self does not remember being born in this life let alone previous incarnations. Perhaps Searl's methods were not so unusual. What makes us so sure we are awake now?

WB

- FEATURES -

SEARL UNFURLED

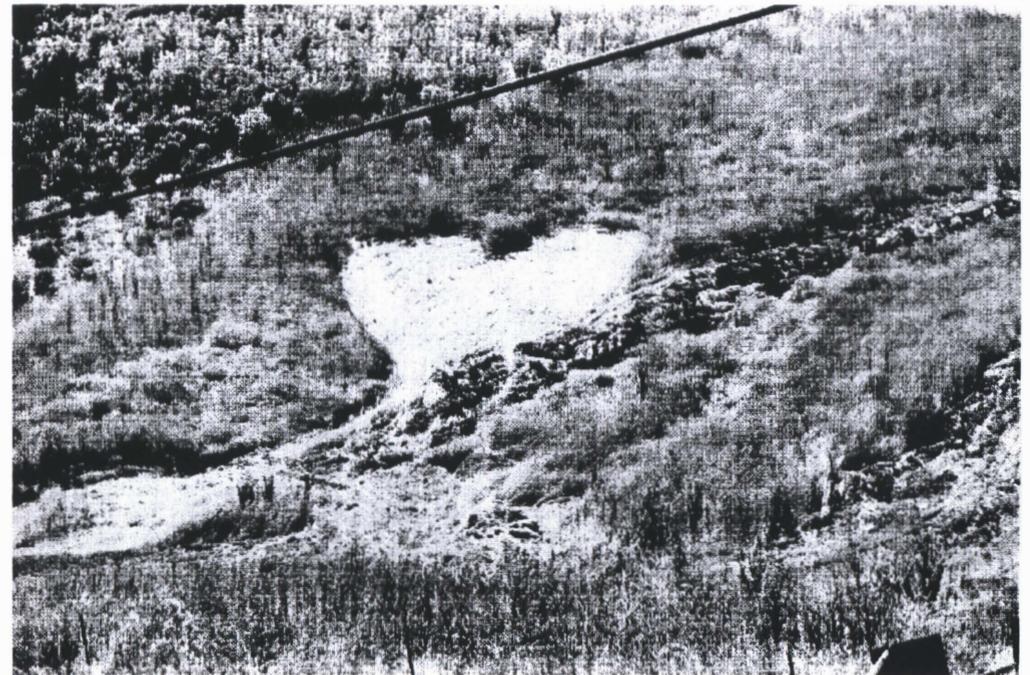
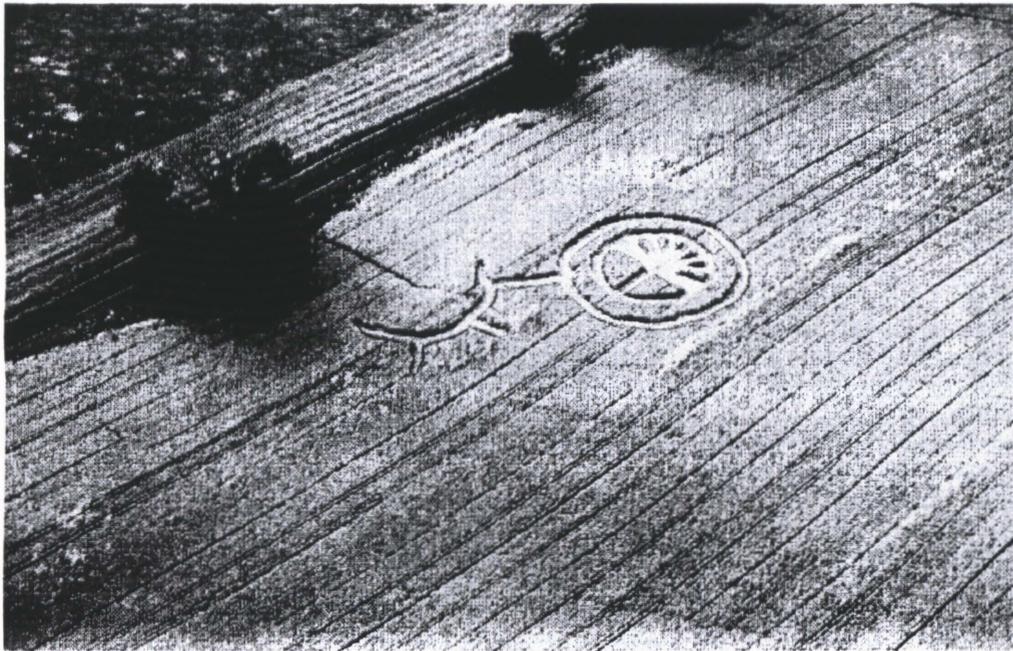
John Searl's 'antigravity' discs briefly attracted attention in the 70's but details of the man and his work are sparse. WALLACE BINNS fills in some of the gaps...

