

# LANGENBURG, 1974: A CLASSIC HISTORICAL CE2 AND A CROP CIRCLE PROGENITOR?

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One of the most contentious issues in crop-circle research is whether or not crop circles are a relatively new phenomenon, described only since about 1980, or are only the most recent variant of the familiar CE2/trace cases from historical ufology. Furthermore, it has been suggested that crop circles are a phenomenon largely confined to an area of southern England and that similar formations elsewhere in the world are not related to modern cerealogy.

With this in mind, we have undertaken a renewed interest in the examination of historical CE2/trace records in the ufological literature, in the hope of finding comparative or conflicting characteristics that may answer the question of the possible kinship of modern crop circles and historical physical traces, now termed UGMs (unusual ground markings).

According to a *Fact Sheet for Crop Circle Researchers* prepared by Ralph Noyes for the London-based Center for Crop Circle Studies, crop circles are flattened areas that occur:

- (a) within growing crops
- (b) during the season of growth
- (c) confined to the boundaries of a field
- (d) exhibit a gentleness of effect, with no macroscopic damage.

It is claimed that few reliable records of crop circles exist prior to 1980, when the phenomena came under systematic study by British cerealists, and that historical cases are "few in number, none [have] the complexity of the events of the late 1980s/early 1990s, and most are poorly evidenced." In short, there is "little supporting detail . . . that the crop circle phenomenon has a long and continuous history."

This position has unsettled many ufologists, who had investigated and gathered data on many physical-trace cases with strong apparent similarities to crop circles decades before the crop-circle phenomenon began. Ted Phillips' *Catalogue of Physical Traces*, published in July

1975, lists hundreds of reports of CE2s that involved the flattening of grass or crops after a UFO landing. In addition, the same catalogue contains many trace cases involving the discovery of flattened areas without any associated UFO activity. Before he left active ufology, Phillips' collection of trace cases was said to number over 4000.

Admittedly, many trace cases include such things as burn marks, "tripod marks," angel hair, and holes in the ground. These are the macroscopic effects that are not considered related to crop circles. (Yet we can wonder where such cases went during the British crop-circle wave, since these common UGMs are consistently reported worldwide.) Disregarding all UGMs other than the flattened circles, we still have many historical reports to take into account.

