Shining Land

Earth Energies and
Ancient Sites in West Penwith

Palden Jenkins

If learned critics publicly deride my work,
Then let them.
Not for them I wrought.
One day a soul shall live to share my thought:
for time is endless and the world is wide.

– Bhavabhuti, Indian mathematician and philosopher, 700s CE.

The Inevitable Introduction

Shining Land is a result of fiftyish years of exploration of ancient sites in Orkney, Snowdonia, middle Sweden, Somerset, Wiltshire and west Cornwall. It started when, as a young hippy student protester at LSE around 1970, I hitch-hiked out of London to escape the revolution and find some clarity – I was rather burned out. I landed up in Orkney.

It was a nice summer's night and perchance I found a stone circle, of all things – the Ring of Brogar. Rather naively I decided to get out my sleeping bag and sleep in the middle of it. During the night I dreamt of hordes of ancients dressed in clothes that definitely weren't from Marks and Spencer, dancing and chanting rhythmically around the circle in a deeply stirring way. One of them came over to me, reaching out and *thinking* to me – *come and join us*. I did. A long path started there and it hasn't quite completed yet, if ever it will.

It might be worth reflecting on the occasion when you were prompted to join this prehistory malarkey. Look at your initial feelings, what drew you into it and how it developed from there.

In 2019 I was diagnosed with bone marrow cancer and this of course made me think about my life, what I have done and what yet needs doing. What came up was to write down my rather dissident thoughts and perspectives on earth energies, geomancy and the prehistory of the neolithic and bronze ages – for the record, in case anyone is interested. By geomancy I mean the study of ancient sites from an *earth energy* viewpoint – as practiced by dowsers, sensitives, ley-hunters, metrologists, alternative archaeologists and some archaeoastronomers. This doesn't exclude archaeology – it adds to it.

Throughout my life I've been more of a geomancer than an archaeologist, and there's a bit of both in me. I'm a geopolitics buff and historian as well as formerly an astrologer, croppie, contactee, project founder, author, editor and humanitarian worker. My adult life started in Liverpool in the 1960s and progressed to the revolution at the LSE, a precursor of uprisings that continue worldwide to this day. It seems I didn't come here for a peaceful and ordinary life.

What concerns me in prehistory is that the full range of evidence is not considered – worse, it's usually rejected because it does not fit today's authoritative, scientific or academic framework – so we get skewed results in our understanding of ancient times – interpretative problems. When confronted with a nondescript pile of stones, a geomancer can often discern the difference between, say, a settlement site and a genuine sacred site.

Though an archaeologist with a genuine eye for these things can often do so too – and in a sense they are practicing informal geomancy when they do so. So when it seems I'm criticising archaeology, it's formal, academic and rule-bound archaeology that I'm referring to, not to archaeologists with a gift and instinct for figuring things out their own way.

This book concerns *ways of seeing things* and what we start seeing when we look at things another way. Ideas presented here might or might not stand the test of time or majority agreement, but my hope is that the discussion is widened and deepened hereby. It's all a question of interpretation. What do we choose to see as evidence? What does this evidence really show? We just do not know what was going on in the heads of the megalith builders – we can only deduce it from surviving remains they left behind. But they left clues.

The ancients lived in a very different world and they had a very different logic to ours. For archaeologists and geomancers together, understanding them involves a lot of guesswork based on patchy evidence with an abundance of holes and gaps. It's important to move our understanding toward theirs rather than to attempt to fit theirs into ours.

So do enjoy the ride. It might be a bit bumpy to some readers. The idea with this book is to shake things around and we'll see what emerges from there.

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Part One

Why are Ancient Sites Important?

1. Energy-fields

One reason many people like visiting ancient sites is that they affect our feelings and mood. You come away feeling lighter, your view of life has subtly changed, a smile comes to your face and you feel different. Something about them is special, distinct in tone and atmosphere when compared with more ordinary beautiful places out in nature.

This is because, when you visit them, you are entering an energy-field. It's heretical to say this, sad to say. The evidence lies in observing your feelings when you visit them, allowing yourself to register those feelings and take them seriously. When you leave, note whether anything has changed in your state of being between the time you entered and the time you left.