A stitch in time saves the council of... mine?

- MEDIAWATCH -

GATE FATE

ANDY THOMAS pops to the flicks to see *Stargate*...



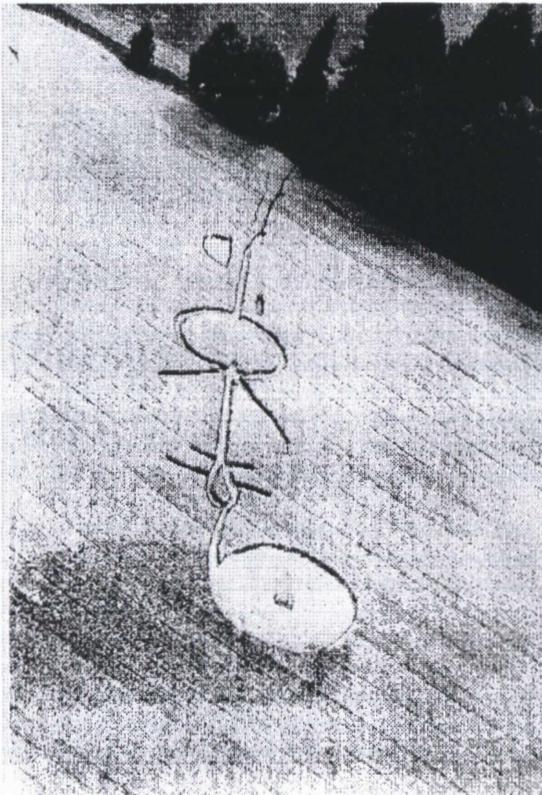
- NEWS -

U.S. CROP CIRCLES AND BEYOND

With all the amazing formations on our own doorstep here in England, one doesn't get to hear much about agriglyphs overseas so here's a photographic update on just some of the ones we've heard about recently...

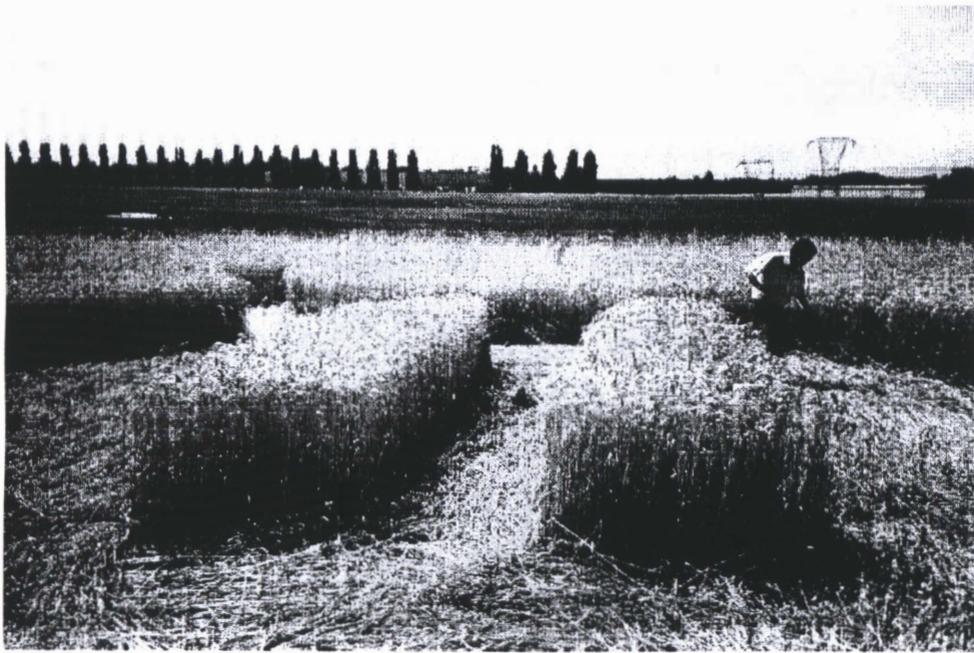
ABOVE: Chehalis, Washington State, USA. Formed in wheat, July 8/9th 1994, overall length 130ft. Photo and source: iyles

