

# *Gifts in the Fields*

## CROP CIRCLES OF 2008

*During the summer in England, the fields were graced with beautiful, precision-made crop formations, one of them apparently depicting planetary positions for the December 2012 northern winter solstice.*

**by Andy Thomas © 2008**

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**F**ads come and go and mysteries rise and subside, but, despite the constant attacks from sceptics or damage from plain media ignorance, against all the odds the crop circle phenomenon somehow continues to entrance its devotees after all these years.

From simple circles in lonely fields in the earlier years to the sudden explosion of complex glyphs and subsequent wide public fascination in 1990, the development of this never less than intriguing puzzle has seen the rise and fall of many design genres and styles, but always there has been a sense of a constant, slow progression of evolution towards...*something*.

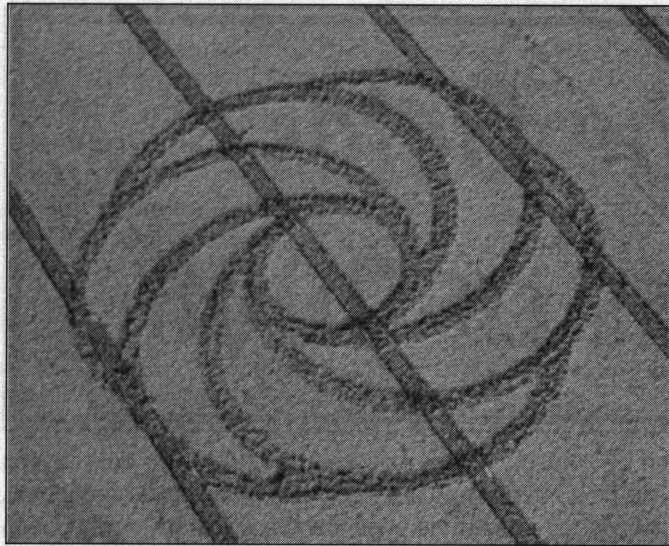
The dismissive view that *all* works of this mystery are merely human art (inevitably one still fostered by the usual dedicated debunkers) is countered in too many cases with evidence biological, statistical and geometrical that suggests something else at work outside the mundane. Whatever the case, the fact remains that, whether one believes the circles are patterns of nature, projections of collective consciousness by physical or metaphysical means or intelligent encoded communications from a great beyond, the view that the crop formations are heralds of some coming time of huge change, perhaps connected to the many predictions now surrounding the year 2012, has come to predominate the scene. But with that message now rightly or wrongly successfully lodged in so many minds, the phenomenon has seemingly reached some kind of plateau, as if it has done the bulk of its set-up work and is now biding its time to await either closure or the dawning of something even more momentous than spectacular glyphs.

### **An enthusiastic response**

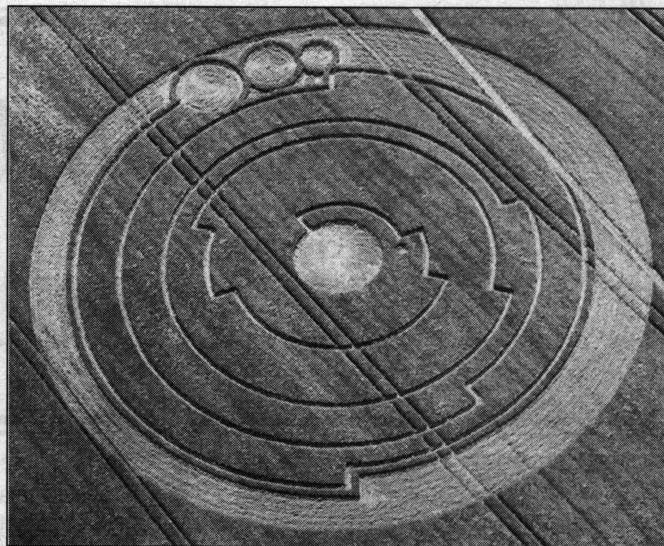
Last year I described the crop formations of 2007 as a "holding operation", a consistent supply of beautiful yet not shockingly groundbreaking designs which kept the faithful happy and continued to bring a modest influx of new enthusiasts into an awareness of something very curious going on in their world. I also suggested that 2008 was likely to be much the same, and that has turned out to be a fair prediction.

