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**Footprints in stone [
part II]**

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Résumé :

Since my small paper on allegedly fossil footprints was published in BIPEDIA (16), I have found a few additional examples and received a long and detailed letter (July 16, 1998) by Evan Hansen of Beryl in Utah, on one of the finds I had mentioned, the William Meister prints from Antelope Springs, Utah.

Since my small paper on allegedly fossil footprints was published in *BIPEDIA* (16), I have found a few additional examples and received a long and detailed letter (July 16, 1998) by Evan Hansen of Beryl in Utah, on one of the finds I had mentioned, the William Meister prints from Antelope Springs, Utah.

In discussing the Meister prints, due to the number of conflicting reports in various popular books, I had made several mistakes which I can now correct. Hansen did personally investigate the Meister footprint on the site and interviewed Meister. His very informative letter runs for three pages, so I can give only excerpts, and I hope that I leave out no detail that was important to Hansen :

"...this one absolutely is a print of a human shoe. ... (As I worked in shoe repair for 11 years) if there is one subject where I am an expert, it will be the way a human shoe will show wear. Bill (Meister) told me that Kelvin Cook went in television to say that the print was nothing but an oversized trilobite. (From the photo, it evidently isn't) Bill was upset about this, because Cook had never seen the print, so he phoned Cook, offering to take the print to his office and let him study it in person. Cook refused to look at it ! ... Other critics you quoted were using excuses such as weathering, fracturing and spalling. These are absurd on the face of it, because the print was never on the surface a single day ! Bill found it by digging deeply into the rock, and the print was exposed when Bill split open the layers. ... Two actual trilobites are in the rock, and it is the exact same shale rock as the rest of the mountain. I have held it in my hand, and studied it in a magnifying glass."

Hansen continues :

"The left half is the actual print made by the shoe, this formed a mold that filled with mud after drying. The right is the cast. Note how the toe cracked the mud as he pushed forward to take the next step. (I can't actually discern this on the photo) ... If you wet present day soil to exactly the consistency that allows a shoe to sink in as deep as this print, it makes EXACTLY (capitalization in original) this same kind of mark, which includes the mud splitting at the top as you push off for the next step. Bill found two other prints in softer mud, one of which sank in more than 3 cm deep. In this print, the mud pushed back in over both sides, until it doesn't look like a shoe print, so these smaller prints were never reported, though his wife still has both at her house. ... The heel stepped on a trilobite, which curled up exactly like a modern bug will curl in protection when it's injured. The cast has an imprint of this in the mud. (This is true and can clearly be seen in the photo) Another trilobite is

seen on the sole of the cast, but this is not curled, it died a normal death, and the mold has no print, proving that the mold was dry before the new mud filled it. This is the right foot, proven by two clues, the outer edge of the heel is worn, I was the one who drew Bill's attention to this, and the mold presses far deeper on the outer edge of the heel, exactly as modern men press deeper on the heel. The inner edge is shallower, the back of the heel didn't even imprint in the mud, and the left side of the heel, the mud stuck to the heel, lifting it above the surface of the mud. There is a second proof this is the right foot, there is a bulge at the ball of the foot, where the big toe makes the foot wider. ... The front of the heel isn't cut straight, possibly it had mud sticking there, or perhaps pounding during walking had flattened it. Both sole and heel are some hard material like leather, or plastic, so this was a shoe with hard sole, it was not a moccasin or any other simple foot covering or soft material."

Hansen's letter shows how unreliable most of the reports from ancient astronauts-type books I had to work with actually are. Certainly, my identification of the Meister print as natural was premature, whether it was wrong is another question. What is certainly needed is a scientific and unbiased study of the print by geologists and palaeontologists, although it is hard to imagine that anybody would be unbiased faced with such a find. For the time, I have to exclude the Meister print from the list of explained footprints in stone. It must be regarded as still unexplained.

Now for those cases I have only come across after finishing my initial study.

CENTRAL EUROPE :

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Near Minden in the Geismarwald on the Totenberg, so folktales say, an army leader sometime before a battle in the 30 years-war exclaimed that : "I will not win, it is as impossible as this stone becoming soft". He then stood up and found his legs and hands firmly imprinted in solid stone.

(Grimm, p. 168)

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At Rosenstein Castle on the Heuberg in the Remo Valley in the Swabian Alb there is the form of a beautiful human foot in rock. On the opposite mountain, the Scheulberg, is a similar track. The first is of a left, the other of a right foot.

(Grimm, p. 207)

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At Castle Bentheim there is a curious smooth rock. The devil used them as pillar when he slept, and one can find the impression of his ear on them.

(Grimm, p. 211)

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In Cologne, on a heavy stone called Teufelsstein, the hands and talons of devil can still be seen imprinted in it.

(Grimm, p. 213)

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The Lügenstein on the cathedral square at Halberstadt was carried there by the devil to destroy the cathedral, however, he dropped it from the air before this was done. Now the impression of his glowing thumb is still in it.

(Grimm, p. 214)

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Close to Altenburg near Ehrenberg one finds a mighty stone. The devil once used it as a hat and said that not even God was strong enough to do likewise. Jesus appeared and lifted the stone with his little finger. It now bears impression of devil's head and Christ's finger.

(Grimm, p. 218)

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At Freiberg in Meissen, in 1545, an angry father condemned his son who was idle to be rooted to the spot in the house's hall. The boy stood there (the story is rather long) until September 1552 when he was released. His footprints can still be seen in the wooden floor.

(Grimm, p. 237)

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In the Klatauer Kreis, close to Oberkamenz village on Hradekberg Mountain stood a castle. The owner built a mighty bridge leading to the city of Stankau, which was miles away. His daughter

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was so arrogant that she wore bread rolls as shoes. She sank into the solid rock, and so did the castle. One footprint can still be seen.

(Grimm, p. 241)

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At Oberhasli on the road to Gadmen near Meiringen is the Sterbensstein with the impression of a hand with several fingers left by a dying man after he'd been murdered.

(Grimm, p. 334)

GREAT BRITAIN :

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At lake Llyn Berfog, Merioneth, Wales, King Arthur's horse left a footprint in stone.

(Ashe, p. 98)

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Above Sabden in Lancashire, the devil has left two footprints in a rock.

(McCann & Medway, p. 119)

Post-scriptum :

SOURCES :

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- *Grimm, Brothers : Deutsche Sagen. Zurich : Transitbooks 1974.*
- *McCann, Mark d, Medway, Gareth J. : The Mount of vision. In : Fortean Studies 4, 1998, p. 113-131.*

