



Field of 'dreams'

■ Aliens? Drunks? Or energy from another dimension? Theories abound, but the crop circles remain a mystery

WHAT causes strange shapes to appear in the wheated plains of south-west England? Bored drunks? Aliens? Energy from another dimension, or maybe just an enterprising tourist board?

The people who come to view these prodigies of lawn-mowing don't really care.

"It's a piece of the magic to let you know it's real," said Shawn Randall, a Los Angeles metaphysics teacher here for a three-day conference on crop circles, UFOs and strange visitors from other planets.

Randall stood on wheat flattened into the shape of an eye. Others sprawled on the grain that crackedled under blazing sun, meditated in the lotus position, or pursued electromagnetic fields with dowsing rods.

Farmer Tim Carson said he was certain that two of the three crop circles on his 600ha were hoaxes because he caught men with oil drums

From **KARIN DAVIES**
in Alton Priors, England

tamping down the wheat early one morning.

But he wondered about the giant eye — it appeared after a bright moonlit night when people were watching the field but saw nothing unusual.

"I'm not saying it's not a hoax, but I won't say it is," he said.

Neat swirls of flattened crops, ranging from a few metres to a few hundred metres, appear each summer on the farmlands of south-west England, mainly in the county of Wiltshire, home of the prehistoric and truly mysterious stone circles of Stonehenge.

Crop circles were first recorded in England in 1678. In other countries, circles have been reported in sand, snow, rice paddies and fields. The patterns have been attributed to whirlwinds, witches, magnetic forces, animals, hoaxers and spaceships.

Scientists who don't believe



Tourists meditate — who knows, the aliens may be watching

in unnatural phenomena think they are made by eddies of wind sweeping over hilly ground.

They say the recent complex shapes of circles, bars, squares and triangles were made by hoaxers.

In 1991 two Englishmen said they were bored one night in a pub and decided to make crop circles. They said they made hundreds of hoax crop circles for 13 years in the south of England using wooden boards, string and a baseball bat.

Richard Andrews, an Englishman who has studied crop circles since 1979, conceded some were hoaxes.

"But what makes the others? We really don't know. We

know it is an intelligent force — but this is not human intellect," he said. "I'm not talking about aliens. I'm talking about another dimension."

"This year we've only had hundreds of visitors," Carson said. "1990 was just out of hand really — 10,000 people came; the world and his wife."

Making scooping motions towards her chest, Barbara Lindsay of London said: "I think this is going to enhance my healing."

Margaret Pinyan, a retired book editor from Arizona, was searching for evidence of aliens.

"It is frustrating to everyone that you can't say, 'Hey you guys, come on down and let's talk about it,'" she said.



The cows seem unperturbed by the mysterious crop circles in a south-west England paddock