

HUMANOIDS

(A)

The Green Alien of Ilkley Moor



Are missing time and an unexplainable photograph evidence of a close encounter?

by Peter Hough
photos © Peter Hough

It is almost a dozen years since a former British police officer claimed to have had a close encounter on Ilkley Moor, Yorkshire. What made this case different was that the witness produced evidence of his experience — a photograph that seemingly depicted an alien entity. Was this proof of the encounter, or part of an elaborate hoax?

In the early morning of December 1, 1987, "Philip Spencer," who asked that his real name not be used, set off across the moor to visit his father-in-law who lived in a village on the far side. The rugged, hilly moors are just a few miles north of Haworth, home to the Brontë sisters, and the setting for *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*.

It was dark and overcast when Spencer said goodbye to his wife at about a quarter past seven. Strung around his

neck were a camera and compass. He hoped to take pictures of Ilkley from the moor tops as daybreak flooded the sky. The compass was insurance against bad weather. Spencer had lived in the town only a few months, and as an experienced walker he knew how quickly mist and rain could move in during winter.

He walked past the White Wells building, a landmark that houses a natural spring on the edge of the moor, then picked up a path that led up a steep slope and past a stand of trees. As he approached the trees he heard a humming sound, which he took to be an aircraft. The crown of the hill had been scooped out at some time in the distant past, and the path dipped here, skirting the lip of a huge hollow. Suddenly something caught his eye. Turning, he saw a small green creature, no more than four feet



Above: This enlargement shows the mysterious green figure allegedly photographed by a former police officer on Ilkley Moor in December 1987.



These computer enhancements use various filters to try for a better look at what roamed the moor that day. What do you think?

tall. It moved quickly away into the hollow, and as it turned and waved an arm dismissively at him, Spencer brought up his camera and took one shot.

The creature scuttled out of sight behind an outcropping, and Spencer gave chase. He turned the corner. There was no sign of the entity, but hovering before him was a silver, saucer-shaped object. A box-like appendage with a pattern of holes cut into it descended into the upper dome. The object shot immediately into the sky, disappearing into a cloud. Spencer had no time to take a second photo.

Spencer returned to Ilkley, where he was surprised to find the town bustling with shoppers. He glanced up at the church clock and saw it was 10 A.M. — by his reckoning it should only have been around 8:15!

Spencer began to wonder if he had suffered a breakdown and hallucinated the incident. The only way to settle that was to have his film processed. He took it to a one-hour film processor and stared with disbelief when he saw the photo of

the green being. *What had happened up on Ilkley Moor?*

The Investigation

Two days later Spencer wrote up an anonymous account of his experience and sent it to British ufologist Jenny Randles, who discussed it with me. He also contacted investigator Arthur Tomlinson, who with a friend had visited Spencer and were going to return. They agreed to take me along.

I am naturally suspicious of photographic cases, and the witness seemed too casual about it all, so I put it to him that the whole thing was a stunt. He smiled sadly and said, "I know what I saw, and if people don't believe me that's up to them. I've got nothing to gain by doing that. I don't see the sense. I've got better things to do with my time."

Spencer certainly did not seem to have any motive for perpetuating a hoax. He sought neither fame nor fortune from his story. Indeed, he made it clear that we must never reveal his true iden-

A rod of
light,
similar in
appearance
to a
fluorescent
tube,
then followed
the contours
of his
body.

tity, and he offered me the copyright of the photograph.

Jenny Randles and I took the negative to two independent photographic experts, who drew conflicting conclusions. Finally Kodak expert Peter Sutherst examined it and shared his observations:

"It is underexposed by at least two stops. It is usual for these films to produce grainy pictures when underexposed. The negative shows a degree of camera shake, making it difficult to decide what the small figure might be. Identification is made even more of a problem because of underexposure.

"I would not care to commit myself to any observation beyond saying that the film had not been interfered with after processing."

Spencer had had neither the time nor the nerve to set the correct speed and aperture before snapping the figure. But the negative was not the only piece of evidence. Spencer's compass had stopped working properly during the incident. It now pointed south instead of north. Something had interfered with the electromagnetic field surrounding the device.

Had Spencer done this as part of a deception, and if so, how, or had it been altered when he was supposedly near the UFO?

My friend Professor Ray Leonard, head of the Total Technology Department at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (TTMIST), put me in touch with Dr. Ed Spooner, head of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Electronics. Spooner invited me to bring along the compass for examination. Tomlinson supplied a similar compass for the tests.