This season has seen another run of ambitious and striking formations but without any major developments, yet still offering plenty of crowd-pleasing elements. And please the crowds it did, with the crop circle phenomenon enjoying a surprisingly high profile in its UK heartlands (in contrast to 2006, when the press and its readers seemed inexplicably convinced the circles were dying away) and a seeming resurgence of buoyant enthusiasm firing up its aficionados.

The annual crop circle coach tour of the longest-running circle-related gathering, the Glastonbury Symposium, had more subscribers than ever before. Meanwhile, the rejuvenated Silent Circle at Compton Bassett in Wiltshire—once the crop circle-themed cafe at Cherhill and now reborn in a new venue next to The White Horse Inn as a shop and information point—was a constant hive of activity. It saw a steady stream of visitors each day of the summer and held many



Waden Hill, Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 19th April.  
Image: Janet Ossebaard © 2008



Barbury Castle, near Wroughton, Wiltshire. Reported 1st June.  
Image: John Montgomery © 2008



Furze Knoll, near Beckhampton, Wiltshire. Reported 20th June.  
Image: John Montgomery © 2008

well-attended lectures. Indeed, Silent Circle is now the first port of call for most Wiltshire circle adventurers keen to get a reasonably unbiased assessment of the latest wonders and the informed fine detail on how to find them (see [www.silentcircle.co.uk](http://www.silentcircle.co.uk)).

### The season unfurls

The 2008 season began near Avebury on 19th April with a straightforward but attractive sixfold wheel in rapeseed, but the raised profile of the phenomenon was helped enormously on 1st June by the arrival of the first majorly significant formation of the year. Lying below the ancient hill fort of Barbury Castle, the perfectly ratcheted spiral in green barley was a more complex echo of the spiral incorporated into the famous triangular pictogram at the same location way back in 1991. This time, however, it embodied perfectly the mathematical principles of  $\pi$  (the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter)—something very unlikely to occur by chance or without perfect precision of placement, and something which even the UK newspapers couldn't ignore. Several papers featured the thoughts of retired US astrophysicist Michael Reed, who made the following impressive observation, as reported by Earthfiles.com and Crop Circle Connector:

"The ratcheting arcs starting at the centre and proceeding outward express  $\pi$  as increments of a circle divided into tenths, or 36 degrees. If you proceed outward from the centre, the multiples of 1/10 of a rotation (including the small circle as a decimal) are 3.141592654..."

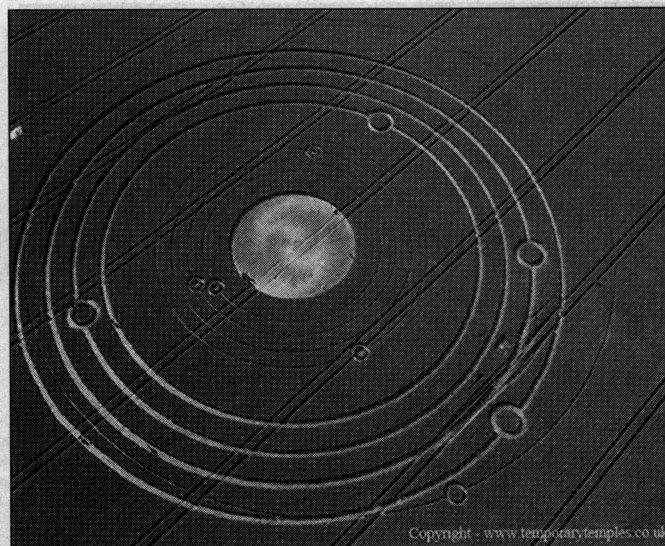
This development was mostly reported, unusually, without the traditionally sneering "humorous" tones of the media that tend to accompany remarkable formations and instead bore tones of almost begrudging respect. The observations of an astrophysicist took cerealogy (the study of crop circles) back within the sphere of the officially approved scientism that grips the mainstream, just for one day at least, and therefore propelled it into the limelight. As a result, general interest in the circles rose a little and added to the curiously heightened excitement within the "croppie" community in 2008.

