

## An Appreciation of the Work of Hamish Miller

The recent and peaceful death of Hamish Miller at his home near St Ives, Cornwall, has prompted an enormous and appreciative response. The Parallel Community, which Hamish recently helped to found, enjoyed over 47,000 messages on its website, a warranted response to a man who had given so much to both the alternative and earth mysteries movement. Hamish was well loved.

Hamish was always a Scot, but he was not always involved in alternative ideas. He spent his childhood near Stirling and attended Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, where he graduated in engineering. After a career in this discipline, eventually owning his own company, he underwent a near-death experience (NDE) while under the surgeon's knife, and this totally redirected his attentions to other matters that were to occupy the final thirty years of his life. He moved to a 12 acre smallholding near Trencrom, a short distance from Hayle and St Ives, where he set up a fully equipped blacksmith's workshop/studio. He quickly made himself a local name as a fine and most useful craftsman, this leading to later acclaim as a sculptor in metal. Commissions followed and his garden was dotted with graceful and humorous examples of his work.

It was in Cornwall, living under the powerful peak of Trencrom that Hamish first began to become interested in dowsing. He rapidly became very proficient indeed in this art, and in the late 80s, Hamish got together with another adopted Cornishman, the writer and historian Paul Broadhurst, and together they mounted one of the largest earth mysteries projects ever undertaken at the time. Travelling the length of what has since become known as the St Michael line - the longest line that can be drawn across southern Britain - they dowsed all the sites along it. Today the 'Michael line' is known to many people, at the time hardly anyone knew of it.

The Michael line passes through or adjacent to many of the prime sites in southern Britain and this includes many important megalithic sites such as Boscawen-un, the Hurlers and Avebury, as well as scores of churches

named after the Saint, many perched on high tors and lower tumps, such as Glastonbury Abbey and Tor, Bury St Edmunds Abbey and Cathedral, Brentor and Burrow Mump.

This lengthy quest resulted in the publication of the best selling earth mysteries book of all time, *The Sun and the Serpent*, in the late 1980s. Building on work undertaken previously by his contemporary, John Michell, this book radically and practically approached the study of the interaction between Man and Landscape, and formed a precursor to the phenomenology movement in academic archaeology.

A highly readable book, the *Sun and the Serpent* demonstrated several astonishments. Firstly, the relationship between sky and landscape - both the natural and the built features along the alignment are topographically arranged to form a straight line whose angle points to the direction of the Beltane sunrise (May 1st). Secondly, the book shows that several cultures had repeatably built massive works upon this line throughout prehistory and into history, as if magnetically drawn to it. Thirdly, the book showed that the extensive mythology concerning St Michael now had a basis in fact, on the landscape. Fourthly, the book demonstrated repeated cultural interaction with this line enabling readers to recognise that a *reflex* relationship exists between the landscape and the lives and activities that are being lived on its surface. Finally, the book showed that a sensitive dowser could determine the path and the nature of this alignment as it snaked across the earth.

Each of these was a major achievement in the nascent subject of landscape studies, and it encouraged thousands of people into walking sections of the line themselves, repeating the techniques described, and applying it to other alignments throughout Britain. The book became and remains a landmark in the subject.

Following the success of this book, the two authors and their respective partners undertook an even more ambitious project, travelling the length of Europe and into the Middle East, from Skellig St Michael, off the west coast of Ireland into the Holy Land, in order to follow another similar line, which they named the Apollo line. Over ten years, the authors explored the whole land length of this line, and finally in 1999 published their findings in a

beautifully produced book, *The Dance of the Dragon*.

Other books by Hamish included a semi-autobiographic account of his approach to life and a message to the modern world. *It's Not Too Late* was published in 2001, and followed in 2002 by *The Definitive Wee Book of Dowsing*, one of those beautifully designed Wooden Books range that grace the counters of any good bookshop.

Later contacts with a similarly minded friend in New Zealand led to a fieldwork which produced the eventual publication of *In Search of the Southern Serpent*.



Ba, Tricia and Hamish on the lawn at Trevisco, April 1998.

These publications will remain, and they will remind us and future generations that here was a practical and thoughtful man who took a Cinderella subject away from the Ugly Sisters of stubborn orthodoxy, academic indifference and 'scientific' derision, and accompanied her to the ball. Hamish certainly had a ball doing this work; he loved it as much as he loved showing people why they too should love this subject.

Hamish was a fine presenter, never better than when this could take

place out there on the landscape. He possessed what is known as the 'common touch', being entirely comfortable and very good with people. He exuded a unique charisma that allowed people to have great fun in his presence while learning the art of dowsing and he introduced thousands to this reckoning with the hidden forces of the earth. His death leaves a huge void in both the subject itself and also in the number of people that can communicate effectively on this subject.



Robin and Hamish next to a Morris Dancer sculpture made, appropriately and deliberately by Hamish 'from an old Morris Minor van', April 1998.

Hamish and his wife Ba became good friends of ours. I used to take occasional tour groups to experience some thing of Hamish's teaching and once ran a weekend gig at his smallholding. In several visits between our two homes, we saw the man outside of his public persona, and were honoured and enlarged by the experience. I well remember visiting a fish & chip shop in Hayle, reciprocated by another visit to one in St Dogmaels, all the while discussing, as two Taureans are wont to do, which big plate of food was the better of the two. Fine whisky was moderately drunk while the philosophy of life was expounded into the wee small hours of the night. And during the day we four walked the local landscapes and visited the ancient sites around our two homes, memories that will stay forever with Trish and me.

Hamish held a very strong connection with spiritual forces. For him, following his NDE, 'the management' had shown him, as Plato also suggested, that 'things are much better managed than you could ever imagine'. Like Braveheart, this Scot had lost his fear of death, and the manner of his passing, on January 25th, peacefully, and after enjoying Burn's night as only a Scot can, surely proves the truth of this belief.

No death is easy for those left behind. We, his friends, shall all miss Hamish's presence. And the enormous loss and readjustment for his wife Ba and his two sons will be a further challenge to be faced in the coming months. Our condolences go out to dear Ba and all Hamish's close family at this time - our thoughts are with you.

Go well, Hamish and continue to enjoy the view.

Robin Heath and Tricia Osborne,  
St Dogmaels,  
February 8th 2010, 2:30 pm

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