We discovered that powerful industrial magnets deflected the needle only while they were in proximity to the compass. When they were removed, the needle returned to normal. Spooner then applied a pulsed magnetic field using electricity from the national system. This had the desired effect of reversing the polarity. (It wasn't until several years later that new industrial magnets from Japan that had the same effect were available.)

What did this tell us? It showed that it was possible to bring about the reversed-pole effect through trickery, but that doing so required specialized knowledge and was dangerous. The alternative, that the effect was due to an interaction with an electromagnetic field associated with a UFO, was just as viable.

Hypnosis

At about this time Spencer said he was having dreams about patterns of stars, and he wondered if hypnosis would help him remember what had occurred during the missing time. Journalist Matthew Hill put us in touch with Jim Singleton, a clinical psychologist. Jim had no particular interest in UFOs, but he was open-minded and happy to help. In fact, we became good friends and he assisted me on another abduction case. During a tape-recorded session, Spencer relived his walk from home on that fateful day.

It emerged that the photograph was not the be-all and end-all of the encounter, but merely a parting shot after an abduction experience. This would explain why the it was taken in daylight, when it should still have been quite dark. In view

of that, it makes me wonder if Spencer was "programmed" to take the picture.

Under hypnosis Spencer described how he had been approached by the creature earlier in his walk as he drew level with the stand of trees:

"He's still coming toward me. And I still can't move...I'm stuck, and everything's gone fuzzy. I'm...I'm floating along in the air...I want to get down! And this green thing's walking ahead of me, and I don't like it. I still can't move, I'm going round the corner and this green thing's in front of me. Oh, God...I want to get down!"

Spencer felt paralyzed and levitated "like a balloon on a piece of string." He began breathing rapidly as he continued his story.

"There's a...there's a big silver, like, saucer thing, and there's a door in it, and I don't want to go in there. Everything's gone black now..."

Spencer then described a brightly lit room and a soothing voice that told



Author Peter Ho

him, "We don't mean to harm you, don't be afraid." He was put onto a table surrounded by several of the green beings. A rod of light, similar in appearance to a fluorescent tube, then followed the contours of his body. He closed his eyes as it traveled over his head and he felt its warmth. He complained that "my nose feels uncomfortable."

Spencer then left the table and was motioned by one of the creatures to follow it. The creature gave him a tour of the "ship," and at one point he saw the distant Earth through a window. A hole opened in the corridor wall and he was led onto a platform. In the center of a circular room was a ball with square blocks attached to it. The whole thing was spinning, and Spencer's camera and compass, still hanging around his neck, were attracted to it. Was this where the compass was affected?

Next he was taken into another room and shown two "films." One was a warning of ecological disaster, the other more

The Legacy of an Abduction

In a recent conversation with Peter Hough, Philip Spencer talked about the effect of the "green man" incident on his life:

"I now question everything, and every aspect of everything. [The encounter] has made me a much more skeptical person. I feel I have been dropped into a sea of uncertainty, unable now to have a belief in anything. What happened to me on the moors was 'impossible.' It throws everything you think is normal, certain, and secure into question. I now exist in a vacuum of disbelief, occasionally reaching out to hold onto something solid, only to discover it is a hologram.

"I don't live in fear that 'they' will return, although I do find myself looking up at the sky some nights, thinking deeply....

"Why did it happen to me? I remember a scene from the Disney film *Night of the Navigator*, where a young boy is taken away by a small spacecraft. He asks it why it chose him. The robot replies, *Why not?*, which is perhaps fair comment."

