Shining Land | Supplement

# Geomancy and Archaeology

***Ever since Alfred Watkins and John Michell propounded the idea of leylines, presenting their evidence, almost all archaeologists have implacably rejected and ignored them, despite a plethora of evidence available. Yes, there is much to discuss, but more openness and interest and less scepticism, disrespect and discrediting would really help. This is too important.***

Archaeologists have generally come to a rather irrational conclusion that, since alignments *cannot* exist, they *don't* – and the matter stops there. Meanwhile, geomancers work hard on researching alignments, but explaining what they truly are and what they actually do remains an open, unresolved question. Some might self-censor to avoid undue argument with boringly repetitive and sometimes aggressive sceptics, while others might go too far, jumping to conclusions that don't necessarily hold up. Shrapnel-damaged, geomancy awaits more receptive times.

There is a fundamental worldview issue between geomancers and sceptics. They have big differences of opinion over what is deemed acceptable as evidence, but this is not insurmountable and, while the matter is usually argued intellectually and at length, such differences are often more emotionally than rationally based and perhaps they need to be acknowledged as such. Sceptics claim the rational high ground, but the position they take is, frankly, dishonest.

As we have progressed through this book, a picture has been painted of a magical, shamanic culture with significant knowledge and ways of operating, taking a friendlier, more sympathetic approach to its environment than we, and incorporating a deeper awareness of nature and human nature. Real life was challenging to them just as it is to us, but they saw and approached things in a very different way. They lived in another world, in terms of their worldly circumstances as well as their psyches and worldviews. So, to understand them, we need to enter that world to the extent we can, to try to see things from where they stood.

For prehistorians, incorporating the principles of geomancy into the overall field of enquiry of archaeology would be transformative. It would involve a big shift of worldview, and acceptance of the depth and profundity of cultures different from our own and in some respects arguably more advanced. Sadly, for decades this transformation has been seen as a potential threat and loss, and it has thus been fiercely resisted. Archaeology is not unique in denying evidence, but this matter is critical to its progress. If, that is, there is a genuine intention to understand ancient cultures.

While new technologies, analytical techniques and people are opening up the scope and range of archaeological enquiry, uncovering much new evidence, an elephant waits quietly in the middle of the room, waiting to be seen. Archaeology is skewed, and as a result it lacks answers concerning the megalithic period.

## Worldview Conflicts

Now to address some wider issues around alignments. What little funded research that has been done over recent decades has, for the most part, set out to prove that alignments have no

valid basis or existence. In many cases flawed and biased, such research has sought to impose an apparently rational but actually a prejudicial interpretation of prehistoric landscape patterns such as alignments. There's an unwillingness to re-examine fundamental archaeological assumptions or to research alignments intelligently, fully and closely – only an habituated urge to disprove, debunk and discredit. In so doing, sceptics have boxed themselves into a corner since adopting such a position requires overlooking and denying a large body of factual evidence and then maintaining such a stance longterm in the face of volumes of oncoming evidence. This cannot last.

Meanwhile, in the last fiftyish years geomancers (ley hunters, dowsers and megalitho-maniacs), basing their analysis on the notion of *earth energy*, have unwittingly created contrasting problems, often by producing unsystematic findings or introducing visionary inputs and ideas that don't necessarily hold up or help the debate. There is plenty that *does* hold up, but it is doggedly rejected, and thus research progress is obstructed. Geomancers have lacked support, facilities, time and personnel, partly because funding is unavailable, partly for lack of public interest and partly due to a lack of common ground between geomancers. So, individuals, including myself, have done our own thing to the extent we can, and this has had mixed consequences. Nevertheless, good work has been done and knowledge has indeed advanced over the decades.

Modern technological means can only measure certain aspects and effects of subtle earth energy. Earth energy is neither clearly definable nor easy to define, even though certain frequencies can be detected by measuring radiation, magnetic anomalies, acoustics or brainwave patterns in visitors to sites. Since the modern mind is rather attached to reaching definitive answers, this leads to a lack of objectivity and to the inference that, since earth energy cannot easily be defined, *ergo*, it does not exist. This, despite the oft-quoted archaeological axiom, *absence of proof does not mean proof of absence*. There is proof, and plenty of it.

Work on alignments lies in the realm of 'pure research' – a bit like nuclear physics, space flight or pure mathematics – and while it is of marginal immediate value it has vast longterm implications, leading potentially to profound discoveries about energy, matter, consciousness, biosystems, climate and prehistory.

Geomancy brings up a further worldview problem, because accepting alignments implies accepting a host of other things, and many people don't want to go there because it involves wading out of one's depth, going against convention and potentially losing respect or income, funding or promotion. In the longterm this pressure to conform charges a price both for individuals and for the state of human knowledge.