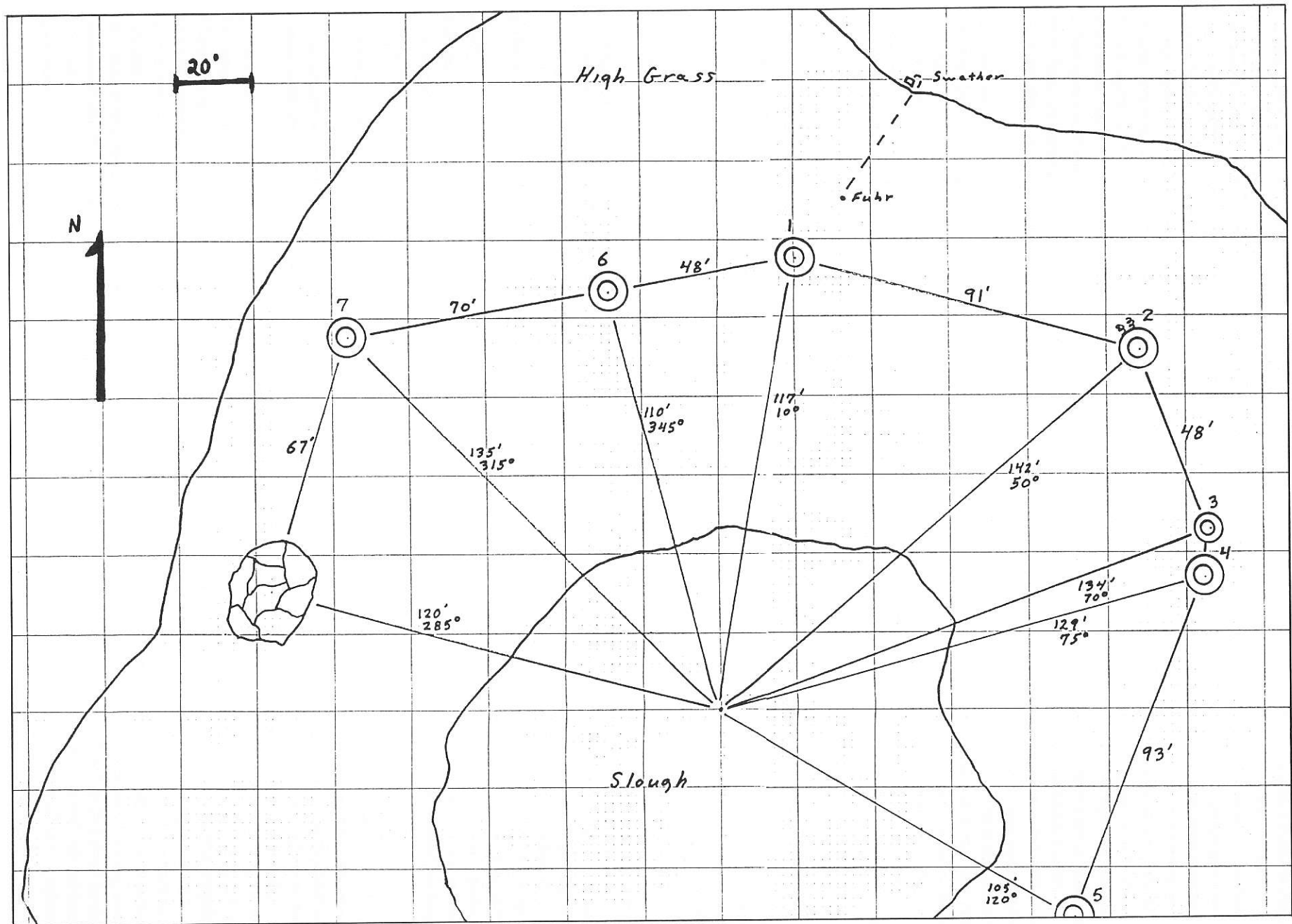
## LANGENBURG

On September 18, 1974, J. Allen Hynek received a newspaper clipping about the Langenburg incident from a correspondent in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He conferred with Ted Phillips, then began making inquiries in Saskatchewan about the case. Because it seemed like a good case, arrangements were made for Phillips to travel to Langenburg on September 21. Phillips interviewed the witness, Edwin Fuhr, as well as Fuhr's mother and the investigating RCMP officer, Ron Morier.

The summary of the event is as follows, from Phillips' report:

Shortly after 10 on Sunday morning, September 1, 1974, Edwin Fuhr, a 36-year-old farmer, began harvesting his rape crop in a field located some 1,500 ft. south of his home. After Fuhr had been swathing for nearly an hour he was closing on a slough located at the south end of the field. As he approached the slough he slowed the swather to a crawl, looked up to check his position relative to the grassy area and saw a metal dome about 50 ft. away, sitting in the grassy area between the slough and the crop area. At first he thought it was a metal goose blind. He stopped the swather and walked to within 15 ft. of the object.

As he approached the metal dome he noticed that the grass around the base was moving and the object itself was spinning at a high rate of speed. Fuhr became quite frightened and backed



away toward the swather which was still running at full throttle.

When he reached the swather he moved behind it and climbed up to seat. At this point he could see the spinning dome from a slightly higher elevation. As he glanced to the left he saw four more metal domes, all the same size and all were spinning. They seemed to be hovering 12 to 18 inches above ground level. The grass was moving at the base of each object. Two of the objects (3 & 4) were very near each other. The objects were arranged in a rough semi-circle around the slough. He could hear no sound as the swather was running.

As he watched he could see what appeared to be grooves of a slightly darker color on the spinning dome; no other surface details were seen. Fuhr tried to push the swather into gear but couldn't move the throttle or the steering wheel. He admits that he can't be sure if he was just weak from extreme fear or if the swather was not reacting properly to the touch.

