

## THE "SNAILS" ARE STILL AROUND — PART I

*Ernst Berger*

THE Traunstein, Lower Austria, "snail feeler" sightings of October 28/29 and November 17, 1973 developed into a steady local "flap". In-depth field investigations conducted by my team and I\* yielded a total of 26 case histories with detailed descriptions plus measurements of some 50 objects involved. We hope the following report will show the full spectrum of this interesting activity, even though space problems make it impossible to give a minutely detailed presentation of our results. We trust, however, that our kind readers will forgive this and be sure that our investigation techniques have not weakened. The cases outlined below are in chronological order —

Mid-August, 1973

Herr Walter Tham, aged 40, a

\* Ernst Berger is the Central European representative of MUFON.

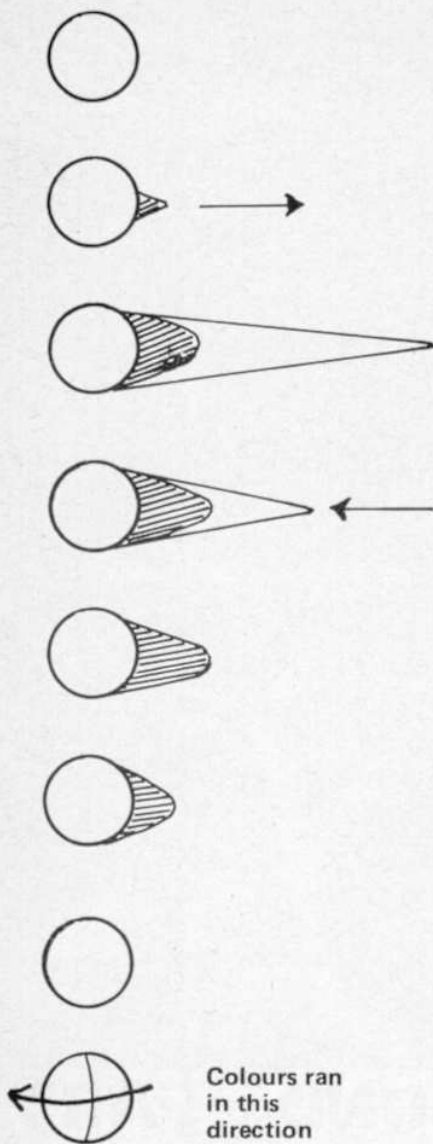
service station owner who has his home and workshop in Spielberg, about 2 km. from Traunstein, had his attention drawn to a "strange star" at an elevation of  $9^{\circ}$  and directly south of Spielberg. The time was 9.30 p.m. CET. The "star" turned from red to blue, then to green and began to send out a conical beam. The colour originated from a motionless globe of about half the diameter of the moon. It appeared to be rotating clockwise, the colours disappearing in irregular sequence — red, violet, blue, yellow, green — off the left edge. Meanwhile the beam, coming from the right edge of the globe, moved repeatedly in and out. As the beam extended slowly outwards, a darker shape could be distinguished within the cone, like the cold portion of a gas flame, and was not affected by the "pull-in process which occurred after maximum extension. The object remained about 30 minutes, but it had disappeared when Tham brought

his mechanics outside the garage to take a look. At 11.00 p.m. the globe signalled again in the east and stayed there for another 30 minutes. Tham's wife and mother-in-law refused to watch it with him because "it must be a nonsense."

The following evening, at 10.30 p.m., when Tham was returning from Spielberg Inn (sober, it must be added, as he had only gone to buy cigarettes), the globe had returned. It was the same size as the day before ( $188^{\circ}$  azimuth,  $9^{\circ}$  elevation), but it projected *two* light cones. The object disappeared in a trice, at a moment Tham had looked away.

Early September, 1973

Between 9.00 and 10.00 p.m., the "globe" with running colours hovered in the south, remained 30 minutes and then made an extremely rapid dash to the east where it contin-



ued blinking for another 15 minutes. It vanished suddenly, only seconds before Tham's wife flung open the front door at her husband's calls. She wasn't pleased. A few days later, Tham observed an object "pulsating" between the shape of a globe and an elongated ellipse. Suddenly a bright yellow-orange dot detached itself from the main body and shot off into the east following a straight, horizontal trajectory. Thirty degrees "left" it came to a sudden standstill and flew back towards the globe after pausing a few seconds. Tham tried to show it to his customer, a Vienna official from the Treasury Dept., and not the brightest one: "Nonsense, Mister. It's a meteor shooting down from a star," was his intelligent reply. Tham did not try again. After sixty minutes the object vanished suddenly.