Although nothing quite this mathematically significant was to follow, the fields of Wiltshire were then gifted with an eclectic mix of emblems and mandalas throughout the next few weeks, the best of which were perhaps the "wheel hub" at The Ridgeway, near Avebury, on 15th June and the elaborate, huge design at Furze Knoll on 20th June.

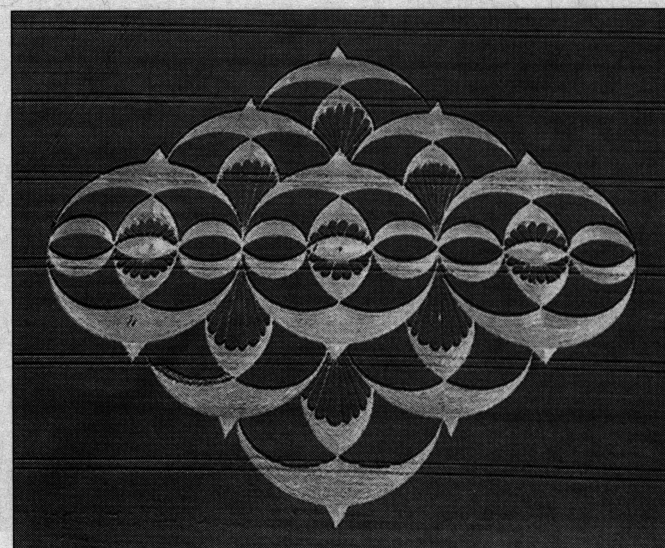
July, however, saw the second most talked about formation of the year with the arrival of a very sharply rendered and astronomically themed nest of thin rings and circles near Avebury Manor on 15th July. It didn't take long for croppies to realise it was a diagram of our own solar system, with all the planets shown in the positions they will take on 21st December 2012—the winter solstice believed by some to herald the arrival of the "great shift" anticipated by several ancient cultures around the world, most notably the Maya. Although some of the planets were very slightly misplaced from their expected positions (which in itself caused debate about coming orbital perturbations amongst some, and about



The Ridgeway, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 15th June.  
Image: [www.temporarytemples.co.uk](http://www.temporarytemples.co.uk) © 2008



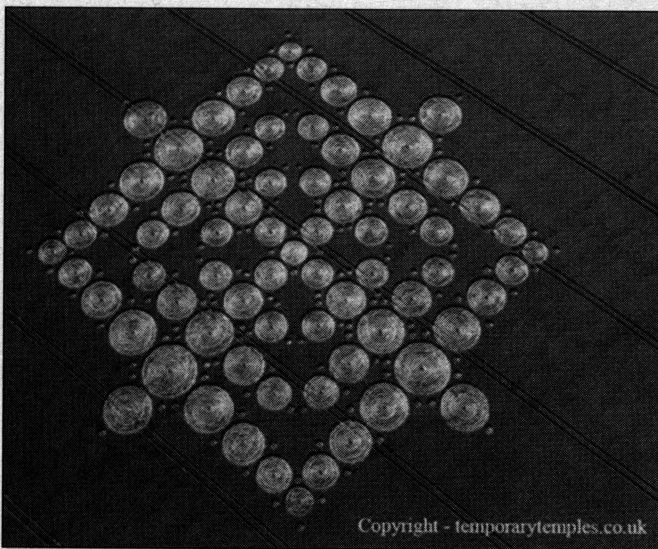
Avebury Manor, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 15th July.  
Image: [www.temporarytemples.co.uk](http://www.temporarytemples.co.uk) © 2008



South Field, Alton Priors, Wiltshire. Reported 22nd & 23rd July.  
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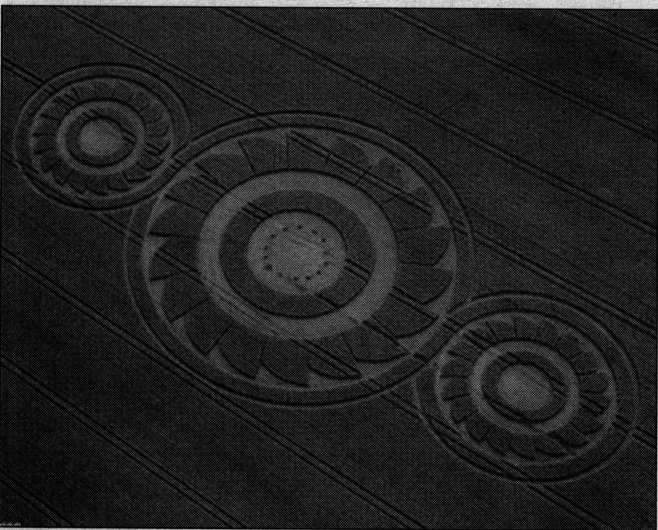
artistic inaccuracy in the more cynical), the message seemed nonetheless clear that we were being reminded of ancient time cycles which might impinge on our civilisation very soon. As just the latest in a line of crop formations to refer directly to the 2012 time cycle, it reinforced to many the idea that we are being called to readiness for that...*something* just around the corner.

