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Landscapes Of England: Hayle

By Steven Cronin

The sea roars, whipped into a frenzy by the Atlantic winds racing across the bay. The waves look good today, surfers will be out for sure. Come rain or shine, these boys are dedicated.

You can taste the salty spray as it draws you towards the water. The familiar smell of seaweed was home. I knew I was back.

The Cornish town of Hayle sits in the far southwest corner of England, near the midpoint of St Ives bay. It lies approximately 10 miles north of Penzance and is part of the Heritage Coast of Cornwall, owned by the National Trust.

The Trust has purchased large chunks of the Cornish coastline, ensuring protection for its wildlife and natural beauty.

"Morning," greets an elderly man, his face weathered, exposed to the elements and sands of time. His dog retrieves his master's stick from the white surf.

"Wind's up. Pity the small boats today," he continues, his faithful companion by his side, stick in mouth.

The small fishing boats leave regularly, setting out from Hayle harbour and sailing along the estuary at high tide and into the big blue. They must return before low tide else the estuary runs dry.

Hayle is part of a beautiful stretch of coastline running from St Ives to the west, through to Godrevy Point in the east and its symbolic lighthouse.

Godrevy Lighthouse features predominantly in paintings by John Miller who has captured the stunning natural beauty on canvass in many of his famous prints.

Westwards leads to the estuary and inland to the working fishing port. The small dock escorts you to the high street, a mixture of old and new. Shopping here is not great; Hayle's strength is its coastline.

Approximately halfway along the high street are the best Cornish pasties money can buy. Upon the corner sits the old bakers' shop, striving to meet demand for the local delicacy.

At least half a dozen work the ovens tirelessly to satisfy the endless queues. Seagulls perch atop the roof hoping for a taste of the action.

Across the road, the Cornish Arms serves a great pint of ale with which to wash down your meal. Relax and enjoy the unique Cornish ambience where strangers stop to say hello. Far from the mega metropolis cities, life in Hayle slows down to a crawl.

Steven Cronin owns the City Breaks website featuring city break special offers from luxury hotels to budget accommodations. For more information please visit

<http://www.sargas.co.uk>

In Pursuit Of Miller's Landscape

By Steven Cronin

I have always been a great admirer of the artist John Miller. His simplistic coastal landscapes are a wonderful escape from the rigours of city life in Birmingham.

But what of the subjects of his work? Were they just figments of his imagination or did these places actually exist?

Since buying my first print 'Estuary', his worlds have always seemed a beautiful Utopia, scenes of unrivalled natural beauty, somewhere I wanted to be.

Eventually I discovered his work portrayed much of the coastline of St Ives Bay in Cornwall, the county of unrivalled myths and legends, and that the estuary in question was in Hayle.

It wasn't long until I was making my way south along the M5 motorway in pursuit of the landscape John Miller had found so irresistible. The M5 takes you to the south of England.

Picking up the A30 would take me into the far reaches of the southwest, first Devon and ultimately into Cornwall.

The journey down the M5 was fairly nondescript. There's little to catch your eye as you make your way south. The motorway is simply a link to all the towns and cities along the west coast.

But upon reaching Devon, the A30 takes you through beautiful English countryside. Green rolling hills frame the horizon. The land is dressed like a patchwork quilt as farmers go about their daily business harvesting the land and seeing to the many animals scattered about their fields.

Driving through Cornwall was equally enjoyable, though the skyline was dominated occasionally by

manmade structures.

The green land and blue waters of isolated lakes were interrupted by huge wind turbines. Stood like giant white sentinels, though they may be a little sore on the eye, they are an essential piece of the jigsaw if governments are to find alternative energy sources to ease the threat of global warming.

The 'Welcome to Hayle' sign was greeted with a sigh of relief having spent the past five hours on the road. I headed for the docks and parked the car.

There were a dozen or so fishing boats in the harbour, many manned as fisherman prepared their vessels for a days work.

I left the boats and followed the water as it led through the estuary. It snaked its way through the contours of the land.

As I rounded a final bend the river met the sea and for the first time I could see where Miller had painted 'Estuary'. I stood at the precise spot he must have sat with his easel. It was easy to imagine the inspiration that must have flooded through his body.

As I walked nearer to the sea, the scene unfolded before me. To the left the coast continued to sweep around before reaching the town of St Ives.

I headed right, trying to stay out the way of the dozens of wind surfers scattered about the beach. Now the whole of the bay was visible. Several miles of golden sands lay before me.

As the shoreline drifted away to the left, Godrevy Lighthouse stood at the end of the bay, so prominent in many of John Miller's paintings. Finally I had seen Miller's landscape come to life.

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