After watching for what seemed to be several minutes, the objects suddenly burst into the air. The near object (1) left the ground first, followed by the remaining four (5 ascending last). The objects ascended in a step formation into the overcast sky. Suddenly, at about 200 ft. they stopped, a puff of dark gray "vapor" was seen coming from exhaust-like extensions located at the base of each of the objects. The vapor was about 6 ft. in length and was followed by a downward gust of wind which almost knocked Fuhr's hat off and flattened the rape that was standing in the immediate area. The ascent took only seconds, after reaching the 200 ft. altitude the objects formed a perfect line and remained stationary for perhaps 1 to 2 minutes. They suddenly ascended into the low cloud cover and disappeared. Fuhr remained on the swather for at least 2 minutes after they were gone.

Fuhr learned later that cattle in a nearby field were bellowing and had broken through a fence in four places at about the time of the sighting!

After the ascent, Fuhr went to the landing area and found five rings of depressed grass. The #2 site had what appeared to be probe areas where the grass was depressed in 3 ft. long areas leading away from the ring on the north side. The grass was swirled in a clockwise fashion at all the sites. The grass was not dead and had not been heated or burned.

The official explanation of the case was given to the media by archskeptic Allen MacNamara of the National Research Council of Canada and published across Canada on September 27, 1974. MacNamara, who admitted he had not investigated the case but had only read the RCMP reports, was quoted as saying that the rings on the Fuhr farm were "exactly the same as the 'fairy rings' which can vary in diameter from a few feet to a good fraction of a mile" (*Regina Leader-Post*, September 27, 1974).

Other experts were called upon to lend support to MacNamara's off-the-cuff explanation, including one mycologist who noted that after fairy-ring mushrooms kill plant growth in the center of an area, the grass "in the center grows back better than before . . . of course, none of this explains the five saucer-shaped objects seen by Mr. Fuhr except for the fact that . . . well, it seems some mushrooms produce a luminous glow."

As readers of the report narrative above will realize, fairy-ring mushrooms could not in any way be used to explain the Fuhr case. What was not added in the description of the fungi is that they do not form circles over a very short period of time, they do not form in cultivated crops, and they do not leave grass flattened in the manner found. Most ufologists with experience in trace cases are familiar with examples of crop pathology, and fairy rings do not account for the "saucer nest" variety of UGMs. Other crop growth effects such as lodging are more likely as possible explanations, but the fairy-ring explanation, used most often by uninformed debunkers, is not viable in most circumstances.

We can note, however, that the Fuhr circles were not found in the rape field, but in a soggy, unseeded area of a slough, left untouched because of its rocky, boggy soil. This might suggest that fairy rings could possibly form (in fact, mushrooms were found underneath some flattened grass), but the appearance was clearly unlike that of any fairy rings.

