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Location: [Mothership](#) -> [UFO](#) -> [Updates](#) -> [1999](#) -> [May](#) -> **BBC: US Billionaire Funds Crop Circle Research**

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### BBC: US Billionaire Funds Crop Circle Research

From: Steven J. Dunn <[SDunn@logicon.com](mailto:SDunn@logicon.com)>  
Date: Wed, 19 May 1999 05:00:45 -0700  
Fwd Date: Thu, 20 May 1999 17:22:54 -0400  
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BBC

"US billionaire funds crop circle research"

US billionaire Laurance Rockefeller is to fund the UK's biggest survey of crop circles.

Scientists will be carrying out aerial research over Wiltshire next month in the hope of finding out once and for all whether the mysterious patterns are genuine or the work of hoaxers.

Some believe they are created by UFOs during nocturnal visits. Others say they are connected to ancient "ley lines", or put it down to natural phenomena such as unusual forms of lightning.

The first few crop circles of the season have already appeared in several West Country fields. The area has long been the focal point of those in Britain who believe that the circles are the work of extra terrestrial forces.

Last year a US Website advertised week-long tours of UK crop circles priced at \$2,199 per person.

Until now research has been carried out by amateurs and enthusiasts, known as croppies. But there is a growing scientific discipline based around the study, known as cereology.

Mr Rockefeller, a former US congressman, has given his financial backing to the UK's largest and most scientific study.

Mr Rockefeller, scion of the famous dynasty, has a long standing interest in UFOs and other bizarre phenomena.

He has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to UFO abduction researcher John Mack.

Mr Rockefeller also funds the Starlight Coalition, which wants to end what it says is US Government secrecy on UFOs.

His organisation has already built up the biggest crop circle database, and will be working with private detectives and the National Farmers Union.

Many farmers believe crop circles are the work of hoaxers, and

say they cause thousands of pounds of damage every year. Several people have come forward to claim responsibility.

In 1991 two landscape painters, David Chorley and Douglas Bower, claimed they started the hoax in 1978, after drinking in a pub.

They said for the past 13 years they had been sneaking around southern England at night, fashioning as many as 25 to 30 new circles each growing season.

In a BBC CountryFile special in January, Mr Bower, 74, showed how his patterns were made with planks of wood, lengths of rope and a ball of string. He said he was amazed that many followers of crop circles still refused to believe they were a hoax.

But it seems there remain unexplained factors, such as the lack of tracks or footsteps.

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