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## Hawkins' Way: Remembering Astronomer Gerald S. Hawkins

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**Hubert A. Allen, Jr.**

**Editor's note.** Gerald Hawkins, who rose to fame in the 1960s as the author of *Stonehenge Decoded*, was due to have been a keynote speaker at the INSAP IV conference. As preparations were being made for the conference, the sad news was received that he had passed away, on his farm in Virginia. *Stonehenge Decoded* and other publications played a seminal role in defining the study of prehistoric astronomy and bringing that study to wider critical attention. He was fortunate to have lived long enough to see others take up the challenge of decoding human intellect embedded in ancient architecture. He was particularly interested in proposals for English Heritage's plans for a new Stonehenge Visitor Centre. The following tribute was prepared by his friend and colleague, Hubert A. Allen.

Here are some things you might not have known about Gerald S. Hawkins:

- What the 'S' in his middle name stands for? Not long after I began working with Gerald, in the first quarter of 2001, he posed this question to me, and quipped: 'Stonehenge, of course!' (It stands for Stanley ). We often joked about his 'English humor!' here in America.
- That he anonymously sponsored the 'Gold Sovereign Lecture Series' – in which the greatest scholars from over the pond, in the United Kingdom, were invited to lecture at The Smithsonian in Washington DC every other year. Sir Martin Reese, Astronomer

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Hubert A. Allen, Jr , ' Hawkins' Way: Remembering Astronomer Gerald S. Hawkins', *The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena*: Proceedings of the fourth conference on the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena, Magdalen College, Oxford, England, 3-9 August 2003, special issue of *Culture and Cosmos* 8, nos. 1 and 2, Spring/Summer-Autumn/Winter 2004, pp. 1–6.  
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Royal of England, gave the lecture in 2001. (I have a picture of the two together.) Sir Martin was not tempted to make the lecture because of status or the enviable crowd who would receive him in America but for the gold sovereign that was given in reward by Gerald personally. Sir Neil Cossons, English Heritage, was booked for this year until a schedule mishap occurred. Gerald had a cache of gold sovereigns for future lectures!

- When he died, on 26 May 2003, Gerald S. Hawkins was in his 'best warrior spirit' according to Julia Dobson. Why? Because finally he was beginning to recognize that his work in *Stonehenge Decoded* (Doubleday, 1965) had, in its broadest sense, become a part of our cultural norm, and not a radical exception. He constantly reminded me that his work came down to a fight for the dignity/intellect of the early Stonehenge peoples. They were not 'howling barbarians' as one very famous archaeologist once famously said (most scholars of the day agreed). In Gerald's estimation the ancient people were clever indeed – learning the cycles of the sun and moon and working them into the architecture of Stonehenge.
- For most of the 1990s, Gerald lived a quiet life removed from Stonehenge and beyond his contributions to the mathematics of crop circles. He was gentleman farmer, living in rural Virginia and commuting to Washington, DC for intellectual respite. During his last two and a half years, Gerald and I had worked together on a new edition of *Beyond Stonehenge* (Hubert Allen and Associates, 2001). This March, Gerald and I completed an entire new book – his most photographic. *Stonehenge, Earth and Sky* will be published in 2004 by Wessex Books.
- Gerald was working on a complete revision of *Stonehenge Decoded*, having come to the belief, and I paraphrase him, 'That over the last 40 years the archaeology of Stonehenge has changed completely while the case for the astronomy has only grown stronger'. This is now on hold, and it may never be completed – although much progress had been made and the second edition was timed to come out in 2005 via Hubert Allen and Associates.

Gerald knew many famous twentieth century intellectuals. And he was

puckish. He told me one story about the famous writer Isaac Asimov. The two men were together at Boston University in the 1960s. Gerald was the head of the astronomy department and was actively publishing in science journals (dozens of peer-review articles, a fair share in prestigious journals). In contrast, Asimov was in (something like) the department of biochemistry. I've heard that, before gaining tenure, he asked a dean what number of papers was required for tenure? After a bit of research, the dean found the answer – no specified number of papers! However, the dean explained, Professor Asimov must attend one annual faculty meeting to maintain his tenure. Upon hearing this, Asimov reportedly said, 'Well then, I shall see you at the meeting'.

Back to Gerald, who was also exceedingly successful in science, academia and popular publishing (*Stonehenge Decoded* had made him world-famous and a bit more cash-flush than most professors). In fact, Gerald had a new convertible sports car. One Boston day decades ago, he invited Asimov to come along for a ride. Gerald must have known that Asimov was timid. He did not fly in airplanes. Once asked why he did not fly, Asimov replied, 'My imagination is too vivid'.

Gerald, on the other hand, was working with NASA at the time (1958 through 1969 – magic years for the space pioneers), putting men in space and on the moon. He loved flight, speed and his new sports car. The two men were clearly opposites. As Gerald recounted to me, Asimov got into the passenger's seat and alerted him to the fact that he did not like speed. The response from Gerald was to insert his key, turn over the engine and floor the gas pedal! Immediately, the two were pressed firmly back into their seats, feeling the maximum G's. Professor Gerald S. Hawkins then shouted over the roar of the engine to Professor Isaac Asimov. 'But you said nothing of acceleration!'

Gerald took the time to relay his stories in his wonderful English accent, over the telephone. In these last two years, we spoke several times a week. He told me a story involving Sir Arthur C. Clarke. It was just a brief interaction between the two men, but telling and prescient.

The scene is the English countryside, on a fine summery day in the 1950s. Gerald, a bright young scholar in his 20s, was astride a motor-scooter, snapping closed the leather chin-strap of his cap, adjusting his goggles, and preparing to streak across the landscape like the rockets not yet launched into space.