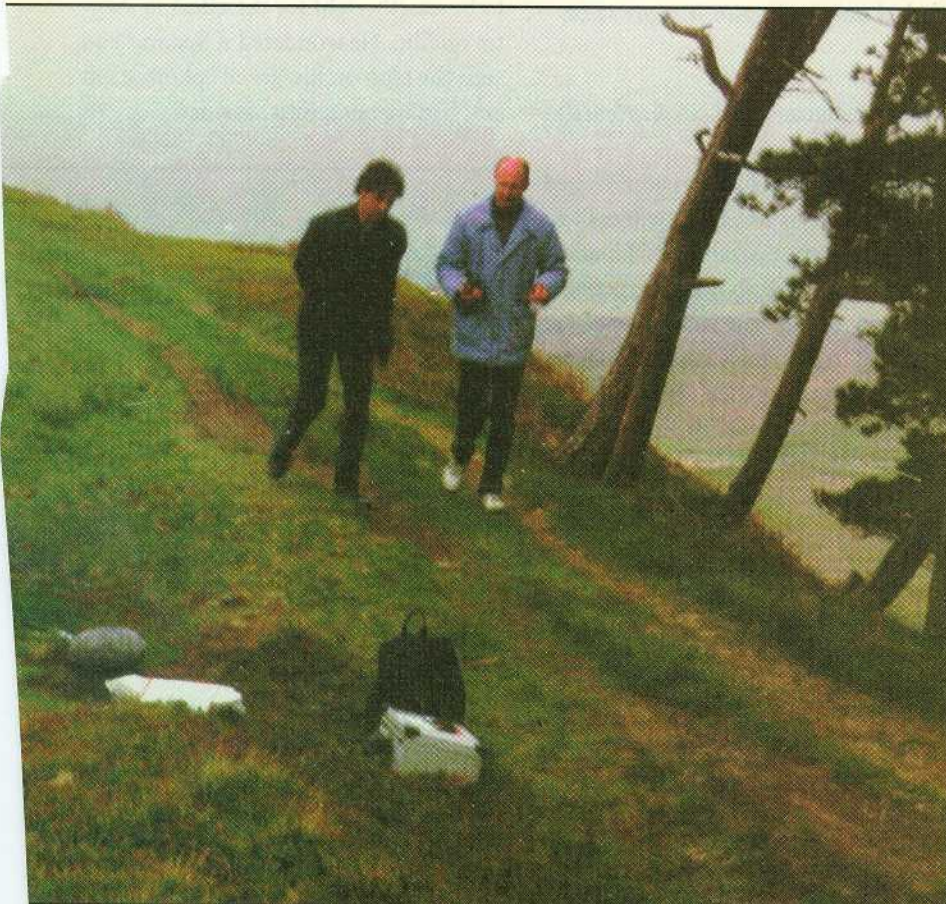
personal, containing predictions about Spencer's future. When we pressed him for more details on this he replied, "If you are married you will understand. There are certain things about your wife you would never tell anyone. And that's how I feel about the second film."

While under hypnosis the former police officer was able to give us a full description of one of the entities. "It's quite small. It's about four foot. Comes to the lump on my stomach. He's got big pointed ears; it's got big eyes. They're quite dark. He hasn't got a nose. He's only got a little mouth. And his hands are enormous. And his arms are long. He's got funny feet. They're like a V-shape, like two big toes. It's got three big fingers, like sausages. Big sausages."

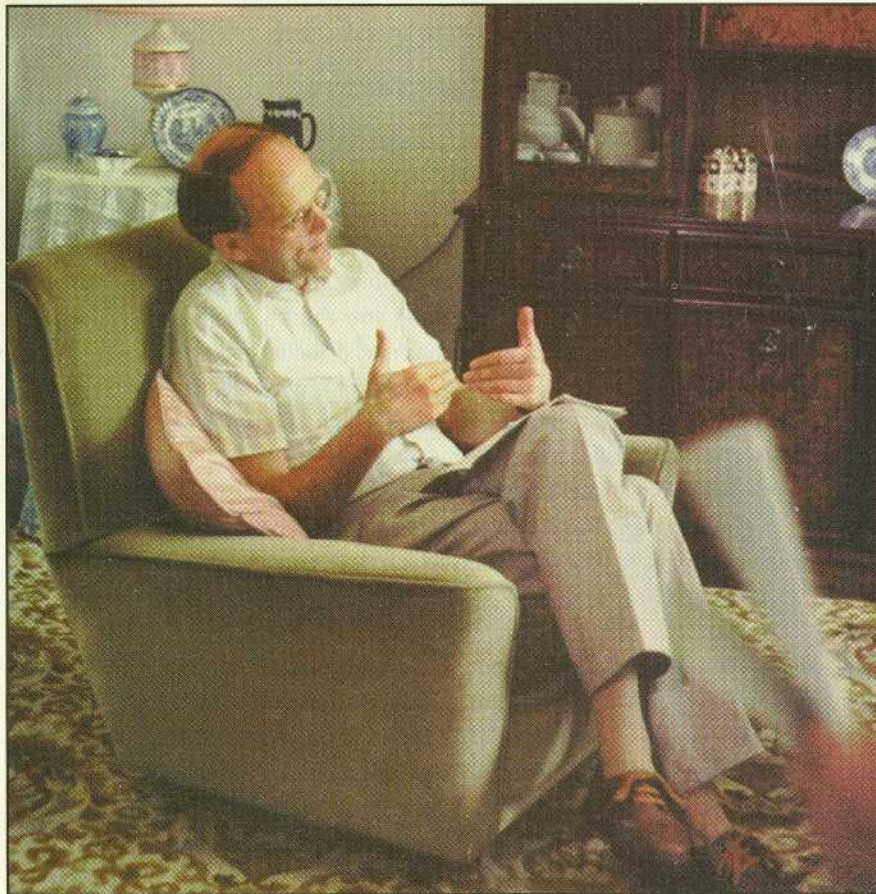
Spencer told me later that there was no evidence of genitals, and the skin was rough like that of a crocodile.

