

THE WHIPPINGHAM GROUND EFFECTS

WAS THE DAMAGE TO CROPS CAUSED BY A UFO?

By **LEONARD G. CRAMP**

During the summer of 1967 the flight of an unusual aerial object was observed by schoolboys in England's South Coast holiday island, the Isle of Wight. Our contributor, well known for his two books, *Space, Gravity and the Flying Saucer* and *Piece for a Jigsaw*, has had many contributions in the pages of **FLYING SAUCER REVIEW**, including one in our very first issue in January 1955. The investigation which he and his friends made of this 1967 incident was so meticulous that we are delighted to present the report for our readers.

AT a quarter to nine on a fine, cloudless morning last year (July 10, 1967), two pupils of the Whippingham Primary School, near Newport, Isle of Wight, were lining up with their fellows to enter school when a stationary object in the northern sky caught the attention of one of the boys. The object was "milky-white" and "cloud-like" and looked like a disc with a bi-convex section. It may or may not be significant that immediately prior to the sighting the boy's eye had been attracted by falling ash, drifting in a westerly direction across the sky. Apparently ash does occasionally drift across to the school from a works situated farther to the west, but then the ash is carried eastwards by a westerly wind. On the morning in question there was no wind, and "there seemed to be silvery sparks around the large pieces of ash". It was while looking at this that the UFO was first seen hovering near the distant B.H.C. test tank research establishment.

When the boys came out into the playground at 1030, the boy who had spotted the original object looked in the direction in which he had first seen it at 0845, but saw nothing. Then his companion spotted the same (or a similar) object further to the west. About a dozen boys watched as the UFO moved in a westerly direction. Its size was estimated to be "larger than a bus". During this time the UFO was descending and was "fluttering down like something out of control". This motion continued until the UFO was at approximately 2 degrees elevation; then it seemed to "correct itself" and began to climb. The westerly traverse between the first and second sightings was calculated to be approximately 30 degrees. The UFO was then lost to view behind a line of trees.

On his way home that evening on top of a bus, one witness saw marks in the barley field (Site A) which is bounded by the Newport-East Cowes road and adjoins the school playground.

Investigations of this site revealed large areas (up to 6 yds. wide) of damage, in the form of depressed and flattened stalks, which made an almost completely circular pattern. The damage had a very mechanical appearance in a vortex pattern, sometimes clockwise and sometimes anti-clockwise, but predominantly clockwise. The centres of some of the vortices had tufts with broken stalks and others had nothing—obviously