We don't understand how this consciousness effect works but we do have clues. The principle here is that containing, fixing and enhancing energy-fields seems to be a key reason why ancient sites were built, placed where they were and designed as they were. These energy-fields are neither easy to measure nor to understand rationally, presenting us with a problem.

The conundrum is that it isn't difficult to feel or sense *earth energy*, at least instinctually or semi-consciously, but it is more difficult to develop instrumentation to measure the full range of frequencies that seem to be involved. That's where things get stuck. We want to understand ancient sites and their builders on *our* terms, but they exist on terms of their own.

This question is awkward for rationalists, so it's mostly disregarded. But it's a key issue. My old friend the late philosopher Stanley Messenger gave this problem a moniker: APICHTID – *a priori it cannot happen, therefore it doesn't*. That is, the matter is already decided, so we won't investigate. However, here's another truth, which many might believe to be biased and irrational: *ancient sites cannot be understood without acknowledging the existence of their accompanying energy-fields.* And that's what this book is all about.

The ancients had a shamanistic perception in which they felt that, for human life to succeed, we needed to harmonise with the subtle energies, parameters, periodicities and laws of the heavens and earth, including the invisible realms, forces and beings that they perceived in their world. They developed a subtle energy technology to do this, and the specialists who did it were geomancers practiced in the art of auspicious location and design of sacred constructions. Their knowledge spanned engineering, astronomy, astrology, surveying, logistics, geometry, metrology (measurement systems), esoteric knowhow, social leadership and community synergy-building.

This was a practical, economic, ecological and psycho-social issue, not 'just' a religious or superstitious belief. This kind of idea is coming into a new focus today with current thinking about sustainability – an issue that goes much deeper than we are educated to believe. Our world is, after all, in trouble environmentally, economically, socially, technologically and... *psycho-spiritually*. So studying ancient sites represents not just a fascination with the past. It has something to do with the present and the future.

The megalithic era in West Penwith and Britain spanned more than two millennia – a hundred generations. It was the longest-lasting civilisation Britain has ever seen. It comprised two main periods of development. The first lasted several centuries between about 3700 and 3200 BCE. The second lasted

a millennium from around 2500 to around 1500 BCE, with its final end around 1200. These two phases were quite different but they had a certain continuity too.

The Neolithic Period

The first period, in the neolithic around 3700-3200, saw the building of the hilltop tor enclosures. In Penwith these are found at St Michael's Mount, Trencrom Hill, Carn Galva and Carn Kenidjack. The first such enclosure to be identified was at Carn Brea above Camborne, east of Penwith and in sight of it.

Important also to neolithic people were the cliff sanctuaries (cliff castles). These are normally dated to the iron age, around 400 BCE to 100 CE or so, but I urge reconsideration and will present good reasons later. Archaeologists identify the boundary 'ramparts' of cliff sanctuaries as iron age in origin, but this decides nothing except the antiquity of those banks.

The most remarkable megalithic constructions of this time were the quoits (cromlechs or dolmens), all located in the northern, upland part of Penwith, the centre of human activity in the neolithic. In engineering terms, these were the trickiest and most advanced constructions of the whole megalithic period, involving the raising of enormous multi-ton capstones. Capstone transportation would have been an enormous challenge. The quoits were not tombs, as they are often described: later, I suggest they were *energy-chambers*.

The neolithic 3000s also saw the erection of placed, propped and oriented stones. *Placed stones* were rocks moved short distances to install them in interesting, rather artistic locations, as if to enhance nature's enchanting visual magic – rather like a prehistoric art installation. *Propped stones* were raised up from the ground, often at one end, with one or a few smaller stones placed underneath. There were probably a few different purposes behind them. You can find quite a few up on Zennor Hill and Carn Galva but you need a 'magical eye' to find them. Later in the bronze age, some menhirs were propped too. *Oriented stones* had at least one flattish edge, and they were dug into the ground to stand vertically with the flattish edge oriented toward another, more distant site such as a hill or headland. These stones have not yet been noticed by archaeologists. There's more about all these later in the book.