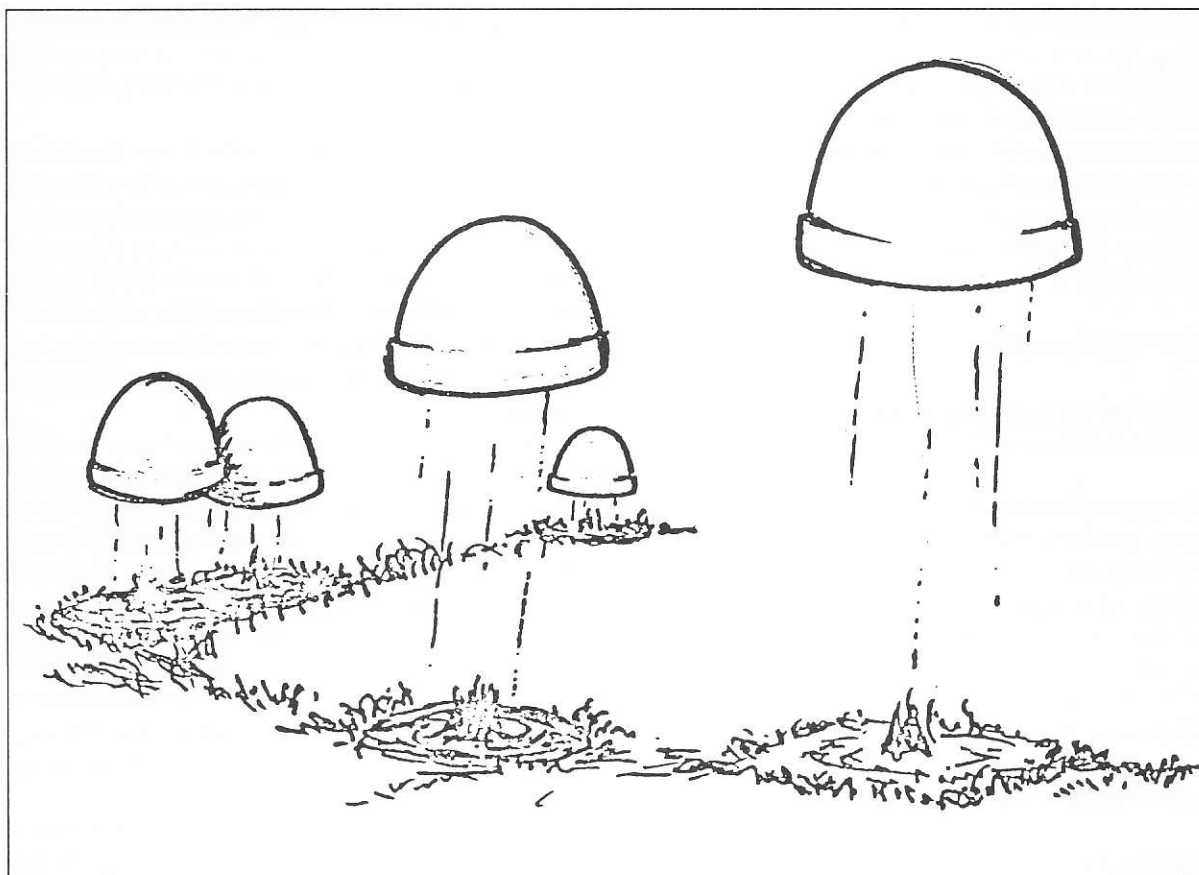
#### ADDITIONAL CIRCLES IN THE AREA

At this point the Langenburg circles have all the characteristics of British crop circles except one: they were made in grass, not "cultivated crops." But what is not generally known about the Langenburg case is that there were several more circles found in the immediate area and throughout the province at that time, and some of these were in cultivated crops.

On September 3 Fuhr found a new, sixth crop circle in formation with the original five. On September 15 a seventh circle was found, again in a formation resembling an arc with the other six circles.

But on September 14 three more rings were found on another farm about a mile east of the Fuhr site, this time in a cultivated crop. They were of comparative size to the Fuhr circles and had no associated UFO activity. Also on that day, a strange circle of wheat was found flattened and twisted counter-clockwise near Young, Saskatchewan, over 200 miles northwest of Langenburg. The diameter of that ring was 14 feet, and its width was 24 inches. Additional rings were found at sites near Peebles, Lake Lenore, and Dinsmore, Saskatchewan, over the next few weeks, all in wheat. Altogether no fewer than 15 circles were found (reported) at seven different sites in Saskatchewan.

What is curious is that the area around Langenburg appears to have an extensive history of both UFO cases and crop-circle-like UGMs (perhaps British cerealists should consider travelling to Canada on crop-circle expeditions to visit this prolific location). In the fall of 1967, farmers near Willen, Manitoba, about 50 miles southeast of Langenburg, found several rings while swathing their wheat field. On September 4, 1977, not far away near Rosburn, Manitoba, a farmer came upon as many as 25 circles as he was swathing his wheat field. UFOs were not associated with either of these discoveries.