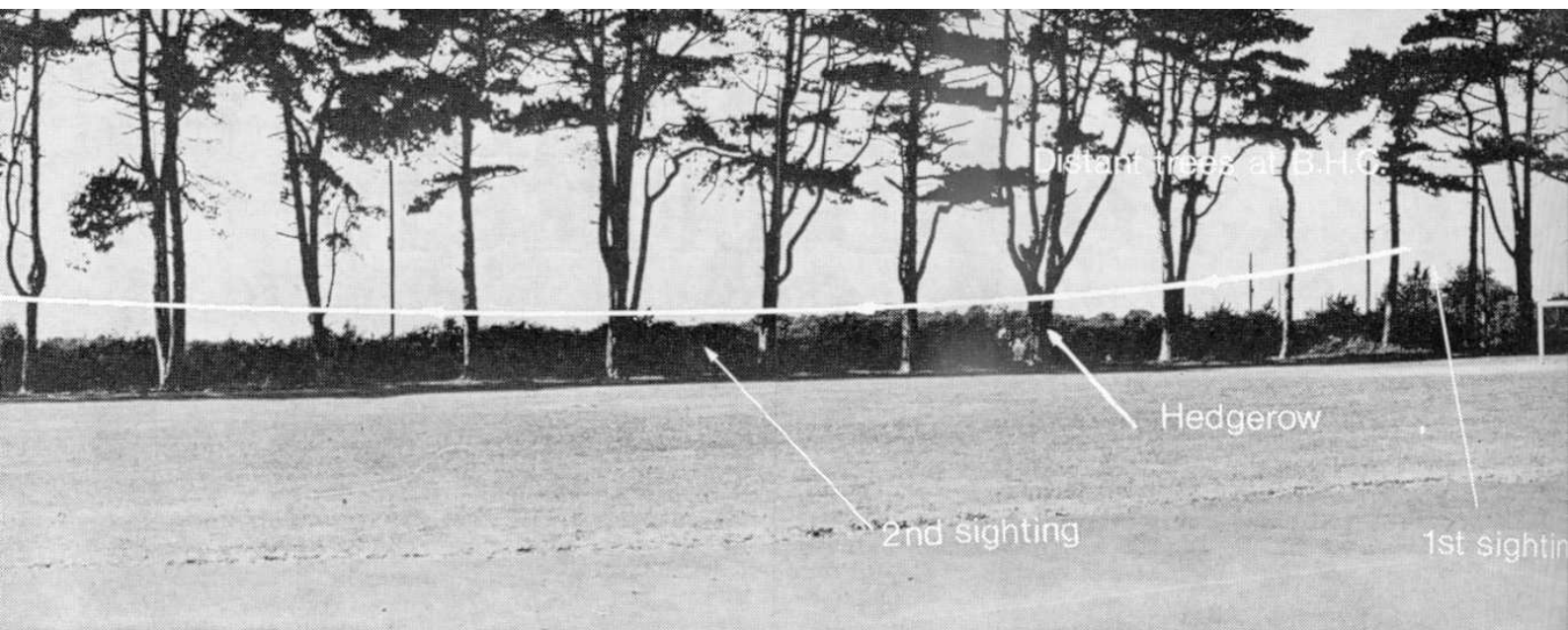
the roots and stalks had disappeared completely. In these areas the heads of corn had been denuded and looked (to quote one farmer) "as if they had been thrashed". From the rim of several of these vortices there were "lanes", about 1ft. in width, which began in the barley that had been pressed down outwardly. These lanes tapered to an end in the midst of untouched barley.

At first the investigators presumed that the damage was restricted to the area near the school, but further investigation revealed that the marks in the Site "A" field continued, in a diminishing pattern, in a northerly direction parallel to and 12 yds. from the hedge lining the Cowes-Newport road. The marks on the Northern and Western boundaries of Site "A" were discovered at a later date when a study was made of aerial photographs.

The barley field denoted as Site "B" has a piggery on its boundary, and the damage here was discovered to be in the form of a continuous trough some 3 to 4 yds. in width and 88 yds. in length. The trough runs close to—and parallel with—the access path to the piggery. There is a strong resemblance to the general characteristics at Site "A". The undamaged heads of corn on the northern side of the trough were in a uniform line towards the east, as though the barley had been swept by a broad broom. The damage discovered on this site corresponds exactly to the 30-degree traverse indicated by the boys. The westerly end of the trough thins out and skirts round a small derelict shed. This thinning out coincides with the point at which the object was said to have been climbing. This completely supports the suggestion that, if an aerial object produces effects on the ground because it is at a low altitude, then those effects must diminish as the object gains height.

In the "eye" of one of the whorls a 6in. cube section of concrete, weighing a few pounds, was found resting on some of the stalks but covered by top stalks. Although the investigators tried to identify the piece with others on a nearby disused gun-site, they could not satisfy themselves that it had come from there, although this is the likeliest possibility.

A further significant point is that the body of a wood-pigeon had been seen at the precise point at which the witnesses stated the object was first seen hovering. This



View from school showing UFO flight path, which, it is emphasised, was beyond the line of trees

has a special bearing on the discovery of pigeon feathers, which were later found distributed along the damaged areas.

The investigation continued into Site "C", which is a barley field similar to Site "A". The damage here had the same general characteristics as in Site "A"—i.e. intermittent with central tufts and occasional "lanes" which led off towards the southern hedgerow. As with Site "B", the undamaged heads of corn were regimented towards the east.

Damage on sites D, G, H, I and J (all barley fields) followed the general pattern of Site "A", while Site "E" had characteristics of both Sites "A" and "B"—i.e. intermittent and trough-like damage.