The existence of subtle energy is simply demonstrated by observing the experiential effects of spending time at ancient sites. It requires neither instruments nor a doctorate. Saying this doesn't mean it is merely subjective, inaccurate or to be ignored – it means simply that science does not have answers and it cannot work on this level. To add to this, while many people for methodological reasons doubt the evidence provided by dowsers, studies of alignments, archaeoastronomy, mathematics and geometry do produce hard, verifiable evidence.

Dowsing and intuitive skills such as psychometry should be assessed not on the basis of their methods but on that of their results. They bring much to the discussion, whether or not the means they use make sense. All of these branches of geomancy point toward one unifying factor: *subtle earth energy*. Research needs to address this without bias, even if it involves

stretching concepts and entering unknown territory. Today's constraints will not apply permanently. Things will change, perhaps by necessity.

## Antiquity of Aligned Sites

Several problems arise with alignments. Some complaints against alignments are genuine and some are rather neurotic. Here we'll look at a few of them.

Sceptics assert that alignments are invalid because they often contain sites of different ages. This is a valid reservation, at first, and perhaps in some cases. As suggested earlier, a site's first use can precede construction of a megalithic edifice on that site (whether or not there is proof), so each needs considering individually without generalisation. But the location of stone circles and other sites in conformity with the Neolithic backbone alignments system suggests that many of the locations were known of earlier than the time they were built on.

In some cases, a younger site will have been placed on a pre-existing alignment, in effect plugging it into the network. So, it's necessary to check the ages of all sites on the alignment, since the presence of at least three sites of similar antiquity points to the time-period when that alignment might have been established. It is to be expected that alignments will have sites younger than the base sites upon which the alignment was established.

This apparently valid complaint largely does not apply in West Penwith, since many alignments do actually connect sites of similar antiquity. Unfortunately, such a complaint is often used as a blocking, discrediting or dissembling device, to throw people off balance. Sceptics need to look closely at sites and alignments on a case-by-case and evidential basis, avoiding sweeping statements. Blanket rejection of alignments on such a basis doesn't constitute a serious challenge. Nevertheless, when an alignment contains sites of varying ages, it is worth examining the implications closely. Here are a couple of examples.

- **Alignment 3, Castle an Dinas to Mên an Tol stone circle**, a John Michell alignment that passes through Castle an Dinas, Try Menhir, Boskednan SE kerbed cairn and finally Mên an Tol. Three of these sites are Bronze Age. Castle an Dinas is thought of as an Iron Age multivallate hillfort, but its cairns and inner ring are Bronze Age in origin. The existence of this alignment suggests that all four sites are of a similar antiquity, that Castle an Dinas is older than Iron Age – and its innermost circular bank is actually Bronze Age. The enclosing, and more prominent, Iron Age banks were not built when the site was first established. The alignment also passes through two Iron Age or Romano-British settlements at Mulfra Vean and Chysauster, though here the settlements will have appeared on the alignment well after it was established. It does not pass through significant remains (rocks or houses) in either settlement, so these settlements' placing on the alignment might be incidental.

In the Middle Ages, crosses were sometimes integrated into alignments, presumably to christianise them – this happened around the Merry Maidens, and the cross-builders came from St Buryan. Were they aspiring exorcists or Christian geomancers?

- **Alignment 25**, a short radial in the Merry Maidens complex, aligns Boskenna Gate Cross with Boskenna Cross, then passing through the late-Neolithic Tregiffian chambered cairn – one of the early sites of southern Penwith – to the Bronze Age Merry Maidens stone circle. Here, the question is: did the medieval Christians create a new alignment plugged into two existing prehistoric sites, by planting the two crosses, or do the two crosses occupy locations originally occupied by pre-Christian menhirs or stones? Is the alignment Christian-period or Bronze Age? Whichever is the case, it's a valid alignment.

So, in some cases Christian crosses are plugged into the alignments network – as also is the case with older churches such as those at Gulval, Sancreed, St Just or St Mary's in Penzance.

One further problem is the parish boundary stones around the Carn Galva area, taken by some to be invalid as viable determining points on alignments. The stones come, presumably, from the medieval era. However, stones such as the Four Parishes Stone (*Maen Crouse*, the Cross Stone) and the Bishop's Head and Foot Stone may also be situated on menhir sites, or they might be upcycled menhirs, not least because crosses carved on them suggest such carving was done to exorcise and christianise existing stones. Perhaps certain boundary stones were also intentionally placed on pre-existing alignments.

