

# The Geomancy Group

## Minutes of Biennial General Meeting 29 October 2017

Fernie, Mindrum, Northumberland

*Present: Richard, Jewels, Patrick, Giulia, Ros, Grahame, Sarah, Brannie, Barry, Kiarna*

*Apologies for absence: John & Jill, Jon, Sara, Shaun, Fay, Sig & Karin*

### 1. Chair Report

Jewels acknowledged the good turnout for this meeting, comparing it to the last BGM in Wales, which attracted only a small group. Due to increased personal commitments, she announced her intention to stand down as Chair this year. She complimented Ros for her fine work in sourcing excellent accommodations for the Group, in particular this lovely place; and gave thanks to Grahame for his continuing work on the website and fielding client enquiries. Jewels feels that her main achievement as Chair has been instigating the development of the written 'constitutional code' (which was compiled by Grahame from previous meeting minutes and discussed at length by the present committee during an unofficial Group gathering in Skye in January 2017), and starting the secret Facebook page for the Group - although she acknowledged that she had not actually done any of the work on those herself(!) She suggests that the incoming Chair should focus more energy on developing membership guidelines and protocols for handling visitors/guests at meetings.

Patrick led a vote of appreciation for the Chair's work.

### 2. Treasurer's Report

Ros reported that subscriptions are up to date, and after deducting £5/month for web hosting and £100/month to go towards BGM property rental, the bank balance is about £1,000.

Some people are still very slow to respond about payment requests or even confirmation of attendances at meetings, which makes booking suitable accommodation very difficult; Ros asks everyone to please respond earlier to let her know if you plan on attending a meeting, and thanks those who do respond (and pay) quickly. At this particular meeting, Shaun had paid in full but backed out literally the day before; Fay had stated her intention to attend but had not paid anything, and again withdrew at the very last minute. This meant that the accommodation was not fully utilised and Sarah and Brannie could have stayed with the rest of the Group instead of booking into a B&B.

### 3. Secretary's Report

Grahame had already sent out list of website enquiries over the last two years, there was some discussion on referrals to confirm any follow-ups. He updated some contact details for those present and will send out a new contact list ASAP.

Kiarna offered her IT skills, suggested that it could be possible to hook up a live webcast or video call of meetings for absent members to watch, depending on internet availability. The Chair suggested that we have further discussion about this over the course of our next couple of meetings.

#### **4. Election of Officers**

Grahame was elected as Secretary, Ros as Treasurer again. Jewels proposed John Moss as new Chair (having previously discussed this with him). The meeting was unanimous in welcoming John as our new Chair. Congratulations John!

#### **5. Constitutional Guidelines (“The Code”)**

There was extensive discussion on this document, which had been sent out prior to the meeting. Some of this overlaps into the next section on membership policy.

It was felt that one of the areas that needed further development is the policy regarding bringing guests along to meetings, and the need to clearly distinguish between potential probationers and other guests, e.g. friends or family members, or other practitioners who just want to hang out with us for a weekend but not join the Group. It was decided that any requests to bring a guest along to a meeting should be routed through the Chair, who would have final veto.

On the subject of potential members, we agreed to amend the procedure as follows; the applicant would first attend one meeting simply as guest, following which a secret ballot would be held. If everyone is in agreement, they would enter the probationary programme as per existing procedures. After they have attended a further two meetings, another secret ballot would be held to confirm that everyone is happy with them joining the Group. Formal initiation would take place at the applicant’s *next* (fourth) meeting. The Chair should be responsible for organising secret ballots as required.

Kiarna suggested that we could record a short introductory video of potential applicants so that those not present have a chance to see and hear them. Grahame added that prospective new members are asked to provide a short biography or CV for circulation to the Group.

Prior to this meeting, John had raised a point about the Group bursary for those on low income. This clause dates back to 2004 and has not actually been used since then. Discussion ensued, and it was agreed that the guideline be amended to read, “At the discretion of the Chair and committee, the Group is open to offering limited financial support as required to assist anyone with financial difficulties to attend meetings.”

The Chair thanked Grahame for his work in putting together these guidelines.

#### **6. Group Membership Policy**

There was lengthy discussion about the Group identity and purpose, some of which is summarised here; but it was recognised that this is an ongoing discussion and not all threads were resolved in the time available.

Due to the increasing ages of some members who may be less able to attend meetings, we need to start thinking about maintaining our current numbers, which have always self-regulated around the 20 mark. Yet we need clarification on the new member procedures. We agreed that more work needs to be done to formalise our membership invitation protocol.

The original mission statement of the Group as “a forum for the study, practice, discussion and promotion of geomancy and geomantic awareness” still holds true. We have resisted previous attempts to become a more professional body and remain a “circle of peers”. Therefore, we are open to admitting peers in geomancy work, but we are not a mentoring group so prospective members should be at a similar level of development.

The present unstated 4-tier membership level should be modified to: Core - members of the original Glastonbury school who are effectively Life Members unless they self-elect to opt out of the Group, General Members, Probationers and Dormant.

We should endeavour to maintain an informal list of prospective guests who may be asked along to a meeting without necessarily inviting membership; Gary Biltcliffe and Caroline Hoare, and Peter Knight and Sue Wallace were suggested as prospective weekend guests. Other suggestions are welcomed.