Several stones were found in the damage at Site "C",

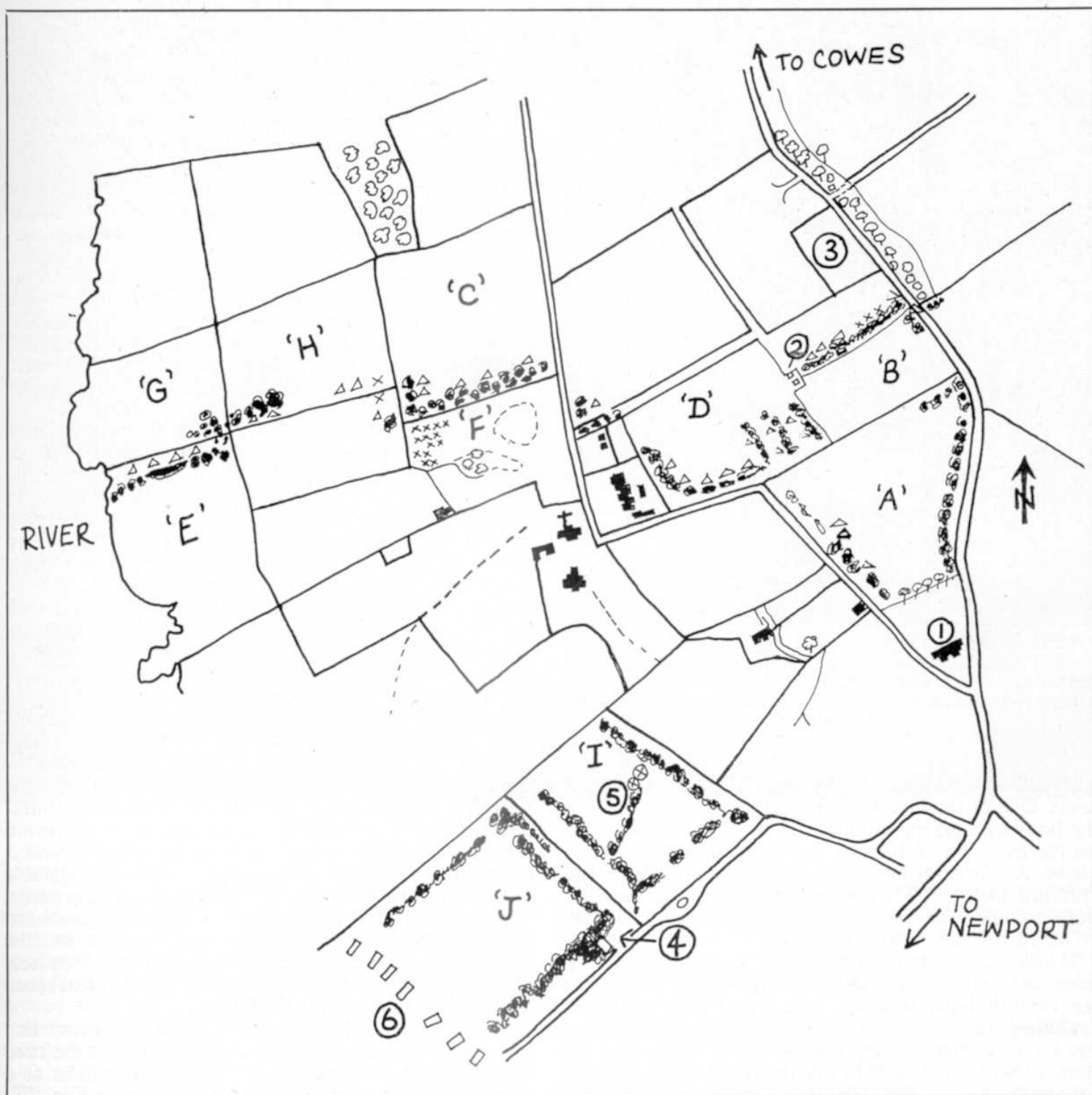
lying in a similar position to the piece of concrete at Site "B".

Site "E", which is grassland, had large numbers of stones (from several ounces to a few pounds) which were deposited on top of the grass over a wide area. Many of these stones could not have been in these positions for long, since the grass underneath was still quite green.