After he had viewed the "films" it was "time to go." Once again everything went black, and he found himself back on the moor, *with no memory of what had just happened*. Even under hypnosis, he describes his surprise at suddenly seeing the green creature in the hollow, and taking the photograph. Almost two hours of his life apparently had been edited from his conscious mind with such precision that he failed to realize that at one moment he was in darkness and the next in daylight.

One thing that impressed me at the time was Spencer's description of blacking out before finding himself inside the object. When people are asked to imagine an alien abduction, they inevitably describe being taken up some sort of ramp into a "space ship." Actual abductees almost never remember entering the UFO.



ht) being interviewed by a Granada film crew on Ilkley Moor.



Clinical psychologist Jim Singleton, who carried out the hypnotic regression on Philip Spencer.

In 1987 the term “doorway amnesia” had not yet been coined. Spencer’s research would have been very thorough indeed for him to have picked up on this detail and incorporated it into his story.

Computer Enhancement

Over the years there has been a lot of talk about the possibility of using computer image enhancement to clarify the photograph. Peter Sutherst pointed out in 1988 that “image enhancement is a costly exercise.” He doubted the benefits of using these sophisticated techniques on Spencer’s photo because “the size, distance of the subject, camera movement, and underexposure mean that there is insufficient detail available to enhance.”

Geoffrey Crowley of the *British Journal of Photography* attempted computer enhancement in 1990. Some years previously Crowley had helped prove that the famous “Cottingly fairies” were cardboard cutouts. Unfortunately his work on the entity picture met with failure. At-

tempts in Japan and the USA also failed to clarify the image.

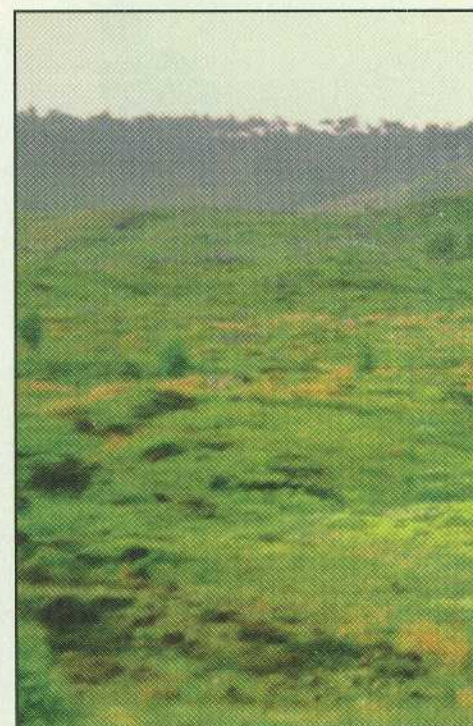
When NIPPON Television visited England in May 1989, I was witness to a remarkable demonstration of Japanese improvisation. The photo was stuck to a wall and a very bright studio lamp was positioned to illuminate it. Then a television camera was focused on the picture, and the image fed directly to a six-inch monitor. This had the effect of highlighting the contrast between the figure and the background. In so doing, one of the photograph’s mysteries was cleared up.

The left arm of the entity ends in an amorphous mass. Some commentators have speculated that the figure is carrying something. Even Geoffrey Crowley saw the outline of a rectangular box in his enhancements. What the Japanese film crew did was demonstrate that this was an effect of the hand and the ground directly behind it blending into one. There, on the small monitor, the outline of a hand, with three fingers, could clearly be seen.

There is something obvious about the photograph that everyone seems to have missed. Apart from underexposure and camera shake, there is another reason the figure is hard to see. It is almost camouflaged into the environment. It would make sense for advanced biological entities to camouflage themselves to escape detection. But would a hoaxer have thought of that?

To the right of the figure is an amorphous bright blob. In his account Spencer described seeing “a square box with holes” disappearing into the top of the object. I wondered if this blob could have been the box, and put it to Spencer. The former police officer shook his head and said he did not know.