Not content to stop there, July continued to produce a stream of interesting glyphs, at least two of which were truly stunning. A line of three tail-to-tail "swallow" shapes which arrived at Alton Priors on 22nd July then performed the old trick of metamorphosis by turning into the astonishing sight of a whole larger flock of them on the next night, with a beautifully smooth crop-lay inside. Then, on 27th July, a field at Wayland's Smithy in Oxfordshire played host to an enormous complex of hundreds of large and small circles, looking like some kind of celestial game of Solitaire and crying out for some kind of decoding by the educated faithful.



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Wayland's Smithy, near Ashbury, Oxfordshire. Reported 27th July. Image: www.temporarytemples.co.uk © 2008



Watchfield Wind Farm, near Shrivenham, Oxfordshire. Reported 1st August. Image: Frank Laumen © 2008

## Multifaceted designs

August brought its own surprises. A triple-windmill-type design at Shrivenham, Oxfordshire, on 1st August seemed to be an obscure comment on the adjacent wind farm, perhaps calling attention to the current arguments raging in the UK about the pros and cons of wind power and its effect on the visual environment.

A very literal rendition of a multifaceted gemstone at Yatesbury, Wiltshire, on 3rd August was perhaps the most unusual entry of the month, while a huge figure-of-eight of tailed circles back at the old haunt of Alton Barnes (amongst several other formations this season) was notable for appearing on 8/8/08. In fact, this was the only significant cerealogical event to occur on 8th August—after many unfulfilled Internet predictions of amazing things which otherwise didn't materialise, based on the supposed predictive symbolism of the preceding weeks and the neatness of the digits.

Perhaps the most beautiful design to appear in August had a Celtic-Christian flavour in the shape of a huge crucifix of graceful curves and lines at Etchilhampton, Wiltshire, on 15th, raising some religious speculation (although many other faiths have also been referenced over the years).

August provided a few more complex designs, tailing itself with a very striking star shape at Etchilhampton on 31st. Formations have continued into September (at the time of writing), perhaps because of late harvests due to wet weather—the latest to date appearing at Avebury on 7th, comprising a complex mandala rather like a Chinese puzzle.

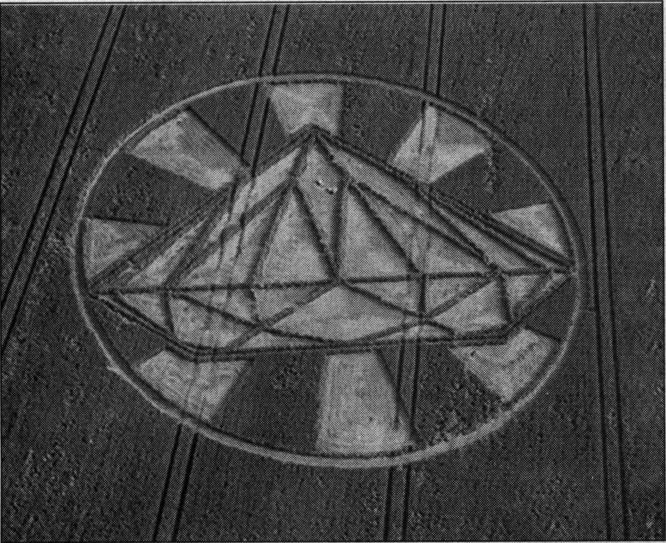
As ever, much of the activity was based in Wiltshire this season, although some other atypical counties such as Suffolk, Cornwall and North Yorkshire did produce the occasional single circle or simple design. There was even a grand surprise at Barton Le Clay in Bedfordshire on 14th August, with a very clear-cut mandala worthy of the very best. However, Kent and Sussex, both circle hotspots once, lay bereft.