#### Early November, 1973

On a starry evening, Tham was travelling by car from Aschen (4 km. north-west of Spielberg), his wife in the driving seat. Between 8.00 and 8.30 p.m., while approaching Pfaffings,



Left: Tham's sighting of UFO in mid August.

Above: The object as seen by Tham on the following evening.

Tham noticed the globe, but he decided to keep his mouth shut this time. However, soon after leaving Pfaffings his wife hit the brakes and got out of the car to look at the sky. Said Tham, "It was the first time she really believed me." It changed colours much faster than all the objects he had seen before. On arriving at Spielberg, the Tham family, and Anton B. (who confirmed the sighting at an interview with us later on), continued to watch the object which disappeared by 10.15 p.m.

#### December 28, 1973

On an ice-cold, clear winter evening, Herr Hans Pritz (21),† his mother Hedwig (49) and his brother Gerhard (16) were grilling hot dogs a few meters uphill behind their house at Traunstein. Shortly after 7.00 p.m. a huge, fiery "something" dashed at lightning speed just below the treetops in the south-west, in the direction of the village of Buchegg 3 km. distant. It dashed back and disappeared, then came back again and performed the same thing - but at irregular intervals. The manoeuvre was performed monotonously; back, once again to the left, right, disappearance. The "something" was of 1.5 moon diameters and too fast to be a car headlight. (We timed three seconds for one "to-and-fro" with Mrs. Pritz and two seconds with

Hans, giving half the speed of sound if the object was at maximum distance, right over Buchegg.) After five or more minutes of observation Hans drove to Buchegg, but he felt a fool when he arrived in a dark village with everything quiet and normal. Back at Traunstein, his mother told him the "race" continued for 30 minutes with lengthening intervals between two "drives" and eventually came to an end.

#### Late January (or early February), 1974

Gerhard Pritz had just started on his way to visit his uncle, between 8.00 and 8.30 p.m., when he saw in the south-east a bright red object of roundish shape, like an egg of apparent size as large as the moon ( $215^{\circ}$  az.,  $4/5^{\circ}$  el.). There was no sound, and the surroundings were all lit up. A light cone was descending from the object and hit the snow. It was a most impressive sight. Gerhard estimated that the object was scarcely 300 meters away, hovering over brushwood; the real size was thought to be 2.5 meters. He stood and stared for some five minutes. It had gone when he returned to the spot half an hour later.

#### July 26, 1974. Manoeuvres again

It was 11.45 p.m. when Hans Pritz spotted a bright object "like a sodium vapour lamp" from a window of his house ( $165^{\circ}$  az.,  $32^{\circ}$  el.). When it started to diminish in size and grow red after a few seconds Pritz recognised the "shrinking process" of 1973 and

† Mentioned in the Traunstein article in FSR Vol. 20, No.2.

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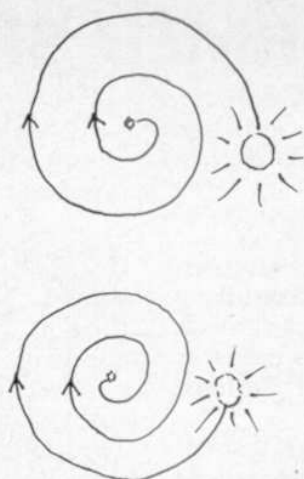
grabbed his 8 x 40 binoculars. Soon his brother Gerhard was outdoors with him and they watched the fuzzy yellow-orange light source (half-moon diameter), but no feelers were visible, only short rays around. (We took measurements later, and calculated the size of the object. We were shocked to find, after double checking, that the globe had a diameter of only about 35 cm. and was only some 55 meters away at a height of 30 meters.) From midnight to 00.30 a.m. that same night, between two pine trees 15° high, in the north-east, two blinking objects yellow-orange in their upper two-thirds and changing from red to green, blue and orange in their lower thirds were observed.

#### August 15, 1974.

Sawmill worker Fichtinger awakened Hans Pritz at 3.45 a.m. to show him three objects hanging in the air. One was low in the north-west (sequence of colour change dull yellow - red - green - dull yellow) and rather distant; two were definitely nearer and projecting "rays" up into the sky. The one at 40° az., 38° el. was motionless and, through binoculars, an extremely thin, dull yellow "ray" was detected, reaching vertically upwards from the upper left side of the globe and coming to an abrupt end about two diameters up - unusual for a normal spotlight. The biggest object (az., 76/77°, 42° el.), which also seemed to have projecting apparatus, moved gradually, hesitantly, southwards (106° az., 41° el.) within 45 minutes, where it was lost at 4.30 a.m. in the bluish sky before sunrise.