BELOW: Chehalis, Washington State, USA. Formed in wheat, same field as above, July 9/10th 1994, overall length 376ft! Photo and source: iyles



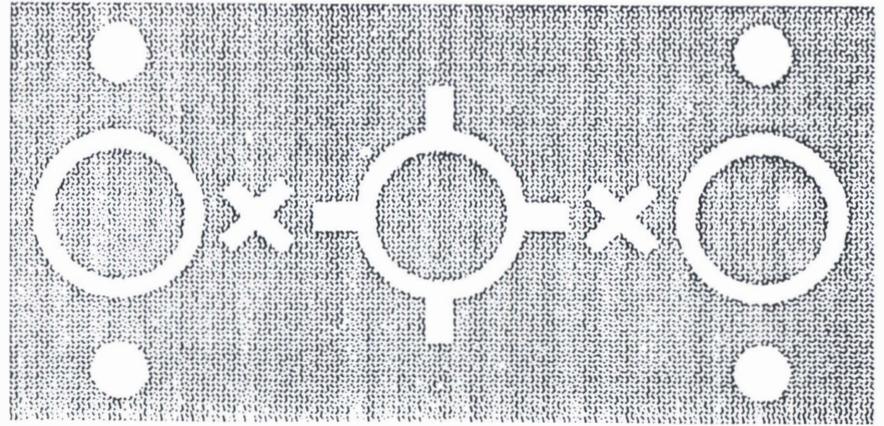
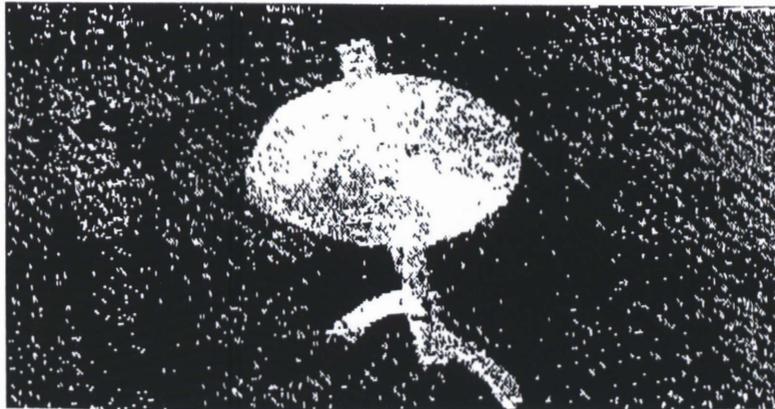
ABOVE & BELOW: Lompoc, Santa Barbara, California, USA. Formed August 1994 in mustard plants, approximate diameter 35ft. Discovered by Erik Beckjord, Erik believes this may have appeared in response to a formation he created himself (with permission) in England of an ET and a human shaking hands. On the return to his home State, he discovered this heart formation next to Highway 1... Below, 'Rodney King nurse' Joan DeNeve displays bent stalks found in the formation. Photos and source: Erik Beckjord





ABOVE: West Union, Oregon, USA. Formed July 20th 1994 in bearded wheat, overall length 150ft approximate. Photo and source: Carol Pedersen

BELOW: Northfield, Adelaide, Australia. Formed around 10th December 1994. This formation picked up quite a lot of TV coverage, apparently. Photo: 'Channel 10' (from newspaper clipping) Source: Richard Giles via Marcus Allen



ABOVE: Botswana, Africa. Formed sometime in 1994 in maize. Very notable in being a rare official record of a crop formation in Africa, as reported in 'UFO Afrinews', an African newsletter. The diagram is based on a drawing made by the farmer for a Martin Chibanda from Zimbabwe, who met him by chance. Unlike standard formations, the pattern was burned into the crop and the grapeshot appeared to have been "dug into the soil". The farmer was apparently more concerned with the loss of his crop than with the appearance of the pattern! As far as SC knows, this is the first time this event has been reported in Britain... Diagram: Martin Chibanda Source: 'UFO Afrinews' via Lois Horowitz

