

Chair and Vice-Chair's Report

A review of our first year

The Geomancy Group

Samhain, 2002

Maria Hayden, Chair
Grahame Gardner, Vice-Chair

In many ways it is difficult to believe that The Geomancy Group has only just seen the wheel turn one full circle as so much has been achieved during our first year. We, Maria and Grahame, hope that you have found it as enriching a time as we have.

While we have undoubtedly had challenges to face and overcome, it seems most appropriate to take this opportunity to look back over some of the year's highlights and to really acknowledge the group's achievements to date. However, as you all know, Samhain is not just about the ending of the old year; it also opens the door to the new. Therefore we have also stopped to consider briefly what the next year may hold.

Review of Events

After a rather difficult birth, the Group met for the first time, post-Glastonbury, at Richard's Stone Circle Camp at Beech Hill in E Sussex at Autumn Equinox 2001 (21,22,23 September). This was an important weekend for us in a number of ways. Firstly we had a venue and a purpose to give us some sense of focus in what could otherwise have been a confusing and confused time. As we were one small group in a rather large crowd, we were effectively forced to recognise ourselves as having a distinct identity and to introduce ourselves as 'the geomancy group' (the Capital Letters came later!).

We quickly began to understand what we did and did not want to manifest in our weekends together. It was clear that we needed to put some structure on our gatherings, while still retaining a relaxed atmosphere, hence the requirement for a schedule. It was also noted that we have to be disciplined about time keeping or our precious time together could quickly slip away with much being achieved.

Nonetheless we managed to get in a very useful dowsing session, led by Shaun and Paul. A couple of people found that this was the turning point in dowsing confidence. We were also happy and privileged to be able to work with Ivan MacBeth and the North Stone and were pleased that Richard had invited us. We hope to have the opportunity to return to Beech Hill at some time in the future, to enjoy the benefits of the hot-tub, the orgone accumulator and, of course, the geomancers' playground.

John invited us to his home, Townhill Farmhouse, in Dorset for our second weekend together (7,8,9 December). Susie and Maria facilitated the main part of the weekend training – Space Clearing – with Grahame leading a session on Ceremony, culminating in a rather chilly night-time Ceremony around the Stone of Creativity and Inspiration. He also gave us the gift of the Kabbalistic Middle Pillar meditation that Ali kindly recorded and sent copies to all participants. The weekend proved to be very intense as we processed a great deal of information in a very short period.

A highly successful feature of the weekend was going out for a relaxed dinner together on Friday night. This has since become a regular highlight of our time together. We also managed to fit in a performance by John's Dorchester-based choir on Saturday night. We are thankful to John for having offered his home as a venue and as a 'real' space to space-clear and for coordinating our arrangements.

It was at this event that we nominated John as Treasurer as Grahame and Maria had already identified the need for a group chequing account and someone to keep track of it.

A huge vote of thanks was due to Jamie 'and his mum', Kate, for preparing a wagon-load of food for us. This left us free to concentrate on our work, rather than focussing on what we were going to eat.

The key lesson that we learned from this event was that, while we definitely need to use our time wisely, we must also pay heed to not over-schedule and to leave spaces for people to relax. Something else that came out of it was an understanding that we really were operating under a new paradigm from our time in Glastonbury. **There is no onus on anyone to attend all the sessions.** Therefore it is the responsibility of each of us to look after our own energy and to recognise when it is, or is not, appropriate to participate in a session. If someone feels tired or unwell, it is up to that individual to assess if he or she is well enough to continue or if a break and a rest might not be more appropriate. In the latter case, it is reasonable to assume that anyone choosing to miss a session would notify the event leader of this.

By far our most successful, though also our most expensive, event to date was the Roslin trip (19,20,21,22 April 2002). It was one of those fortuitous occasions when everything seems to work: we had a teacher that everyone wanted to hear – Patrick; we had a theme that everyone wanted to cover - 'Demons, Devas, Dragons and Doorways'; we had the location, location, location – Roslin Glen and Rosslyn Chapel; we had an excellent guide – Jim Munro, who took us to his heart; we had a second teacher - Gordon Strachan – whose name initially caused some consternation after our previous experience together. As some of us had expected, however, Gordon proved to be an absolute delight, as well as an irrepressible flirt, and even the Sacred Geometry seemed interesting! We had a brilliant session on Earth Acupuncture followed by group practical work at Castlelaw hillfort in the Pentland Hills, preparing Granny-safe homes.