At Site "C" the torn remains of a pigeon's wing were found, feathers being distributed and co-mingled with the rotary lay of the damaged barley. One of these feathers was found tightly wedged between a piece of stone and other foreign matter. It was this discovery that caused the investigators to back-track over sites A, B, C and D, where more feathers were found,

The damage continuing in Site 'A' towards the distant B.H.C. Test Tanks





Sketch-map of the fields around Whippingham, Isle of Wight.

Key: 1. The School 2. The piggery 3. British Hovercraft Corporation test tanks
4. Derelict harvester 5. H.T. poles 6. Caravan site

Note: With the exception of 'F,' the lettered "sites," and also that lying between 'H' and 'F,' were all barley fields. It was in these that the damage was discovered. In the sketch, areas of damage are marked by the dark, curly pattern, and should not be confused with the conventional signs for trees elsewhere. The positions of the stones are denoted by crosses in sites 'B' and 'F,' and the approximate areas where pigeon feathers were found are indicated by small triangles.

Our cover illustration shows the deep scar on Site 'B' looking along the UFO flight path. The small hut around which the marks meander can be clearly seen. Note also the rotary nature of the damage



Typical rotary damage on Site 'C' in which the last remains of the little wood pigeon was found. This photo shows one wing, the many other feathers are camouflaged among the barley. Here again the broken and thrusted down effect is most evident

constituting a continuous trail throughout the damaged areas. One of the investigators then remembered seeing the body of a pigeon lying in the Newport-Cowes road on the morning of July 10, in the position referred to above. As the body had been only a few yards from the entrance to Site "B", this area was searched, but the body could not be found. Some feathers were, however, collected for later analysis.

When the extent of the damage to their fields had been seen by the local farmers, they could not accept the idea that the weather, which had been very fine preceding the discovery of the damage, could have caused such effects. They agreed, individually, that the damage was too localised to be the result of any natural causes known to them, and one farmer said "it looks as though a mad thing has gone through there."

Could the damage have been caused by straying cattle? This question was answered when the team was shown an adjoining field where cows had strayed. There was no similarity at all between the two effects. Moreover, the damage at Site "A" was intermittent and had no interconnecting "lanes" between the larger areas of damage.

Perhaps, then, shorter-legged animals—e.g. dogs, pigs, etc.—might have caused the damage? This possibility was discarded when one of the farmers came through his fields followed by two Labrador dogs (one of which was a fully-grown dog and the other a few-months-old puppy). The dogs gambolled through the

barley with an abandon that worried the non-farming team. However, the farmer was completely unconcerned, for the stalks of barley resumed their original state as soon as the dogs had moved farther into the field. Though the puppy twisted himself round and round in the barley, there were no traces left of his passage and the team was therefore able to discount one more theory of natural causes.

There remained the possibility that freak winds, sufficient to cause a minor whirlwind or "back-draught" effects, could have caused the damage, and the opinion of a professional meteorologist was sought. He stated that this would have been impossible. This opinion is considered to be fully borne out by the regimented pattern of the damage (absolutely parallel to hedgerows and unhedged paths, precise right-angled turns, the skirting of a dilapidated and overgrown hut etc.), which was most unlikely to have been caused by some inanimate source.

Much of the damage coincided with the spot over which the witnesses claimed to have seen the UFO. It might, however, be argued that all the witnesses saw was the "eye" of a moving whirlwind taking dust and debris along with it. If this was so, then such a whirlwind seen at that range must have caused considerably more noise (one authority instances a noise like an express train) than the silence which attended the sighting.

It must be pointed out that the rotary pattern left in the barley was consistent with the clockwise rotation of whirlwinds in the Northern hemisphere, but in a number of cases the rotation was counter-clockwise and the vortices alternated everywhere.

Although the damage was spread over a considerable area of the countryside, the width was restricted within about 1 to 6 yds. Even at the narrowest widths, the damage had been violent—the stalks having been broken and flattened, heads denuded and some central tufts of corn completely removed. Any whirlwind capable of such havoc must not only have been attended by terrific noise but must have caused considerable atmospheric disturbance over a radius of many yards. The effects of such a disturbance would have tended to diminish towards the perimeter of the vortex, but the barley was uniformly depressed and was very localised, e.g. as though a large plate had been spun at great speed while being pressed into the barley.