In amongst the masterpieces of the season, there were some less-impressive examples—of course, some clearly being messy doodles and others being more ambitious but flawed in their layout, demonstrating probable human error and notable signs of stem damage inside. But in the absence of firm evidence in either direction, as always it is up to individuals to make up their own minds as to the proportion of formations that are man-made (as some surely are) and those that are from that unreachable somewhere else. The lesson in discernment would appear to be part of the equation.

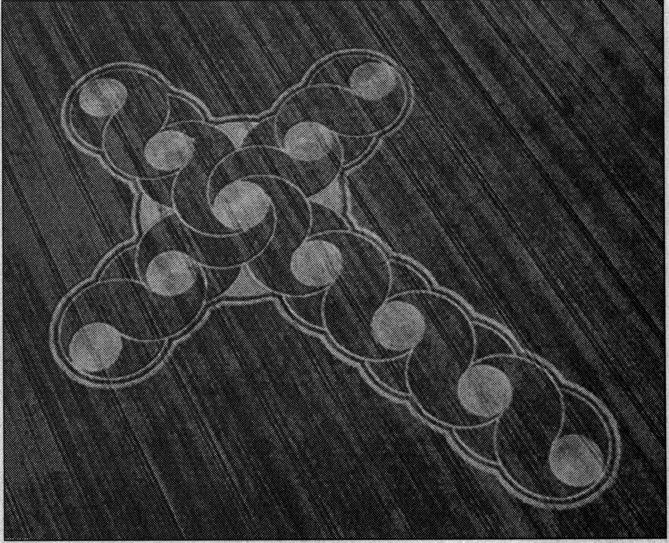
## Foreign formations and English domination

According to the website [www.cropcircleconnector.com](http://www.cropcircleconnector.com), the UK, with 68 formations this summer (at the time of writing), was slightly up on 2007, the second year running of rising occurrences. Meanwhile, the rest of the world seemed slightly down in numbers but still came up with around 50 confirmed reports.

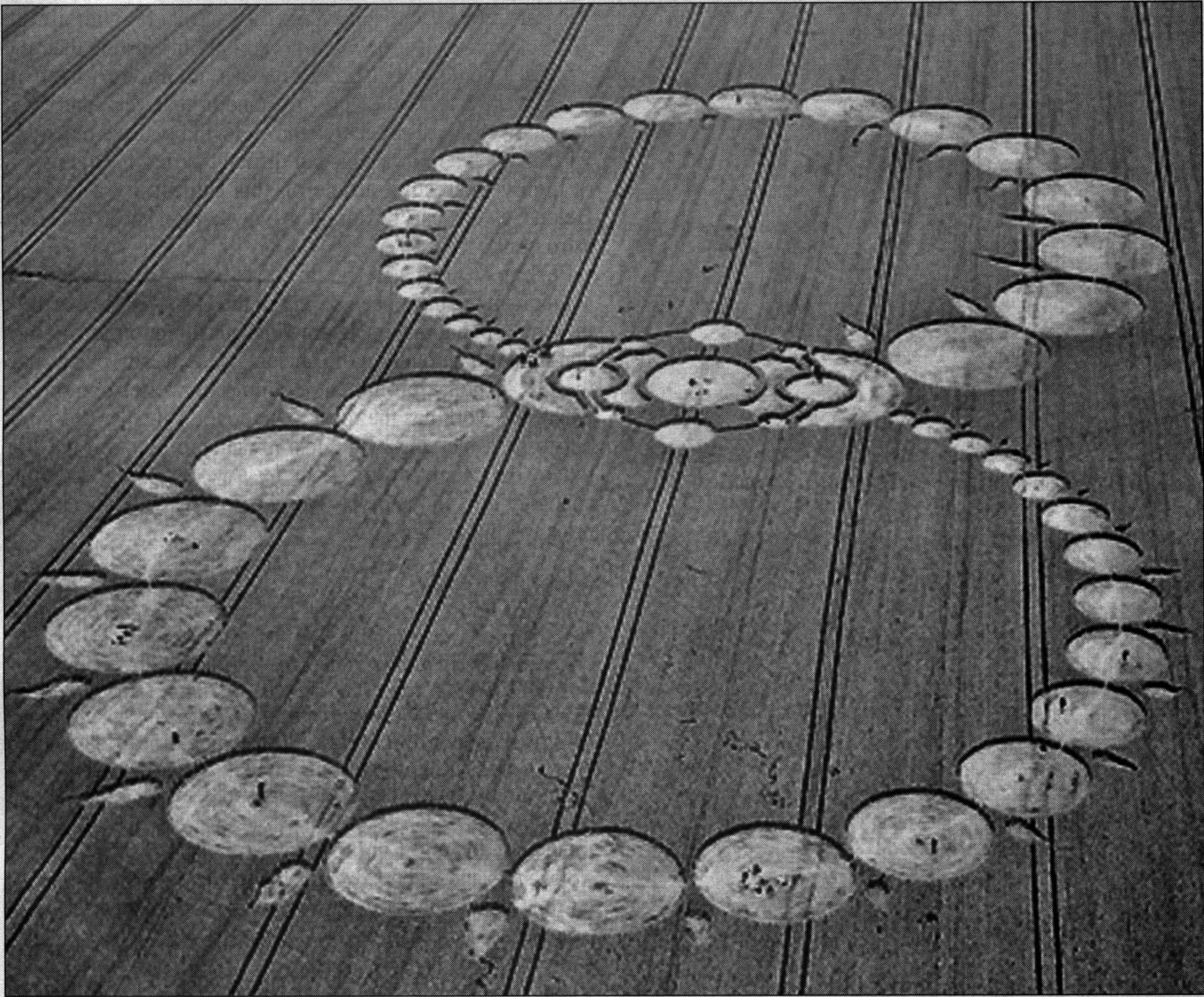
Germany and Italy (the latter last year being the closest