A tall and imposing figure stood near him watching. Arthur Clarke was perhaps a decade older than Gerald and already quite famous for his work on geosynchrony in space. Clarke, the dreamer, began a narrative. 'As

Hawkins dons his life-giving envelope; the SPACE SUIT, the moons of near-by Jupiter float past the space craft's port hole... Finally, the brave ASTRO-NAUT is prepared to begin his epic walk into the vacuum of space'.

Of course, both men were productive dreamers. Arthur C. Clarke went on to script *2001: A Space Odyssey* with Stanley Kubrick; Gerald to decode Stonehenge and launch the modern field of archaeoastronomy. I know of one later time when the two did reconnect, echoing this very incident I have just relayed to you. Prior to the release of *2001: A Space Odyssey* in 1968, Kubrick conducted a series of interviews with twenty of the most prominent intellectuals of the twentieth century. This 'A' list includes Margaret Mead, Isaac Asimov, Freeman J. Dyson, B. F. Skinner and it goes on and on until the youngest person to have a say was Gerald Hawkins. They were not shown the movie or given the script. In fact, Gerald did not know it at the time, but his inquisitors had completely blind-sided him vis-a-vis their questions and the forthcoming movie!!!

To avoid any copyright infringement, I will only mention the themes: extra-terrestrial intelligence in the universe; Earth seeding by ETs in the distant past; can a computer turn against its masters? The still youthful, now famous Professor Gerald S. Hawkins gave thoughtful answers to all these questions. Jump forward in time, sadly, to within about the last month of his life, Gerald was asked by the Kubrick Estate to add commentary to those responses made in the 1960s with his perspective from 2003. Prompt and efficient as always, Gerald had made his reply and sent it off to the Kubrick Estate before his last epic journey.

What of the legacy of Gerald Stanley Hawkins? He authored about a dozen books. I will do my level best to maintain the *Beyond Stonehenge* 2001 edition in-print, both in the USA and the UK (as they currently are). I will see to it that his last book, *Stonehenge, Earth and Sky*, for which I am honoured to be his co-author, comes out in 2004. Gerald and I had completed all the writing, picture selection, captioning and sent it off to the publisher, Wessex Books, in early 2003.

Perhaps the most difficult issue in the legacy is the fate of *Stonehenge Decoded*. As I mentioned earlier, Gerald was actively working on a complete revision and the project was well in swing. I made Gerald a line-by-line critique (in spreadsheet form!) of *Stonehenge Decoded* from which Gerald was working through the various issues.

On the revision, I can relay Gerald's modified thinking on the issue of the modern Druids. Gerald went pretty hard at them in the first edition, at least twice in the book that I can recall. He railed against their 'made-up

religion'. I wondered if he wanted to reconsider this bit of the book. After all, I had witnessed such a gathering on the winter 2002 solstice morning and they were far from horrible people. Indeed, their rites had gone on steadily for years at Stonehenge and environs. At least they appreciated the place! In my spreadsheet critique, I innocently asked if all religions were not ultimately 'made up?' Just this past April I asked him if we couldn't go a little easier on the druids in the second edition of *Stonehenge Decoded*? He audibly chuckled. I could almost see his wry smile beaming over the wires, and he uttered a soothing, 'Yes, I think so'. All the editor needed to hear. Nonetheless, the question remains: Should the second edition of *Stonehenge Decoded* be published with all we know the professor to have changed? Including, of course, any relevant portion of his final book, *Stonehenge, Earth and Sky*, where the archaeology was up-dated. Or, should we let the first edition lay as a historical marker?

Just one more idea on the legacy of Gerald S. Hawkins: I have politely suggested to The Stonehenge Project, which is in charge of the planning and design of the new visitor's centre, that we could establish 'The Gerald S. Hawkins Reading Room on Archaeoastronomy' inside the new structure. It would be privately funded – so we might come knocking at your door if there is interest from English Heritage. Julia, his widow, has offered a wonderful oil painting of the professor to ultimately grace the walls of that library.

Finally, and most importantly, those of us who had the privilege of learning from Gerald, and this includes every person who has ever read any of his books (probably you), must press forward in our unbiased rediscovering of the long-gone arts and sciences which gained inspiration from astronomical phenomenon. Gerald would advise us to research, publish, and present our work to the world! Remember Hawkins' Way, he was a true patron of humanity in its most cosmic sense.

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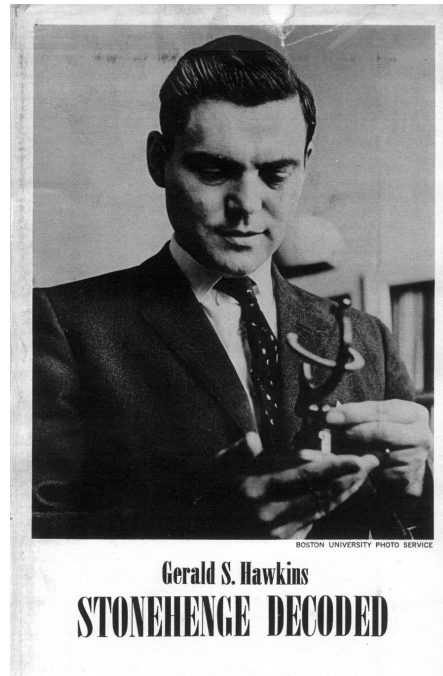


Figure 1. Gerald Hawkins on the cover of *Stonehenge Decoded*.



Figure 2. Gerald Hawkins (right) with Sir Martin Rees,  
British Astronomer Royal.