A year after the event ufologist Andy Roberts went to the location and took a large number of photographs. On two of them appeared the faint outline of the “blob.” It was a feature on the far bank. Roberts speculated that the moisture content of the ground and the light had to be exactly right for the effect to show up on film. He wondered if Spencer had seen the blob on his “faked” photograph and had woven it into his story.



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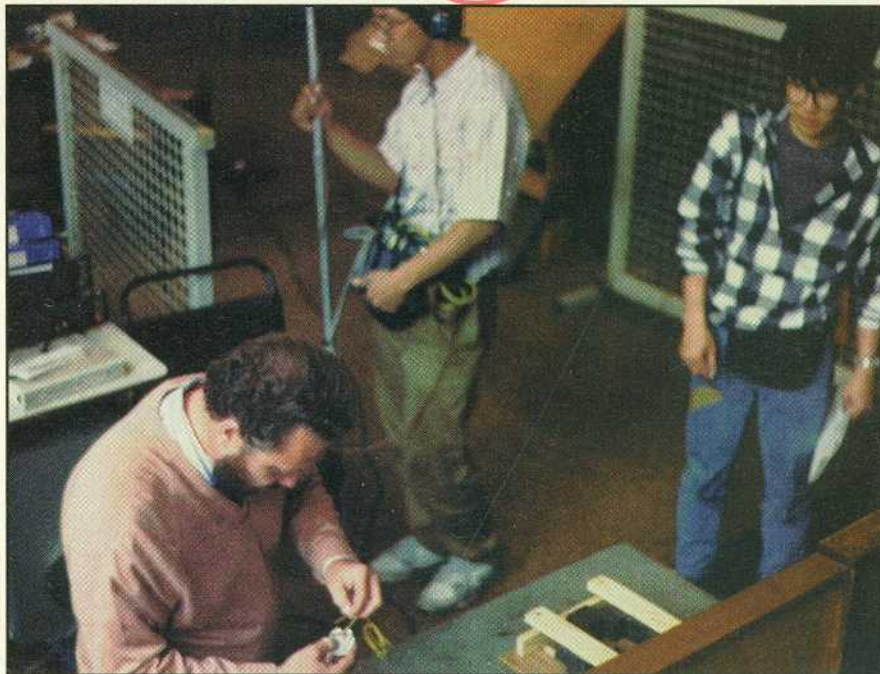
The Green Alien of Ilkley Moor

But Jim Singleton had no doubts about Spencer. "I think he was definitely under hypnosis. He was certainly recounting the incident as something that had actually happened. He compares very well with other non-UFO subjects. I think I've helped Philip to recover memories that were hidden deeply in the mind."

What implications did this have then for the photograph? Because of the existence of the picture there was no room for maneuver — the case was either genuine or a fake, there was no gray area, no room for talk of hallucinations brought about by temporal-lobe epilepsy. Singleton commented:

"It seems — there again — very consistent. I suppose the good thing about the photograph is it helps Philip face up to a very unusual experience. With the photograph he has some material evidence to back up what he knows as a memory."

Last year a self-styled American UFO museum curator amused me with his analysis of the picture. He claims that after computer enhancement he could see a harness-belt on the figure, and a "child-alien" on its back! Some time ago this same man wrote a letter to *Fortean Times*



Dr. Ed Spooner prepares an experiment for a Nippon film crew to demonstrate how the polarity of the compass could have been reversed.

where he described seeing "dozens and dozens of human and animal faces" in trees and bushes depicted in a photograph. The picture had been taken on a sunny day, and most people would conclude that the "faces" were simply the effect of light and shade.

Philip Spencer commented on the results of this "enhancement" in August 1997: "Although some of my memory of the event is hazy, some of it is very clear, and despite the technological miracle of computer enhancement, I can tell you that the creature did not have a belt on, nor was it carrying a child."

From the start, Spencer never sought the two things that hoaxers strive for — fame and fortune. Despite the fact that large sums of money were offered to him by the media, he was never tempted. "It would ruin me socially and professionally," he said.

The only hoax scenario that makes sense is if Spencer were a front man for a group of skeptics. Once the incident had become a "classic" they would pop out of the woodwork, destory the case, and dent our credibility in the process. Eleven years have passed and I'm still waiting for someone to tap me on the shoulder and shout *boo!* ■

Peter Hough's latest book, co-written with Dr. Moyshe Kalman, is *The Truth About Alien Abductions*, published by Blandford and available in the USA.



Spencer took past the White Wells building up onto the moor.