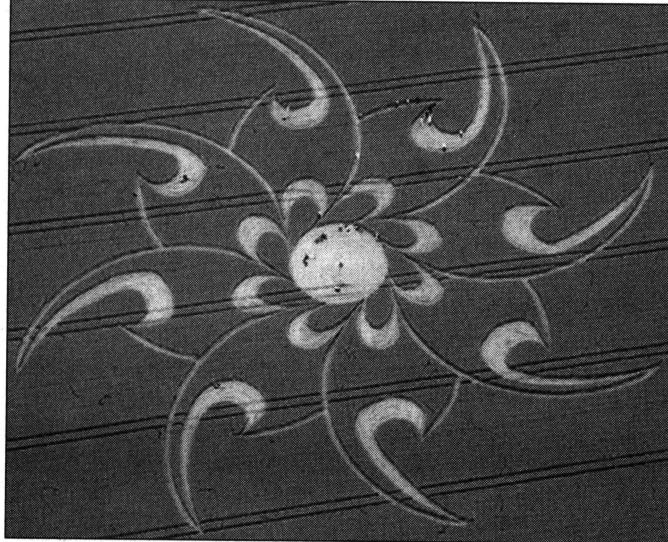
Yatesbury, near Beckhampton, Wiltshire. Reported 3rd August.  
Image: Lucy Pringle © 2008 www.lucypringle.co.uk



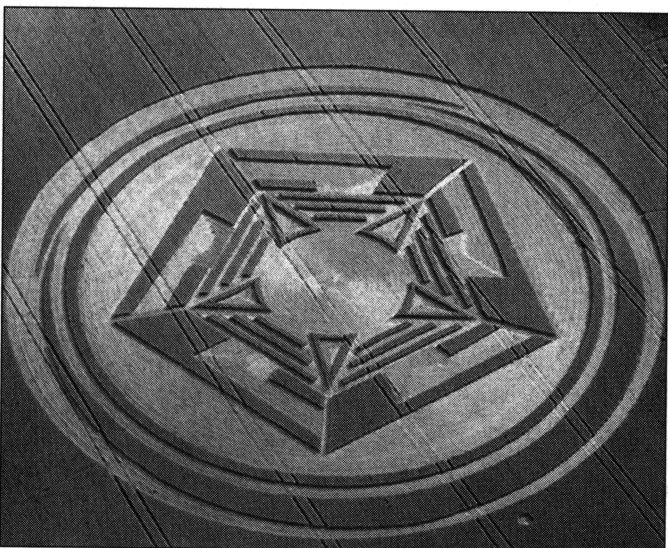
Etchilhampton Hill, near Devizes, Wiltshire. Reported 15th August.  
Image: Frank Laumen © 2008