*Ascent of the five objects in step formation*

## PHILLIPS' CONCLUSIONS

The discussion of the Langenburg evidence by CUFOS' investigator echoes the remarks by cerealogists today, nearly 20 years later. He wrote:

It would be impossible to imagine the creation, by nature, of even one of the Langenburg rings. As indicated by measurements taken at the site, the rings are almost perfectly circular. When one takes into consideration that we are dealing with not one, but *seven* such areas [at the Fuhr site], a natural cause seems rather far removed. One must remember that the sites were all swirled in the same clockwise pattern, all were of very nearly the same dimensions and all had the same type of undisturbed central section.

Regarding the hoax theory, he had this to say:

The perpetration of such a hoax would have involved a great deal of time. Fuhr, like all the farmers in the area, depends on his crops for income. I cannot believe that he would have taken the necessary time during harvest to create even one ring, certainly not seven. The last thing a farmer wants at harvest time is several thousand people walking through his crops and that is exactly what he had. He did not contact the news media and was even hesitant to relate the event to his own family. The RCMP was satisfied that no device had been driven or rolled into the area as there were no marks in the high grass other than the rings.

## THE EXPLANATIONS

There would be three explanations for the Langenburg case, given modern cerealogical thought. One is hoax, which is considered unlikely because no marks indicate access to the remote site and because Fuhr did not seek publicity and was unwilling to report his experience even to his own family or close friends.

The UFO theory is generally advocated in this type of experience because of the observation of physical craft. Indeed, taken at face value, Fuhr's story seems clearly to indicate that extraordinary vehicles created the markings in the field.

A different interpretation of the same observation is advocated by Terence Meaden, who is the proponent of the plasma-vortex theory of crop-circle formation. Recently Meaden has extended his theory to allow observations of apparently physical flying craft (UFOs) creating landing traces as proof that ionized plasmas may *seem* to be solid objects. Since Meaden has supported the contention that an apparently physical "flying saucer" observed in the Soviet Union in 1990 (and which left a circular disturbed area on a frozen lake) was possible proof of a plasma vortex, it is probable that the Langenburg case might be considered as being created by the same mechanism. But Fuhr approached to within 15 feet of one of the UFOs, and a good case could be made that at that distance it would have been possible to



distinguish a plasma from a physical structure. (It should be noted that the plasma-vortex theory of crop circle formation and UFO observations is by no means embraced by either the ufology community or conventional scientific establishment, and it may be only another example of misapplied science towards the explanation of unusual phenomena in much the same manner as the tectonic strain theory [TST] of anomalous and paranormal phenomena proposed by Michael Persinger.)

## PHILLIPS' TRACE CASES

In his report on the Langenburg case, Ted Phillips noted that he had at that time (1974):

- 756 reports of observations of unidentified flying objects involving physical traces.
- 12% involved landing sites described as rings.
- 10% [have] a depressed ring surface.
- 22% [had] ring diameters between eight and twelve feet.
- 20% [had] ring width between one and two feet.
- 18% [had a] disc-shaped object seen at [the] site.

He noted about Langenburg in particular:

The Langenburg event is almost totally unique in one respect—the total landing-trace cases, only one other report involves the landing of more than two UFOs at a given site. That one report took place near Trancas, Argentina, on October 21, 1963, with the landing of six UFOs.

## RECENT STUDIES OF THE LANGENBURG CASE

In the intervening years between 1974 and the present, several UFO and physical-trace reports have originated in the Langenburg area. These have been duly recorded by civilian groups such as UFOFORUM (Ufology Research of Manitoba) and government/military personnel such as the RCMP and NRC.

In June 1991 John Timmerman of CUFOS brought the CUFOS traveling UFO exhibit to a mall in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, not far from Langenburg. There Chris Rutkowski and Jeff Harland of UFOFORUM assisted him with the display and in the interviewing of witnesses who came forward as a result of the display. Arrangements were made for Edwin Fuhr to come to the mall to meet with the three ufologists. An extensive interview resulted, reviewing the case and adding some possible new information.