#### August 17/18, 1974. A spiral pulsation

Walter Tham was approaching Spielberg by car at about 00.30 a.m. Some 500 meters from his house, near an iron cross east of the Hummelberg peat-bog he stopped to relieve himself. Glancing in the direction of the swamp he noticed a reddish dot 7° over the horizon, below the telegraph wires running parallel to the road. Tham was then amazed as he watched it grow in the space of two seconds into a ball two-thirds the diameter of the moon. He was even more amazed by its trajectory - a perfect spiral, like a bed-spring, open towards Tham (his life of view being the middle axis). The red dot was seen approaching clockwise along this invisible spring. On reaching full size on its movement "outwards", it stopped for two seconds, then shrank again, moving clockwise along a new spiral. The spiral was huge when compared to the full-sized object. When the object was approaching it turned yellow, when receding, red. Tham watched two spiral "shrinkings" i.e. total observation period 12



Sighting at Spielberg, August 17/18, 1974. The object was red at the centre of the spiral, yellow on reaching the periphery

seconds, whereupon the red dot suddenly disappeared. It must be added that this was no new fashion swamp gas, as Tham has been familiar with the effects of *ignis fatuus* in the Hummelberg bog since boyhood.

#### "Traffic Lights" in the night

Blinking multicoloured lights never left Traunstein for the rest of the 1974 summer. On August 30 or 31, Walter L., aged 44, local department store owner, and two other villagers watched three "blinking and disappearing lights" to the north-west from 11.45 p.m. until 00.30 a.m. The rapidly pulsating lights - yellowish white-green - red - orange - yellowish white - kept up a triangular formation which remained motionless, even compared with the stars which crept across the sky.

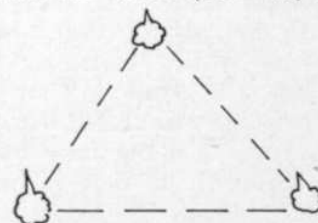
#### November 18, 1974. The Grafenschlag encounter

Hans and Gerhard Pritz left Zwettl by car that evening, heading for Grafenschlag (7 km. north of Spielberg) on their way home. At 5.30 p.m., just before reaching the village, they saw a bright yellow "star" standing way behind the fields towards Klein Nondorf, only 2° above the horizon. It was still visible, glowing calmly like a sodium vapour lamp when they had take two or three bends beyond Grafenschlag. When they reached a junction where the trunk road to Klein Nondorf branches off, everything happened within seconds - "It's flying away!" One thing was clear: they faced an illuminated shape of six feet diameter at low level. The thing apparently crossed the road between the next junction 400 km distant and Zwickelmuehle 600 km. away, an old mill at the Purzelkamp brook, which meanders eastwards across open fields into a forest inter-

sected by the Zwettl-Gutenbrunn railroad (1.8 km. from the car) - a perfectly straight trajectory. When the yellow object reached the first buildings of Klein Goettfritz suddenly it didn't appear yellow anymore, it appeared to have suddenly switched to scintillating red. The shape kept on its course and was finally lost to sight behind the pine trees of the Haushof forest.

#### December 9, 1974

Night had fallen, Herr L's wife Hilde wanted to close a window on the first floor of the L. department store house (where the L. family lives and works) in "downtown Traunstein". From the window Hilde saw an object which at first she took to be an aeroplane: "It sent out beams - green, blue, red, and so on. "She sketched a triangular shape. "The whole thing was three or four times a big star." From 10.30 until 11.00 p.m. she watched the object, which had a straight upper edge and a curved bottom, hovering motionless over a pylon and cable on a house opposite the store (120 az., 9° el.).



Traunstein object, 9.12.74.

Her husband took over at 11.00 p.m. "Every time the light shifted from one colour to another," he told us, "or from one spot to another, the whole shape wasn't illuminated at once, only partially - a ray shot out downwards, but never upwards." The colour change was chaotic, without any system, and the couple chose the tints red-orange, ultramarine and green-emerald in our table, "glaring, like fancy goods colours."

\* \* \* \* \*

At this stage it might be as well to answer a critical question some readers would probably like to pose:- Why always Pritz and Tham reporting? We have to reply quite honestly that the average highlander is a traditionally-bound Catholic and/or materialist with low education level who is too afraid and/or too flimsy to report or even see "things in the sky" and we were lucky to find some atypical families at all who are taking notice of things their neighbours try to suppress or ignore. It may well be that 80% flap reports have already been lost because Pritz and Tham were *not* involved. But nobody else will tell us.