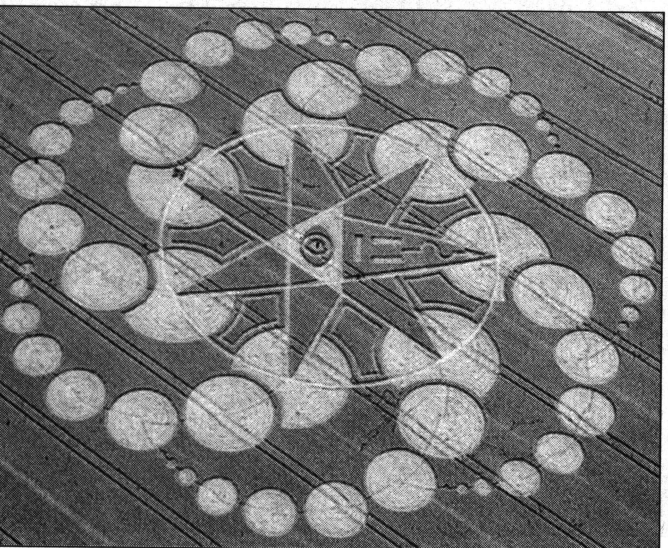
Below Milk Hill, near Alton Barnes, Wiltshire. Reported 8th August (08/08/08).  
Image: Lucy Pringle © 2008 www.lucypringle.co.uk



Cherhill, near Calne, Wiltshire. Reported 7th August.  
Image: John Montgomery © 2008



Barton Le Clay, Barton Springs, Bedfordshire. Reported 14th August.  
Image: www.cropcircleconnector.com © 2008



Eastfield, Alton Barnes, Wiltshire. Reported 25th August.  
Image: Philippe Ullens © 2008

second to the UK) effectively tied on numbers this year, both with their own mix of sublime and less sublime designs. Switzerland, which has been a growing presence in the circle tables, managed to produce six interesting formations this year, and even France, not usually a circle-oriented country, recorded five. Other nations to report a few circles included the USA, Canada, The Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic and even South Korea, which came up with a massive and breathtaking pattern to rival many of its English cousins.

Nonetheless, the UK is clearly the centre of circular activity and seems set to remain so.

Much speculation has been made over the years as to why the fields of the UK—and England in particular—have so much to say, while other countries remain muted. Theories range from the geological to the philosophical, with some believing that the UK is the "heart chakra" of the world and that its people are for some reason the most suited to receive this type of universal wake-up call and help take it out to the world.

Accusations of misplaced patriotism aside, with all the 2012 expectations growing it is certainly interesting that the United Kingdom will draw massive attention to itself in holding the Olympic Games in London that year, and even astrologically it seems that its profile will be raised hugely in what may be a momentous but difficult period for the nation (a highly interesting article on this subject, by astrologer Helen Sewell, can be found at [www.diagnosis2012.co.uk/astro.html](http://www.diagnosis2012.co.uk/astro.html)).

Perhaps, with all the mystifying and spectacular symbolism we have been seeing in the UK over the decades, the circle phenomenon is drawing our attention to the fact that, this time around in the ancient cycle, it is in places like the UK—such a prominent example of western culture—where the work has the most to be done. Whether this turns out to be a blessing or a curse remains to be seen, but, for many, the reception of so many awe-inspiring and life-changing gifts in the crops over the decades will have been a price worth paying. ∞

#### **About the Author:**

Andy Thomas is one of the world's leading crop circle researchers and is the author of five books on the phenomenon including *Vital Signs*, considered by many to be the definitive guide. His new book *The Truth Agenda: Making Sense of Global Deception and Unexplained Mysteries* is due out in late 2008. For more details, see <http://www.vitalsignspublishing.co.uk>. Andy Thomas can be contacted by email at [info@vitalsignspublishing.co.uk](mailto:info@vitalsignspublishing.co.uk).

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