First of all, Fuhr now believes that the objects were not quite featureless; he claims that he had the impression of “something on the outside like rivets of some kind, but you couldn't tell if there was a window in it or not.”

Second, Fuhr claimed that the sixth circle found was partly on top of a large rock. He said that the “scientists dug the rock out” and took it away. There is no record of such a rock in any other account, and Phillips' notes do not

include anything about a rock. Since thousands of people visited the Fuhr site, however, any one of them could have described him or herself as a scientist and taken the rock away.

A significant comment by Fuhr during this interview related to another previously unreported effect. He said that a Russell, Manitoba, man who had apparently worked at a nuclear-research institute brought a geiger counter to the Fuhr site during the 1980s. Fuhr was told that the slough was indeed radioactive. In addition, Fuhr related that “undercover RCMP” visited the site with him and that he was shown that radioactivity was detected on their own geiger counters.

This issue of radioactivity seemed easy to clear up. Timmerman asked Fuhr if he could lead the three back to the site to get more soil samples. He agreed, but there was a problem; he said he'd “have to go to the RCMP to get a release for it.” It seemed that others had tried to take samples away but were somehow blocked from doing so by the RCMP. Fuhr went on to note that he had “signed papers that no soil can be released unless they [the RCMP] release it.” Fuhr stated that the order to prevent soil material from leaving the site was written by Constable Morier, the original investigating officer from whom Phillips had received outstanding cooperation.

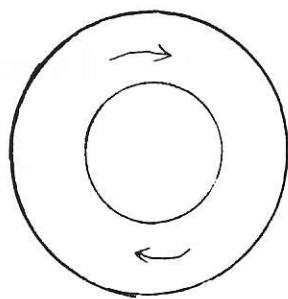
Preliminary inquiries into this strange situation have not been fruitful. Researchers are awaiting an official statement from the local RCMP. Perhaps tests for residual radioactivity in the soil at the Fuhr site can be obtained eventually to verify or contest such claims.

Finally, after considerable review of his memories regarding the incident, Fuhr believes that he experienced some “missing time.” From his original interview by Phillips in 1974:

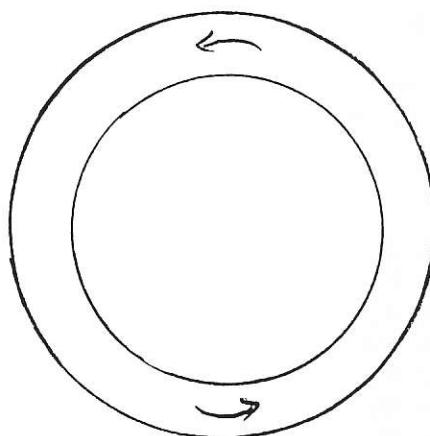
- P:** From the very first observation until they disappeared into the clouds, how long did you see them?
- F:** The most it could have been was 15 to 20 minutes. It could have lasted more or less, I can't be sure.
- P:** What would have been the shortest time?
- F:** 10 minutes, maybe. I just don't know. I don't know how long I sat in the swather. I can't remember that part. After it was over I looked at my watch. It was 15 after 11. When I first saw them I didn't look at my watch. It could have been around 10:30, I just don't know. I knew I had went out about 9:30 . . . . How long I watched them I don't know. I do know that I stood there. My feet wouldn't move for two minutes. How long I was in the swather I don't know. I was like, I guess, in shock. I just kept staring at those things. I couldn't take my eyes off them. . . .

