



Mention of space brings me to another phenomenon, crop circles. Wiltshire, where I now live has been the centre of the universe as far as crop watchers have been concerned for several years. The complexity of the designs and their apparent appearance out of nowhere fuelled early speculation that these were messages from outer space. Associations and societies sprung up all over the world to investigate and study the formations and theories were presented as "facts" to a sceptical audience. Here is one wacky example from the teachings of Buddha Maitreya:

"What you see as a mystery about crop circles, in the Himalayas is nothing more than psychic phenomenon manifested by the transcendental communication that takes place when an Avatar appears. (and if) You are probably wondering what is an Avatar - Buddha according to Tibetan beliefs has had thousands of incarnations since prehistoric times. These are all the same person who comes and expresses Avatar (Heavenly Angelic Forms of Communication) these communications are wrapped in mysteries once the Avatar cycle has passed and they are known as religions."

It's probably safer for me to refrain from comment and simply say that in Wiltshire at least, the secret is now well and truly out of the closet. Hoaxers have now confessed to their nocturnal activities and some have even been commissioned to produce specific designs for advertising purposes. The photograph top left was produced for Mitsubishi to launch their European car the "Space Star". Even so many of the recent appearances have still made it into the mainstream press gaining favourable coverage on television including West Country Local News and BBC1's Country File. And in August 1999 The Daily Mail actually commissioned one piece of Art for an article that brought the following response from one group of devotees:

"TRULY LAME ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT CROP CIRCLES AS MAN MADE: Remember that 1) the farmer not only agreed to this, but he assisted, and 2) there was a full moon and no time constraint - they could take 6 hours. Most crop circles are made with no permission, and in often less than ten minutes, some in one minute, and in full darkness or whatever. Things humans cannot do." It would seem that the debate continues.

But Crop Circles are not the only hoax to have been presented as fact. In 1971 the head of the Philippine agency for national minorities announced to the world that a tribe of stone age people, never exposed to modern civilisation, had been discovered in the jungle. Wearing orchid-leaf loincloths, the Tasaday, as they were called, lived in caves, subsisting on grubs, small aquatic life and wild fruit and vegetables. They did not farm, had no method for keeping time, used no weapons and had no word for war. The news excited scientists and a helicopter platform was built in the rainforest to help ferry in observers. National Geographic devoted a cover story to the Tasaday and during the crest of publicity in 1972, President Marcos declared about 19,000 hectares reserved for the Tasadays and subsequently imposed martial law on the Philippines. Under such political conditions, the Tasaday story was carefully orchestrated and diverse criticisms on their authenticity was blacked out or ignored. No one was given time to really do an exhaustive and scientific study on the Tasaday. Fifteen years later, after the Marcos regime had been ousted, a Swiss journalist revisited these mysterious people. He was stunned to find them living in huts dressed in T-shirts and shorts. They told him they'd been instructed by a government official to pretend to be cavemen in order to raise financial assistance for the region.

So, what new "facts" have you learnt recently?



Key:
 Strategically positioned censors panel.

100 Aliens attended an intergalactic meeting.

- 73 had two heads
- 28 had three eyes
- 21 had four arms
- 12 had two heads and three eyes
- 9 had three eyes and four arms
- 8 had two heads and four arms
- 3 had all these unusual features



weird
or WHAt?

How many had none of these unusual features?
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