Those awaiting proof, if proof were needed what with the huge European floods of late, that the Earth is indeed undergoing a huge environmental change right now, could do worse than work for an insurance company. A trustworthy friend who works for a city firm in business insurance tells me of a meeting recently where certain members of the office were called together to view maps of the east coast of Britain held on a database entitled 'The HALCROW Report'. This seemingly innocent action was surrounded by much hush-hush caution, the reason for which soon became clear. The map showed a projection of how the coastline may look in the next 50 years - and much of it was at high risk of being underwater. Given that this computer model projection was compiled from current geological and environmental information about sea levels, falling ground level measurements and sea defence effectiveness and nothing along psychic lines (we assume!), certain areas of Britain may have *provable* cause for alarm. The meeting was informed

that premiums for the businesses they insure in those areas would be increased accordingly in the coming years... The HALCROW Report, sponsored by the government and various large insurance companies will gradually be expanded to cover the whole of Britain, by postcode areas. So, if you find your premiums going through the roof for no apparent reason, start building an ark pronto... AT

- NEWS -
STONE THE HALCROWS

Looking for 'Earth changes'? Start checking your insurance premiums says ANDY THOMAS...

POSTSCRIPT: *Incidentally, can my wife and I be the only people to have spotted a real-live water-spout (ie, tornado over the sea sucking water up into the sky) on November 16th last year? We were driving into Brighton (Sussex) from Dyke Road and spotted the huge funnel out to sea over Shoreham. We scanned the TV news and papers but to our astonishment it never warranted a mention anywhere. If anyone out there knows more about this event, we'd be interested to hear from you. This following the tornadoes over East and West Sussex in 1993, weather ain't what it used to be in these parts...*

Issue 35 of your excellent publication recently reached me here in the depths of rural France, an area

- LETTERS -

of the world seemingly ignored by the circle makers as being far too unenlightened and materialistic - or perhaps the food is too rich for them. I read the results of the survey with great interest, but one particular section prompted me to reply.

I wondered why, in Question 30, in the list of religions, only Pagan was placed in quotation marks? Was the intention perhaps to imply that Paganism is not a religious body? I take comfort from the fact that at least two of your readers state that they are Pagans and thus we must equate in terms of numbers with the Roman Catholics in Britain - if your statistics are to be believed.

Further down, however, I noticed someone stated; "I think I may be a pagan but are they organised or a religion?". Essentially, the Latin word *paganus* meant a country-dweller but in late Roman times when the Jewish tribal God had staged his takeover, the term was corrupted to mean 'heathen', and the hunting season opened with tragic intensity.

Paganism as we know it today is essentially a recreation based around the ancient religions which worshipped the Lunar or Mother Goddess and the Solar vegetation God as her consort. Thus it is nature based, without a hierarchy, a 'book' or an ancient bearded prophet who forbids the faithful to think for themselves, and hence it has provided a spiritual framework for many today who are seeking refuge from the stranglehold of the patriarchal religions. There are a number of strands or traditions within the global term of Paganism: the followers of re-invented witchcraft or Wicca, Druidism, shamanism and others who simply prefer a more personal search for basic truths. Since the fifties, Paganism has developed into a vibrant movement providing a spiritual base for the New Age, giving the greatest scope for individual belief and tolerance of other forms of religion. It has allowed women to express their spirituality as priestesses in their own right and actively encourages concern for the environment. Lastly, it is non-evangelistic in that it does not seek to actively convert.

As far as organisation is concerned there is a representative body, the Pagan Federation, which has no doctrinal force but exists as a forum for discussion and networking via regional sections. In addition there are a number of responsible bodies that represent various traditions, a good selection of

magazines and regular informal meetings in towns all over the British Isles. It is difficult to estimate numbers as such, but a quarter of a million adherents would not be too far out.

There are three basic principles around which Paganism has coalesced today: 1) Acceptance of a single supreme creative force which is androgyne but which can be manifest in both male and female form as Goddesses and Gods 2) Love and respect for nature in all its forms 3) A simple basic law - "Do as you will and it will harm none". Accept these three statements and you are a Pagan, without having to 'join' anything. The level of commitment to Paganism depends on the individual viewpoint. There are some who regard it as a way of life and do not take part in any particular rituals or ceremonies. The majority, however, accept the reality of the deities and approach them via prayer, meditation and ritual observance. Paganism differs from mainstream religions in that there is no laid down corpus of dogma and no imposed moral code of taboos. There is an ordained priest/esshood who serve only to give guidance and teaching to those who ask for it. No priestess or priest charges money and they are not imposed upon the faithful by synods or bishops. Rites of passage such as child naming, marriage and funerals are conducted only if required.

Paganism does not have an answer as to who is making the crop circles, any more than anybody else does, but now that the scientists have failed to come up with any watertight theories, it is time perhaps for those engaged in a spiritual search to endeavour to make contact, which is already happening. The powers behind the established religions are naturally frightened at what might be revealed, hence the activities of those who are so assiduously spreading disinformation. What Paganism can offer is a way in which folk from all walks of life have the opportunity to attune themselves with those forces which were not alien to our distant ancestors, whose ancient sites are so frequently the target of the circle makers.