In several places large stones (alien to the surrounding earth) were found, and in one particular spot the cube of concrete mentioned earlier, similar to pieces at a disused gun-site a quarter of a mile away. At Site "F", which was a freshly sown meadow, numbers of large stones were distributed over a considerable area. The crushed and yellowed state of the grass under these stones indicated that the depositing must have taken place when the grass was nearing maturity.

Other materials, such as old—or prematurely aged—bones, torn paper, etc., were also found on top of and sandwiched between layers of flattened barley. These finds were significant in that they were almost entirely restricted to the areas of damage and bore the same signs of dehydration as the surrounding barley, which supports the view that they must have been deposited there during the action of the damage.

Before the UFO sighting had been reported to the



Aerial view of Site 'A' looking S.W. showing school boundary

investigators, one of the team had noticed a dead wood-pigeon at the side of the road (as mentioned earlier), but this had not been remembered until the investigation revealed feathers, etc., in the areas of damage. An obvious inference would be that the feathers found later must have come from the same bird, but this cannot be proved as a fact. At Site "C" a wing and over fifty feathers were found. These were distributed in layers and showed the same spiral effects as the smashed barley—i.e. each layer of convolute barley had to be lifted to expose further feathers.

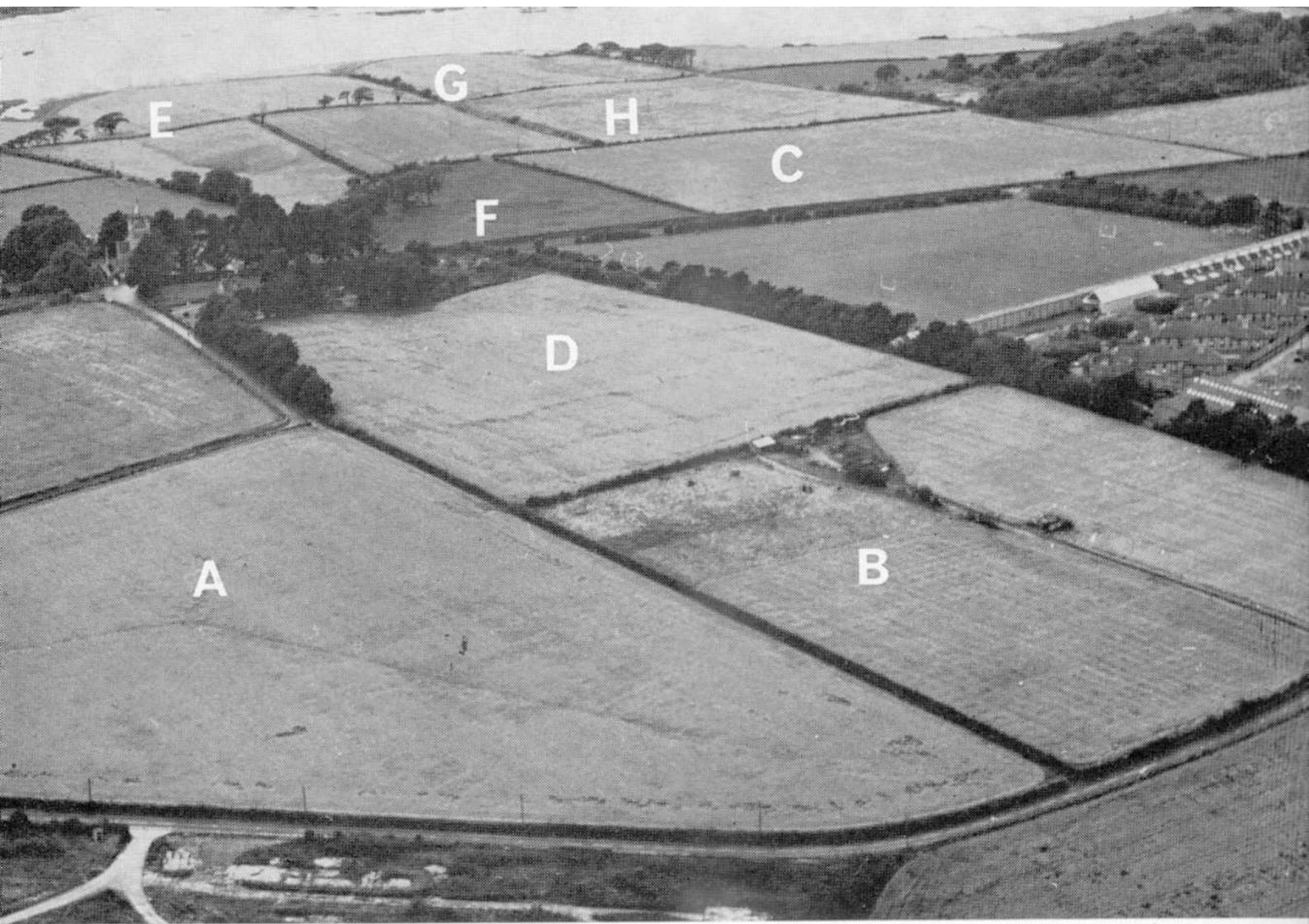
As mentioned earlier, the discovery of the feathers caused the team to back-track over the other sites and finally to the road (since this was a week or two later, the pigeon's carcass had disappeared). It was then realised that the spot where the dead pigeon had been coincided exactly with the position of the UFO at the first sighting. As more damage was found in fields right down to the river Medina, the team looked for any similar signs and soon realised that the pattern was being maintained. Feathers were found—but usually only after careful examination of the lower layers of barley—often in profusion over quite a few yards, then there would be a total lack so that it appeared as if the trail had ended, but in fact the trail continued to the