# FACTS FOR "INFORMED SPECULATORS"

F. W. Holiday

I THINK John Lade (Vol. 21, No.2) should research his facts to a rather greater depth before venturing into the field of dogma. To assert flatly that there is no connection at all between the Loch Ness monster and UFOs is not fact but merely an opinion. Perhaps we could return to facts for a moment.

Animals cannot exist in isolation nor in very small numbers due to a genetic phenomenon known as gene deterioration. A single Loch Ness monster or even a dozen monsters existing down the centuries is genetically impossible.<sup>1</sup> Experts believe that a minimum of 20 individuals is needed to form a viable population — and even this figure is probably too small. But this fact instantly produces a paradox at Loch Ness.

A 3½ ton Killer whale now in captivity consumes 120 lb. of fish a day. By extrapolation — which is unlikely to be more than 20% inaccurate — a 35 ton monster some 70 feet long (the approximate length of the object that many of us have seen in Loch Ness) would consume about 4 tons of fish a week: say 200 tons a year. Twenty such animals would consume about 4000 tons annually.

Loch Ness is a big lake but to suppose that this massive amount of fish is being removed yearly is ludicrous. Neither the Scottish Ministry of Fisheries, the Ness Fishery Board nor the anglers have any evidence for such massive predation. Moreover, it is known that indigenous fish in Loch Ness are slow-growing; indeed the oldest eel ever recorded in Britain came from Ness and it was small. Salmon have greatly declined due to netting off Greenland and disease. Due to the rapid decrease in light there is no zooplankton below about 20 feet.

The mysterious monsters therefore appear to support their huge bulk on nothing at all. This at least is consistent with their trait of never leaving a dead or dying carcass near the shore and never appearing in detail in a film.

The zoological establishment, in the shape of the British Museum (Natural History) and the Washington Smithsonian Institute, are well aware of this curious situation and have quietly sent out experts to probe the problem. They find that not only the Loch Ness monster, but also the alleged ape-man of North America known as Bigfoot, each fall into the same strange category. This is characterized by a) a lack of organic remains, b) no observed pattern relating to habits such as breeding, feeding or migration and c) an environmental lack of suitable food for animals of the bulk described. Since the problem remains, what is the answer?

Mr. Lade makes another factual error when he says that a sonar picture has been obtained of the Loch Ness monster. You cannot take recognisable pictures with sonar. What you can do is to take time-lapse pictures using a strobe flash. This is what

Dr. Robert Rines did to obtain the pictures mentioned. I happened to be at Loch Ness when he took it and he came up within the hour to tell us about it.

The trouble here is that it is not a clear unambiguous negative but a blurry meaningless image. The alleged "plesiosaur" only emerged after the negative had been specially intensified by the Houston space-centre computer which normally deals with film from space. The fact that Dr. Rines has recently obtained still more underwater shots — not so far released — increases my doubts about what goes on in Loch Ness. Readers may remember the way the late Ivan T. Sanderson and Dr. Heuvelmans became greatly excited about an "ape-man" lodged in an ice-block. Two better qualified investigators than Sanderson and Heuvelmans it would be hard to imagine. Yet somehow the convincing ape-man became transformed into a less-convincing model made in Hollywood. No wonder Keel writes about "cosmic practical jokers" and Professor Napier thinks the phenomena emerge from "The Goblin Universe".<sup>2</sup>

Is the Loch Ness monster an apparition and are apparitions hallucinations? In his last book, *The Romeo Error*, Dr. Lyall Watson analyses my last sighting of the monster. He seems to think that the object was an hallucination produced by my mind, that this spread to the six witnesses with me and then to others on the opposite side of the loch. This I don't believe.

Celia Green and Charles McCreery of the Oxford Psychophysical Research Institute have just published a book called *Apparitions* (Hamish Hamilton, 1975) which suggests that all apparitions are hallucinations. But at no point do they define "hallucination." The Concise Oxford Dictionary suggests: "illusion; apparent perception of external object not actually present."

The problem is obvious: how can an illusory object bounce back photons and sonar beams? How can it be seen simultaneously by observers a mile apart?

I don't know who wrote that remarkable manuscript on the UMMO civilization but it makes a lot of sense to me. Where is the "real" world referred to so glibly by Green and McCreery? Such terminology makes one wonder if these writers have ever heard of relativity.

My present position is that the Loch Ness monster and UFOs are not objects, whether organic or mechanical, although they present themselves as such to observers. They are, if you like, pseudo-objects; but no doubt they are as "real," within their own terms of reference, as the nearest concrete wall is to us.

With Uri Geller and Professor John Taylor's amazed analysis of the Geller effect behind us, we