So this complaint is not irrefutable – but we do not actually know. I prefer to rule them in since these alignments are valid and accurate, whatever complainants might say, rather than to rule them out because they cannot easily be explained. If it is a demonstrable alignment, it is an alignment, whether or not we have an explanation. So there is a question about the ages of different sites on an alignment, but it asks for closer research rather than instant dismissal.

## Randomness and Chance

This looks like a problem but it is not. Sceptics often say that if you have a large number of points on any map, alignments are guaranteed to show up solely on the basis of chance or randomness. In the barrowfields of the Lizard and the cairnfields on Scilly, this assertion is proven incorrect: the location of barrows and cairns in both does not conform to the principle of alignment. There is an organic, curving patterning to their location, and accurate, convincing and consistent alignments are difficult to find and are not entirely satisfactory as alignments. They just do not *click* or *hum* in the way that genuine alignments do.

However, menhirs and other sites on the Lizard and Scilly do conform to typical alignment rules, so the principle of alignment is not absent in either place. The alignment principle was not applied in the barrowfields and cairnfields, for whatever reason. This disproves sceptics' point that alignments can be found in *any* distribution of points on an ancient sites map, simply on the basis of randomness.

Many randomness complaints arise from inaccurate testing standards, the scale of maps used and sometimes strange ruses that look convincing, but they aren't. What is impressive about alignments, when examined closely, is their fine-tuned exactitude. In the alignment maps of Cornwall tight accuracy standards have been used, restricted to three, maximum five metres, removing much of the likelihood of accident.

There's more: there's a certain beauty and character to the way alignments work. They don't easily fit our angular logic, but they have a certain logic and pattern of their own. Unwillingness to adjust our thoughts to the actual lay of the land and the evidence provided by alignments becomes a critical factor here. We need to work from actual observations, not from conditional requirements that suit only the modern mindset.

Randomness is an abstract concept rather like infinity. It has no physical basis in reality or in science, and there is no conclusive proof that it exists except in theoretical modelling. Randomness occurs only in cases of maximum entropy – a complete and utter lack of coherent or predictable order – which can happen only when time and space are each and both infinite. That is, maximum entropy has no patterns, frequencies, cyclicity or coherence, no duration (time) and no extent (space). Yet both time and space *are* finite, by their very nature, and here we're talking about spatial distribution of sites. So *randomness or chance do not actually work* in this debate.

‘Chance’ can here be used as an undermining or discrediting device that may sound persuasive but it is not actually credible. A position of pseudo-scientific, mathematical or rational authority is adopted to help carry the argument, exploiting the weakness of many people’s understanding of this kind of question. But it doesn’t work. *When alignments possess patterns of theme, antiquity and geography, as can be observed in a place like Penwith, the chances of an alignment arising randomly become extremely slim.* So the answer to a sceptic making use of this proposition is: *do more homework and examine the evidence*. Astrologer Sir Isaac Newton, a heavyweight who thought up both the law of gravity and the Bank of England, when confronted by a sceptic, rather snootily replied, “Sir, I have studied it and you have not”, and this is often the case when we come to geomancy too.

Some alignments just don’t hold up and they have been weeded out of the Cornwall maps, which are under regular review to eliminate false positives. This pruning process has eliminated only a modest number of alignments – the rest are sound. Those that are questionable or that make little topographical or megalithic sense are deleted or left as a thin, unobtrusive lines on the map until the matter is further reviewed and settled.

*Then we remain stuck with those alignments that are accurate, firing on all cylinders and unable to be eliminated* – the majority. That, to sceptics, is a problem. The only get-out is to reject *all* alignments as invalid. Such a conclusion, though oft-repeated and popular, is evidentially weak, incorrect and irrational. Denial is not a lasting option.

While we don’t understand what exactly the ancients were thinking, we know they operated according to common megalithic rules, signs of which exist across Britain, yet they did not adhere to categorical ways that we post-literate moderns, with our tight concepts, terminologies, formulae and designs, prefer. The ancients clearly knew what they were doing and why, complying with megalithic rules, standards and norms organically and intuitively.

There’s something rather poetic and magical about this. At times it leads to fascinating twists of design or pattern unique to one site only – Mên an Tol’s holed stone and the inclined stone in Boscawen-ûn being good, thoroughly unique, one-off examples. Modern rationalism has a standardising, classifying, definitive, de-poeticising and exorcising effect on the way we see things, and qualified archaeologists emerging from universities today reinforce this tendency. This has led to a poor understanding of key fundamentals in our understanding of prehistory. Meanwhile earlier cultures had variable, rounded, curvier, more dimensional ideas about the reality they lived in. They had a magical-intuitive side to their intellectual pursuits and engineering projects. There is something to learn from this.

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