limit of the investigation.

Later analysis by a competent ornithologist revealed that all of the 130 feathers were identifiable as being those of a young wood-pigeon. Significantly, none of the feathers was duplicated. The ornithologist was therefore confident that all the feathers had come from the same bird.

The magnitude of the force exerted by the cause of the damage was emphasised by the discovery of small feathers firmly sandwiched between a stone and another substance, which had the appearance of baked clay, and other feathers which were co-mingled with and even pierced on stalks of the barley. Though these effects can equally be attributed to a whirlwind type of phenomenon, the magnitude of this force was clearly out of all proportion to the restricted nature of the damage and the deliberately controlled path taken. For this reason, neither a whirlwind nor a plasma-type (ball-lightning) phenomenon can satisfactorily explain the cause of the damage.

The investigation was concluded at Site "E" on the easterly bank of the river Medina. At this point it was discovered that the main trough in the barley thinned out, this being consistent with the gentle fall of the land towards the banks of the river (and the thing which



Aerial view looking towards the River Medina

caused the trough keeping at constant level flight?). Field-glasses revealed further marks in a barley field on the opposite, western, side of the river and these also began some way up the bank, as on the eastern side, curving slightly towards the west (sketch map). Owing to the nearness of the harvest, these marks were not investigated.

There would appear to be a possible corroboration of the UFO sighting on July 10, for, some time after the above investigation was concluded, a report was received of a UFO sighting that same week in July. Again, the witness was a young lad, but this sighting was made several miles away at Carisbrooke Grammar School situated on the opposite side of the river to the Whippingham School.

At the time in July, this youngster told his parents of what he claimed to have seen while playing cricket. They admitted they treated the story very lightly. His account was much the same, the UFO appearing about half-an-inch at arm's length, low down over the trees of Parkhurst Forest and flying in a westerly direction. He claimed he saw something shiny on the disc that looked like portholes.

This report is particularly interesting, for one morning while going to work last July one of the investigators of the Whippingham case spotted some marks in a barley field near Parkhurst Forest. Not being able to link them with the Whippingham case, he had mentioned it to the other members of the team and then dismissed it from his mind. But the remarkable thing is that a line bisecting the end of the barley damage on Site "E" on the eastern bank of the river with the recommencement of that line in the field on the western side, also passes right over Parkhurst Forest—and over the adjacent barley field, where those same marks were seen that early July morning!

Here we have an entirely separate sighting of a UFO, reported at the time (last July), but not revealed to the investigators till later, which was observed several miles away from the Whippingham sighting. Only the date, the time and the direction of flight link the two cases, but the damage in the barley field on Parkhurst road strongly corroborates it!

Piece for a Jigsaw by Leonard G. Cramp, price 27s. 6d. Somerton Publishing Co. Ltd., Newport Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight, England.