If any readers would like more information about Paganism, addresses of organisations etc in their locality, I would be happy to correspond.

The Rev. ANTHONY KEMP (Priest of Cerridwen), AVALON, Chabreville, 16190 Courgeac, France.

Once in a while, a television series comes along which seems to strike a chord in people beyond that of a straight entertainment factor. *The X Files*, currently drawing to the close of its first season on BBC 2, is one of these, highlighting what an extraordinary general interest in the paranormal there is even if simply at the level of a diverting aside. How many actually think about what they have

seen once the screen fades and consider that the subject matter may actually have grains of truth in it is open to question but the clues are there for any who wish to take up the trail.

The X Files' premise is simple. Two FBI agents, Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) run an obscure and frowned-upon department of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, following up 'X Files' cases that seem to involve strange phenomena. Scully is posted to keep an sceptical eye on Mulder, whose passion for such things as UFOs sometimes threatens to undermine his professional credibility. And so the framework exists for a mainstream yet unconventional series, able to cover subjects most dramas wouldn't touch with a bargepole. Each episode lays its cards squarely on the table with the opening credits sequence set against a haunting theme tune; a UFO hovers, a distorted face screams, the words "Paranormal Activity" appear, lightning flickers and finally the slogan "The Truth Is Out There" impresses itself in our subconscious, softening us up to accept the 'concept' of the week by beating our scepticism into submission.

In the world of *The X Files* aliens abduct, ghosts haunt and possess, unknown creatures stalk forests, and government conspiracies lurk behind every desk. There's no question that this is a 'believers' programme. Despite the presence of Scully, a cool customer who serves to put the other side of every case, that there might just be a mundane explanation, the viewpoint given generally belies any such attempts to balance, because we the viewers are allowed to see the ghost, ET, creature or whatever, and often witness scenarios from their point of view. We thus know that Mulder is right in his paranormal postulations. This takes away any tension that might result from our uncertainty, but this is not the point of the series. There seems to be a definite

attempt to sell audiences the idea that such things may really occur. Mulder and Scully's investigations are merely the catalyst for an array of concepts that promote the paranormal, whether this is the intention of the writers or not. Sceptic organisations like CSICOP (who actually get a mention in one episode) must hate things like this. *The X Files* is generally at its best when attempting to expose alleged real-life situations, where the US government are shown as having ET technology, developing their own craft at secret bases and holding ET bodies from crashed saucers. Many will have seen genuine footage of strange lights flying over US military bases which appear to defy the laws of physics; this is duplicated almost exactly in one instalment, which sees Mulder investigating the development of the rumoured 'Aurora' black triangle craft and subsequently being subjected to an excruciating memory-washing process for his troubles. The writers are clearly conspiracy theorists in this respect. The series is deeply pessimistic, portraying a massive distrust in all figures of authority (including the FBI itself) most of whom seem to be working to sinister hidden agendas. More often than not, each episode ends on a decidedly downbeat note - a brave step for such a commercial venture which often has surprisingly reactionary tones. Throughout the series, Mulder's investigations continually bring him up against unidentified government heavies keen to dissuade him from his meddlings and his work is often met with a wall of secrecy just as the point of final revelation is about to be reached. This is frustrating to Mulder, but it can also become irritating to the viewers when it is used as a device for the scriptwriters to avoid proper resolutions. Mulder's only contact behind this 'wall of secrecy' and the higher forces of command which seem to operate there is a mysterious character scripted as 'Deep Throat' who occasionally comes out of the woodwork to give snippets of information, particularly in regard to ET-contact cover-ups. His (apparently benevolent) motives remain unclear throughout but give the impression that, through him, higher authorities are using an unwitting Mulder for their own dirty work. Deep Throat fulfills the function of the Donald

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- MEDIAWATCH -

X-RATED

It's about the paranormal, it's just won a Golden Globe Award for Best Drama Series, and it's being watched by millions. ANDY THOMAS opens up *The X Files*...