We had exclusive use of the hotel and everyone agreed what a difference it made to group energy having everyone staying under one roof (apart from Gordon) and we didn't even have much complaint about food!! We had also learned from previous scheduling experiences and retained a great deal of flexibility while still covering a lot of ground. This worked particularly well as Patrick and Gordon were happy to fit around each other (if not necessarily around dessert!). In fact the only two downsides of Roslin were a) the cost and b) the difficulty of surpassing it. It was quite incredible how much the group energy was consolidated over the course of the four days and we made enormous progress on getting clarity on the way forward.

Probably the most important decision was recognising our identity. This was summed up by Patrick as "***a forum for the study, practice, discussion and promotion of geomancy and geomantic awareness***". There was also very clear acceptance that the group could accommodate both those wishing to train further, and work, as geomancers and also those who just want to further their energetic knowledge and retain a connection with the group. Sara was nominated as Secretary at this meeting.

Another ground-breaking aspect of the weekend was that we had our first taste of group enlargement. There were a number of people who were completely against the idea of opening up to outsiders before the event. It had been agreed in Glastonbury that Barry Hoon, our webmaster, would be invited along as a guest to Roslin in exchange for hosting the old MEG forum for us but, nonetheless, people were nervous. By Saturday evening, however, we were hearing of people having a total change of heart and mind. By discussion time on Monday, not only was Barry our first candidate for full admission to the group, but also there was an overwhelming feeling that we would benefit greatly from opening up to others. Thanks go to everyone who was involved in this event for helping co-create such a magickal weekend.

Our third official event was due to have been a trip to Cornwall but this was unfortunately cancelled. John stepped into the breach and invited us for a return visit to Townhill (5,6,7 July) – thanks again, John. By this time, Paul had just moved to Bridport and he was happily available to attend and lead us on some great dowsing adventures. Saturday concentrated on megalithic sites – the Helstone (dolmen), Hampton Down (stone circle) and Grey Mare and Her Colts (long barrow). Paul demonstrated how he would approach a site and then left us to get on with it. It was reassuring that we seemed to find largely the same energy leys and water lines as one of the crucial aims of this process is for us to be able to speak the same language if we're working on a job together. The main confusion seemed to surround waterlines that had energy leys running with them. Paul commented on the interesting use of sacred sites in the area for healing purposes after Maria's severe hay fever improved dramatically following some work on one of the stones. This was the second time that he had observed such healing in the area. On Sunday, the emphasis was on 'Christian' sites, with a visit to St Catherine's Chapel at Abbotsbury, followed by a visit to a very special little chapel in the woods. A concert given by Yellow Hat Sect Buddhist monks from Tashi Lumpo monastery completed the evening and the few people who stayed over until Monday went along to do some preparatory work for the Watcombe Farm Labyrinth.

This event had a very different energy to the previous two. This was due in no small part to the fact that people were planning on coming and going throughout the weekend, making it very difficult to hold the group energy. Undoubtedly this was exacerbated by the fact that we really did not consecrate the weekend as sacred space and did not circle up until our chanting session in St Catherine's Chapel. This is a facet that a number of us really missed. If we are to consider ourselves geomancers, we quite simply have to walk our talk. We had another 'first' on this visit: it was the first time that a partner (other than Karin, of course) joined us, personified in Elspeth, Grahame's partner. They had just returned from a camping holiday in Brittany, and happily pitched tent on John's lawn.

While many of us were somewhat wary of this situation, because of the potential of having to stop and explain everything etc, we were relieved and delighted to find that Elspeth is an experienced dowser, having undergone some basic geomancy training with Sig & Patrick, Paul and Billy Gawn at the Oak Dragon 1999 eclipse camp in Cornwall. She was quite happy trudging through the Dorset countryside with a motley circle of geomancers. Perhaps this question needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis.

The final meeting in the cycle is the AGM, tagged on to the EEG meeting at Northampton at Samhain (25,26,27 October). We trust that this will see the finalisation of our programme for the next year as well as discussion of other current issues.