Later in the interview:

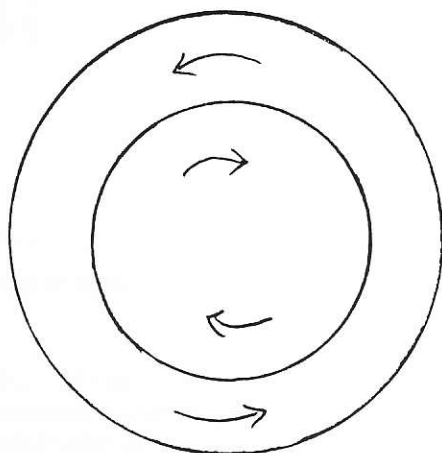
- P:** After the objects left, you waited two minutes. Then what did you do?
- F:** After I looked at the marks I continued to swath for



Typical Fuhr site circle



Typical Rossburn site circle



Typical Willen site circle

(all approximately to scale)  
 (arrows indicate direction of swirl)

# COMPARATIVE SIZES OF CROP CIRCLES DISCUSSED IN THE TEXT

UGM	N-S DIAM.	E-W DIAM.	N-S RING WIDTH	E-W RING WIDTH
FUHR #1	11.0	11.0	2.6	2.7
FUHR #2	11.0	10.3	2.5	2.1
FUHR #3	8.0	8.0	2.0	2.0
FUHR #4	10.0	10.0	2.3	2.3
FUHR #5	11.0	10.8	2.5	2.9
FUHR #6	INDISTINCT			
FUHR #7	10.3	9.8	2.4	2.0
WILLEN #1	13.0	13.0	2.6	2.6
WILLEN #2	13.0	13.0	2.6	2.6
WILLEN #3	13.0	13.0	2.6	2.6
WILLEN #4	13.0	13.0	2.6	2.6
WILLEN #5	13.0	13.0	2.6	2.6
WILLEN #6	6.0	6.0	1.5	1.5
HAVERSTOCK #1	INDISTINCT			
HAVERSTOCK #2	8.1	8.0	2.0	2.0
HAVERSTOCK #3	10.0	9.0	2.1	1.6
YOUNG	14.0	14.0	2.0	2.0
PEEBLES	6.0	6.0	1.5	1.5
ROSSBURN #1	8.0	8.0	2.0	2.0
ROSSBURN #2	8.0	8.0	2.0	2.0
ROSSBURN #3A	16.0	16.0	2.5	2.5
ROSSBURN #3B	16.0	16.0	2.5	2.5
ROSSBURN #4	16.0	16.0	2.0	2.0
ROSSBURN #5	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
ROSSBURN #6	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
ROSSBURN #7	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
ROSSBURN #8	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
ROSSBURN #9	10.0	8.0	2.5	2.0

(ALL DIMENSIONS ARE GIVEN IN FEET)

quite a while because I didn't know how to tell those guys at home. That was my problem. When I got home they asked me, "What's the matter?" I was all pale in the face. I didn't say nothing. I washed and tried to eat and I was trying to think how I could tell them about this thing. I went in for lunch about 12:30.

(But in 1991, during the interview with Timmerman and others, Fuhr stated that he had sat on the swather a much longer time and did not arrive home until about 2:00. He estimated the time he has spent watching while sitting on the swather was "about an hour and a half." He claimed that his relatives had been waiting a long time for him to come home.)

Fuhr's mother noted his state of mind in a separate interview:

I was just here from church when Edwin came in . . . . He acted altogether different. He was sorta . . . worked up, he was so worked up that he could hardly eat dinner . . . . He said, "I don't want nothing, I'm not really hungry" . . . . I said, "Why?" . . . . and he said, "I saw something this morning" . . . . and his dad was sitting there and said, "What do you mean you saw something?" . . . . and Edwin said, "Oh, I can't even describe it to you" . . . . His dad went out with him to look at the marks, and Edwin came back pale as a ghost and said, "What next is going to happen?"

Later, RCMP Constable Morier learned of the incident through Fuhr's brother-in-law. When he went there the next morning to interview Edwin Fuhr, he noted, "I could see that he was still, it appeared to me, to be quite shaken, you know, about this whole thing. He was jumpy, and you could see just by looking at the guy that he had been scared."