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Throughout the series, Mulder's investigations continually bring him up against unidentified government heavies keen to dissuade him from his meddlings and his work is often met with a wall of secrecy just as the point of final revelation is about to be reached. This is frustrating to Mulder, but it can also become irritating to the viewers when it is used as a device for the scriptwriters to avoid proper resolutions. Mulder's only contact behind this 'wall of secrecy' and the higher forces of command which seem to operate there is a mysterious character scripted as 'Deep Throat' who occasionally comes out of the woodwork to give snippets of information, particularly in regard to ET-contact cover-ups. His (apparently benevolent) motives remain unclear throughout but give the impression that, through him, higher authorities are using an unwitting Mulder for their own dirty work. Deep Throat fulfills the function of the Donald

Sutherland character in Oliver Stone's *JFK* or Martin Sheen's in the forthcoming *Roswell* about the alleged 1947 UFO crash. From an entertainment point of view the problem with walls of secrecy is that they can threaten to become a turn-off for the audience as a cop-out device, so such characters with 'inside information' are needed to advance the story further than the plot restrictions imposed on the main players allow.

Apart from the more obvious paranormal themes, lesser-known (to the public) concepts like the Face on Mars have been touched on. In one episode a space shuttle mission is threatened by a saboteur colonel who previously worked on the Viking Mars missions, now possessed by a creature that shares the face of the Martian sphinx. The vague implication is that the creature is trying to sabotage any further investigation into the Mars monuments, but this is never voiced by any of the characters and is thus a less satisfying episode which resorts to using an image purely as a visual reference for enthusiasts. One of the drawbacks of using genuine cases and concepts as inspiration for stories is that these episodes, though often effective from 'our' point of view, are a little too self-conscious in sticking to something 'we' will recognise, and over-reverent in their treatment. The more *entertaining* instalments are sometimes those where imagination is given a freer reign. Not all the stories revolve around ETs, but they are the linking thread that explain's Mulder's obsession with his work - he believes his sister was permanently abducted by aliens when he was a child. His desperation for an answer, and the hope of being reunited drives him on and provides a depth to his character often lacking in mainstream television. Scully's continuing scepticism however, threatens to become unconvincing in the face of all her experiences with Mulder. This must surely change if her character is to develop. Only once is this reversed, where she believes in the channelings of a psychotic prisoner while Mulder takes the opposite view. Advance word from the US suggests this is more permanently rectified in the second season, which is more of an ongoing story than individual episodes.

The subject matter is often far from original; the writers seem quite happy to work classic ideas from various genres into their own scenarios. One episode is a direct lift from the 50's film *The Thing*, as a group of scientists trapped in an arctic base are

threatened by an alien parasite. Another homage *Witness*, another *In The Line Of Fire* and so forth. Many seem to be shameless updates on the old 50's aliens-as-communist paranoia metaphors but without the inferences - this time the aliens really do represent aliens. The whole premise of the series itself seems to have been sparked by the bizarre FBI drama *Twin Peaks* in any case, in which Duchovny himself played another agent, a transvestite. And yet it doesn't seem to matter. *The X Files* appears to thrive by wearing its influences on its sleeve and twisting them into 90's-style tributes. Its technique is impeccable; it looks glossy, the scripts are intelligent and exciting and often genuinely frightening. It has a way of somehow portraying its themes in such a way that you find yourself 'buying' it despite yourself.

Crop circles have merited a couple of brief references, if uncertain ones. In one episode a UFO enthusiast asks what Mulder thinks about the crop circles - "fact or fraud?" Mulder says fraud, but it's not clear whether he is bluffing in an attempt to sound the other out as he seems to believe in most other 'paranormal' events. Mulder quotes the Project Argus report on physical stalk effects! As ever, someone in the script pool has done their homework. If he was giving his true opinion Mulder presumably revises this, as, in a later instalment, sex-changing ETs (!) depart hurriedly from a nearby hayfield, leaving he and Scully wandering around in the resultant circle in the crop...

It's not insignificant that *The X Files* has attracted BBC 2's largest audience in ages, topping the ratings charts even above *Star Trek: The Next Generation* which seems like kid's stuff in comparison. It's been accused by some of being nothing more than a wet dream for the anorak brigade. Well, so be it. If it actually makes some viewers ask pertinent questions about the unknown world around them, even as it entertains, it will have done a service. It certainly treats its subject matter with more sincerity than *Schofield's Quest* or *Strange But True*. **AT**

Anyone wanting further information regarding *The X Files* could do worse than getting hold of a copy of the *Twin Peaks* magazine *Wrapped In Plastic*, published in the US but available in specialist shops over here (ie. 'Forbidden Planet' sci-fi bookshops). Issue 12, August 1994, is virtually dedicated to the series and contains a full episode guide and an interview with Gillian Anderson. It also reviews *Roswell*, the movie. *Recommended.*

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