Guests should not be invited to BGM weekends. Probationers may be invited to a BGM if they have completed the probationary period and are due for initiation.

More clarification on 'Dormant' members is required. Members are theoretically classed as dormant if they have missed 4 consecutive meetings, whereupon a letter is sent asking if they wish to remain members (this does not apply to 'core' members). It was agreed that Dormant members should not get priority over other members when booking accommodation for meetings. Probationary members who lapse into the Dormant category before initiation should have to re-apply as guests.

Firm cut-off dates need to be set for declaring intention to attend a meeting, as it is increasingly difficult to organise accommodation if people don't commit to attend. This continues to be a major problem in organising meetings; in future the Treasurer will declare a cut-off date by which your deposit must be paid. If it is not received it will be assumed that you are not attending and you will not be guaranteed a space at meetings.

Lengthy discussion ensued about the need for a clear procedure for conflict resolution within the Group and the need to allow everyone to freely express their opinion in such situations. Kiarna shared that, from her experience in other groups, the chair should first attempt to mediate any conflict between members before escalating it to Group level. Patrick disagreed with this model and said that conflict issues need to be addressed in circle from the start.

We did not reach resolution on the above topic, so the outgoing Chair tabled the motion that "the Group proposes that the committee continues to work towards a procedure for conflict resolution within the Group".

## **7. Dates & Venues for next year**

April 13-15 - Bodmin area, suggested prior to meeting by John.

October 6-8 - Scotland. Dumfries & Galloway area was originally proposed, as Grahame has recently organised a tour for the Japanese Society of Dowsing there, but on subsequent conversations it became clear that the Loch Tay/ Glen Lyon area in Perthshire held more appeal.

March 21-23 2019 - North Wales

September 2019 - week in Ireland?

## **8. AOB**

Brannie proposed that the Treasurer should receive a one-time free accommodation on next booking in return for her sterling service in finding suitable accommodation for the Group. Patrick seconded. Carried unanimously.

Richard shared the news that some of brother Ivan's ashes were interred in the Swan Circle at Glastonbury Festival.

Gary Biltcliffe had been especially helpful in responding to Saturday morning phone enquiries about the dragon currents at Bamburgh Castle, which greatly enhanced our visit. Grahame will write expressing thanks of the Group and formally inviting them to attend the next meeting as guests. *(Done, and offer kindly accepted).*

There was no other business.

*Grahame Gardner, Secretary. 30/10/17*

## **Weekend summary:**

Most of us assembled at the Collingwood Arms in Cornhill-on-Tweed on Friday evening for a lovely pub meal before heading for the accommodation. Grahame had gone to check out the house first in daylight before heading to the pub and reserving us a table, and Richard & Jewels went straight to the house and did not come to the pub; Sarah & Brannie were staying in a B&B near Ford and didn't come to the pub either.

Suitably fed and watered, we made our way back to the house, which was very remote about a mile along an extremely rough and potholed farm track. But it was very lovely and had lots of room for us all.

On Saturday, Sarah & Brannie came over and we headed over to Bamburgh Castle, which is pretty spectacular and a really interesting castle to explore. At Patrick's request, Grahame called Gary Biltcliffe to get more information on the route of the Bride and Oswald dragon currents; Gary was very helpful and kindly emailed us a map of the castle showing the alignments, so we managed to pick these up without much trouble as we toured the castle.

Of particular interest was the legend of the 'Laidley Worm', which seems to record geomantic knowledge of an astronomical alignment between the castle and the Spindlestone related to Imbolc/ Samhain sunset and Beltane/ Lughnasadh sunrise. The alignment to the Spindlestone from Megstone, one of the Inner Farne islands, is about 237 degrees azimuth, so it is a definite possibility. Further research required! More info on the Laidley Worm here: <http://heddonhistory.weebly.com/blog/the-laidley-worm-of-spindlestone-heugh>

After some lunch in the castle café, we headed for Lindisfarne, which turned out to be a bit of an energetic disappointment for many of us. The castle was closed for renovation, so that left only the ruined Priory, which was charging £7 for entry. Other than that, there was a nice view from the old coastguard tower, the mead shop (which also had a fine Scotch whisky selection) and some other local gift shops, but the whole place seemed rather lacking in any sacred atmosphere.

We had originally proposed also visiting Alnwick castle, but on being informed by Brannie that they were charging over £20 for entry, we decided to give it a miss and headed back to the house, where Grahame gave his presentation on 'Symbols, Shapes and Sigils' for evening entertainment, which everyone found very stimulating.

On Sunday morning we held the BGM, then in the afternoon we visited Hethpool stone circles, the largest in the county according to Megalithic Portal. Not much remains of the two adjacent circles, but a couple of the remaining stones are still fairly substantial. There was an intriguing semi-circular arrangement of stones right beside the car park that had us fooled for a moment, but as they don't appear on the map we assumed that they are a modern addition.

After that, we drove a little way into Scotland and visited the remains of Kelso abbey, then spent a little time at the confluence of the Tweed and Teviot rivers before climbing the first rampart of the old Roxburgh castle mound, which guards the entrance to the haugh that lies between the two rivers and is the site of the former Medieval town of Roxburgh.

The Sunday evening entertainment was provided by Richard, who treated us to his epic (and very funny) psycho-geographical poem based on the place names of south-east England. This was very well-received and we look forward to further developments.