In Morier's opinion Edwin Fuhr was reliable and not prone to exaggeration. Morier believed Fuhr's story and noted in his official RCMP report, "The witness... has been known by a member of this detachment for a period of four years, and during this time he has not been known to materialize any such stories. He is a responsible person and his information is considered reliable."

In 1991, Fuhr commented that he believed "something" might have happened to him while he was observing the objects, but he could not recall any details. There did seem to be some discrepancies in the chronology of events, so Fuhr was asked:

**R:** Did anyone ever suggest that you had some missing time and that there is more to what happened?

**F:** Some fellows did and that I should go under hypnosis, and I won't go under hypnosis.

**T:** Do you have some special reason for not doing that?

**F:** I got that from professionals. They told me not to.

Pressed for details, Fuhr would only say that among the many, many people who had visited him since his experience, some "UFO experts" had told him not to undergo hypnosis. Reassurances of controlled clinical tests performed under the supervision of registered psychologists (who have worked with UFOFORUM on several occasions) did nothing to change his mind.

Clearly the case is becoming embellished after years of poking around by dozens of "experts." Today Fuhr relates stories of "investigators" loading their station wagons full of soil from the site and of persons claiming to be "from the government" doing seemingly redundant tests and measurements.

During the 1989 wave of UFO sightings in Canada, Fuhr was one of many Langenburg-area residents to have witnessed more UFOs, mostly nocturnal lights. He is regarded as something of a local celebrity, though he has yet to actively seek any publicity. He remains a meek yet stubborn individual who is showing signs of weariness from coping with the continuing interest in his experience nearly 20 years ago.

## FINAL COMMENTS

What really happened to Edwin Fuhr in 1974? On the surface it would appear that he had a chance or deliberate encounter with five small, bowl-shaped flying saucers, probably remote-control drones. But new theories in ufology and cerealogy may lead to other interpretations.

Vortex theorists can use the case to bolster their belief that Fuhr observed five spinning plasma vortices, appear-

ing to be solid and metallic but made only of ionized air.

TST proponents can suggest that Fuhr was inside an area teeming with electromagnetic energy created deep underground by stresses within the earth's strata. (Indeed, the Langenburg area does experience occasional earthquakes.) Either Fuhr observed ionized air created by such energy release at the earth's surface, or his temporal lobes were affected by this energy and so he hallucinated his experience. The creation of the depressed grass circles was only an incidental side effect of the released energy.

Skeptics will use Fuhr's bewildering testimony as evidence that he made up the whole story and produced the circles himself for some personal gains, perhaps to impress his family.

What should be obvious from the Fuhr case is that cerealogy is more related to ufology than is generally assumed. Moreover, it does appear that historical precedents for crop circles beyond Britain do exist, and cerealogists might do well to consider these cases when formulating theories concerning crop circle creation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank CUFOS for its assistance in research of this case. In particular, appreciation is conveyed to Ted Phillips for his detailed investigation of the Langenburg case. Thanks also to UFOFORUM associates Victor Wei, Brian James, Jeff Harland, and Gary Lanham (who is now in Birmingham, England). Finally, we would like to thank Edwin Fuhr, who has been continually cooperative with researchers through the decades since his experience. ♦

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## EDITORIAL—continued from page 3

investigation of claims of the paranormal. Some of the handful of parapsychology laboratories have closed down for lack of funds—a fact that, when announced, inspired delighted applause at a recent CSICOP gathering, according to George Hansen, author of the splendid "CSICOP and the Skeptics: An Overview," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (January 1992).

One did not have to be a psychic to predict that eventually CSICOP would get into serious legal trouble, given the extravagance and recklessness of its rhetoric, about which even CSICOP Fellow and founder Ray Hyman—though no other significant figure within the leadership—has complained on occasion. Hyman once remarked to me on a "frightening fundamentalism" he had seen in the debunking ranks. Until its recent crisis CSICOP evinced little interest in moderation in speech or print. The one exception involved the quick squelching of a nobody who circulated a letter which, purporting to speak in CSICOP's name, sought to organize those who wanted to "get dirty"

*continued on page 18*