Ratification

We, Maria and Grahame, were ratified as key facilitators in Glastonbury last year and designated Chair and Vice-Chair at Roslin in April because of the need for these posts if we are to become a constituted group. While others may have done things somewhat differently, and indeed, with hindsight, we might well change a few things with ourselves, we are reasonably happy with the role that we have played to date. We work well as a team, and are confident that we have done our utmost to hold the energy of the circle as it has gradually begun to take shape into a more defined group. We have been conscious of holding spaces open for all original members of the group and for allowing possibilities to blossom. We trust that we have made a satisfactory contribution to defining the group identity, purpose and also to the more mundane running of the group. However, that may well not be everyone else's perception. Therefore we would like to offer this opportunity for anyone who feels that the group would be better off if we were to stand aside, to indicate this in writing (anonymously if you wish) by 11 October so that everyone has a chance to consider the nominations in advance of the Samhain meeting. Also please indicate if you wish to nominate yourself as a successor. We are perfectly prepared to step aside if this is in accordance with group energy; however, we are equally quite happy to continue in our current roles if this is what other members would like. Whatever the outcome, we would like to thank you all for your trust in us to date, for your support, your cooperation, your patience and, not least, for the lessons that you have taught us. Whether you believe it or not, we honour each of you; we honour the Circle and we honour the process.

Newsletters

The group newsletter effectively grew out of Maria's updates on the initial consultation process and were considered a way of updating those who did not have access to, or did not choose to use, the forum. While four newsletters per year are by no means guaranteed, we have pretty much fallen into this cycle. Frequency is dependent to some extent on news available to circulate as well as on our own availability. One area of frustration is a lack of articles being submitted by other members of the group and we would particularly like to invite people to give a little more thought to this over the next year. The item could be a write-up of an event or course that you've attended that might be of interest to others; it could be refer to some specialist knowledge that you'd like to pass on; it could be a description of a new technique you've developed; it could be a poem or it could just be a joke. What we're trying to get across here is that it's not particularly healthy if all of the energy for this comes from us. On the same theme, we would very much welcome the opportunity to have others share the task of editing and producing the newsletter. It is simply an in-house information sheet at the moment so there's no need to feel 'Oh, I couldn't do that'. Undoubtedly there are many in the group who could do a far better job than us but up to now volunteers have been rather scarce on the ground.

Costs

Up until recently Maria has not been drawing on money from the coffers to cover the cost of postage etc. This was at least partly due to the fact that she was in Ireland and this created extra costs that she felt the group should not have to bear. Grahame and Maria have now both started to recoup outlay for production costs etc. but clearly the balance will probably look healthier than it ordinarily would at this time. We currently continue to cover telephone costs ourselves.

Up to now, Barry has been very kindly working on our behalf on the back of his trip to Roslin with us. We have simply been paying hosting charges for our website, operational since Beltane. The transition back to an enhanced Torrific (Barry's company) forum will demand some input from him as will the further development of the public website. Barry has indicated that he is happy to do this as his contribution to the group in exchange for attendance at other Geomancy Group events. He has also re-iterated his desire to belong to the group. Also on the subject of the website, Maria has recently secured our domain for the next five years. We also hold the .com registration now. As you will see from the Subscription and Membership Management Proposal Document, we propose that only those actively using the website as a marketing tool bear the main costs associated with it. If it becomes more of a public resource, we may need to reconsider this at a later date.

While those attending generally cover the cost of weekend venues, we are making an exception in the case of the AGM. The cost of the meeting room for this is probably best covered by subscription as it is important to the group as a whole, whomsoever actually comes. Our original idea was that if members were only to attend a single event in the year, this would be the one.

As you will have seen in the minutes from the Autumn Equinox discussions, there is no clearly defined system for energy exchange within the group for teachers etc. We would like to say a massive 'Thank You'

to anyone who has contributed in any way and would ask each of you to take responsibility for ensuring that the level of energy exchange, monetary or otherwise, is appropriate and one with which you're comfortable. If you feel undervalued for your contribution, please do say so; if you feel that we've overpaid you, please, please, please say so. We have already learned just how important it is to keep the channels clear within the group.

