

Hilary Evans

Hilary Evans (1929–2011) authored books about hauntings, UFOs and other paranormal and Fortean phenomena. He was the co-founder with his wife of the Mary Evans Picture Library and a co-founder of the Association for the Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP).

Life and Career

Hilary Evans was born in Shrewsbury, Shropshire and moved to India with his family in 1933 when his father was appointed the headmaster of a school there. Five years later he returned to England to attend a school in Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

Between 1947 and 1948 he served in the police force in Palestine. He read English at King's College, Cambridge and took a master's degree at Birmingham University. After two years of private tutoring and then a further twelve years as a copywriter for an advertising agency he became a freelance writer. He married in 1956.

Evans was an avid collector of photographs and illustrations of unusual phenomena. In 1964, jointly with his wife, he co-founded the [Mary Evans Picture Library](#) to house their joint collection of historical printed images.

Psychical Research

Evans joined the [Society for Psychical Research](#) in the late 1960s, became a council member and served on the publications committee. Finding its ambit somewhat restricted, in 1981 he co-founded the [Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena \(ASSAP\)](#), a research and educational foundation which extends its interests to anomalies such as UFOs and Fortean phenomena.¹ He was also a member of the [British UFO Research Association](#) and the [Folklore Society](#).

Evans wrote extensively about ufology and the possibility of alien visitations, developing what he called a [psycho-social hypothesis](#). This placed the witness, instead of some 'unknowable alien entity', at the centre of the experience, and viewed it in psychological and cultural terms,² making it amenable to further study. He compared historical claimed encounters with fairies, demons, spirits and the like with more recent claimed accounts of encounters with extra-terrestrials.³ He also investigated subjects as diverse as the psychology of mass hysteria⁴ and claims that street-lights might be affected by a human presence.⁵

Hilary's willingness to give credence to paranormal claims brought criticism from sceptics such as Philip Klass⁶ and Christopher Scott.⁷ Other investigators, such as the author and UFO authority Clas Svahn, were impressed with his wealth of knowledge and scholarship.⁸

Archive

Evans donated his huge book collection to the [Archives for the Unexplained \(AFU\)](#) in Sweden, whose focus is 'on the paranormal, occultism, spiritualism, religion, mythology, folklore and behavioural sciences'.⁹

Works

Selected Books

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Panic Attacks: Media Manipulation and Mass Delusion (2004, with R.E. Bartholomew). Stroud, UK: Sutton Publishing Ltd.

Outbreak! The Encyclopedia of Extraordinary Social Behavior (2009). Charlottesville, Virginia, USA: Anomalist Books.

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The ongoing Medjugore spectacular (2000). *The Skeptic* 13/2, 7-9.

A case of electrical interference? (2000). *Paranormal Review* 15, 7-9.

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Miracles: A Scientific Exploration of Wondrous Phenomena, by D. Scott Rogo (1991). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 58, 109-11.

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Melvyn Willin

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Endnotes

Footnotes

- 1. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/books-obit...>
- 2. Rickard (2011), 26.
- 3. Grossman (2011).
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/aug/16/hilary-evans-obituary>.
- 4. Evans (2009).
- 5. Evans (2010).
- 6. Klass (1987), 63.
- 7. Scott (1982), 595.
- 8. <http://csblogg.ufo.se/csblogg3/?p=14245>
- 9. <http://www.afu.se/afu2/>