Achievements over the past year

- Undoubtedly the biggest achievement is that the Group is still together and is probably more united, and indeed dynamic, than ever. We have made considerable progress in transforming the dynamic from being that of Teachers and Students to being a 'leaderful group of peers', a prospect that seemed highly unlikely this time last year.
- We have succeeded in running four events as planned and we now have a reasonable proposal for next year's schedule. We have further identified shamanic work as a possible theme for our third year.
- Given the geographic spread within the group, we have come quite a way in terms of setting up a communications structure, though this is certainly an area that we feel requires more energy. We currently have the Forum established as the main organ of communication, with the Newsletter as backup. The thorny question of dealing with those on the technological periphery continues to niggle and we still feel that we need to do more in terms of outreach to keep these members informed and on board. If we go ahead with the proposed changes to the subscription and membership management system, this situation may well appear to worsen if not everyone chooses to renew his or her subscription. We have half-heartedly produced a ring-around tree but so far this has been for emergency use only. Sally has suggested that we need to upgrade this to a 'buddy' system and this certainly needs careful consideration.
- Given the successful outcome of the first questionnaire, we surveyed the group a second time. This was a useful process, allowing us to identify where our needs had changed from Beltane 2001 and giving feedback from group members that we may not have been fortunate enough to have seen at weekend events.
- We have the geomancygroup.org website up and running, though much development work remains to be done.
- We have a draft brochure available and ready for printing. We have furthermore identified the need for supplementary specialist information sheets, though these have still to be drafted and will broadly reflect website content.
- We identified the need for a chequing account to help in event organisation etc. This subsequently led to the nomination of John as Treasurer and the opening of a deposit account in the name of The Geomancy Group. As yet, we cannot have our own chequebook without having a proper Constitution. This is an area currently under examination.
- We have agreed that everyone in the group should have a current, printed copy of the Subscriber Contact List, on an annual basis at least (enclosed herewith).
- We have taken the brave but undoubtedly healthy move of embracing group enlargement and have already had Barry join us in the circle. Ros, who indicated her interest in working with the group, was unfortunately unable to join us in Dorset as originally planned, due to ill health. However we very much look forward to seeing her at the Watcombe Farm Labyrinth project, and indeed at Imbolc.
- We have had our first taste of having partners attend certain events and have found it easier than we had supposed.
- We have developed a clear idea of the group identity.
- We have finally agreed a Geomancy Group logo.
- We have come to know each other as friends as well as colleagues and fellow pilgrims and to understand a little more about what each of us has to offer.

The Way Ahead

So where do we see The Geomancy Group going from here? While some of us may have a longer-term view, for the purposes of this document we will confine ourselves to the short to medium term.

We plan on proceeding with the scheduled events for the next year, once they have been given final approval. Given the fact that no one contacted us to indicate a clash of dates, we anticipate that this should be a case of rubber-stamping. We hope that this gives everyone sufficient notice to plan other events around our dates and would encourage you all to attend as many of our events as you possibly can. If you know that this will not be feasible, we would ask you to consider making a special effort to attend the Samhain meet next year, as this is the designated Annual Gathering. If you would particularly like to see Patrick, we anticipate that he will lead the Beltane weekend in a teaching capacity. However he also plans on attending at least one other weekend in a private capacity, dates still to be decided. We are also aware that he is now ready to proceed with his apprenticeship programme and further information on timing, costs, duration etc will be forthcoming very shortly. We can tell you, however, that the programme will only be available in Scotland or Vermont. Grahame is trying hard not to feel smug about this! ☺

A great deal of thought and consideration has gone into the Subscription and Membership Proposal document and we really hope, and strongly recommend, that it be broadly accepted by the group. If so, this will be implemented immediately as it seems appropriate that the subscription period should run for a year from Samhain (1 November to 31 October from an administrative point of view).

As previously indicated, we will continue to try and improve group communication. Please remember that the 'office' is almost always open so do feel free and welcome to call or email either of us to discuss any ideas, or indeed concerns, that you may have.

We plan on developing the public website much more over the next year as well as working on the private 'Members Only' pages.

By Beltane we expect to have a full set of literature available for dissemination.

We anticipate continuing with group enlargement and would expect that a couple more selected candidates may be proposed for group membership. In the meantime, we will put more energy into exploring the enlargement process more fully, from initial proposal and selection of 'appropriate' candidates, through the probationary period, to the final approval mechanism and full initiation into the circle. It seems clear that while Maple Dragon provided a useful template in terms of the magickal benefits of enlargement, we have now exceeded that group's scope in our terms of reference and need to look elsewhere for ideas on how to make this work effectively for us.

We look forward to strengthening our bonds with the BSD and the EEG and any other groups whose area of interest coincides with some of our own. However it should be remembered that while our path overlaps many others, we must retain our integrity, our sense of identity and our true purpose.

Our love, our thanks and our blessings to you all.

Maria and Grahame