The Bronze Age

Around 2500 BCE, after a multi-century pause, things changed. The indigenous culture of the late neolithic, just before 2500, developed new ideas and a new class of ancient sites gradually appeared across Britain. Archaeologists in Penwith tend not to date any sites before 2500 and they're probably largely correct, but revisions to this dating might be necessary. New ideas and people were entering Cornwall from Brittany and Iberia in the centuries around 2500-2200, bringing with them new knowledge, as well as capability in working in copper and, later, bronze. But the chances are that new bronze age trends were first developed by the locals before the incomers came, then to upgrade some of those ideas.

The 'Beaker influx' is so named after a characteristic style of drinking beaker these people brought with them (they brought boozing too). These incomers are reckoned to have been forerunners of the Celts and, with their arrival, the bronze age properly lifted off. The megalithic era took on a new shape and, over the following centuries, a profusion of stone circles, menhirs, cairns and barrows, sacred enclosures and other sites were built. Penwith evolved into a kind of megalithic national park. The principles developed in the neolithic were further developed, with more science and system involved.

The neolithics had intuitively located their sites on top of energy-vortices generated by upwelling blind springs and intersections of underground water lines. They also made use of astronomical, landscape and other factors. Bronze age people turned these principles into a large-scale project that eventually covered the whole Penwith peninsula – and they turned sacred site location and design into a science.

They did this by expanding the principle of aligning ancient sites, incorporating this method into all the sites they built. This was not systematic in the way we moderns might do if we were carrying out a big civil engineering project – there was a naturalesque, organic evolution to the way they did it, without a logical master-plan such as a neat grid system. But there was system to it nonetheless. The neolithic was more like poetry, more intuitive, while the bronze age was more like prose, more formulaic and designed.

About West Penwith

West Penwith or Belerion is the 'toe' at the far end of Cornwall, in the southwest of the Isles of Britain. It is dense with ancient sites. Penwith's rich megalithic prehistory goes back 6,000 years and the achievements of the peak of Britain's megalithic civilisation 4,000 years ago are well represented on the peninsula. In the bronze age Penwith was a source of tin, gold and copper, sitting at the hub of a maritime European Atlantic-coast culture – these two assets played a large part in Penwith's prehistoric evolution.

West Penwith is roughly 16×12 km (10×8 miles) in size. It had over 700 ancient sites big and small. Many are now destroyed or melted away but lots remain. These include neolithic tor enclosures, cliff sanctuaries and quoits around 5,700 years old; stone circles, menhirs, cairns and barrows around 4,000 years old; and also carns, fogous, rounds, holy wells, early Christian crosses and churches from later times.

There was a system to the way Penwith's ancient sites were located and built, forming a network that knitted into an integral pattern covering the peninsula. This suggests a background purpose, something bigger than the simple erection of individual megalithic sites. This book suggests an overall reason why the ancients went to such trouble humping around stones and earth for their construction projects – big capital investments for which they must have sought a favourable return, however they saw that. They invested more inspiration and perspiration in their ancient sites than in their homes, villages and material welfare.

West Penwith is a good place to research ancient sites. It's a concise area, distinct in size and defined by sea cliffs on three sides and a landward threshold in the east, formed by St Michael's Mount, Trencrom Hill and St Ives' Head. You don't have to hike far or burn up too much petrol to pursue this particular kind of madness. Many who live in Penwith or visit here are interested in prehistory, so there has been quite a lot of thinking about this area's ancient remains.

Penwith has a rather special magic atmosphere today – you can *feel* it – and the landscapes, cliffscapes and seascapes are uplifting and spectacular. At the far southwestern end of Britain and on Europe's Atlantic edge, it has one of the highest densities of ancient sites in Europe – strange, for such a small area. Orkney is comparable, at the other end of the isles of Britain.

But then, Penwith was in ancient times a focal hub for long-distance maritime traffic across the megalithic world – it was quite central, not peripheral as it is nowadays. Prehistoric Europe's megalithic culture stretched along the Atlantic seaboard from today's Portugal and Galicia in NW Spain to Brittany, Ireland, Britain and southern Scandinavia. It also affected parts of France, Germany and the Low Countries, and Sardinia and Malta.

In Cornwall things hotted up with the building of the first megalithic sites around 3700 BCE and this continued intermittently for hundreds of generations until at least 1500 BCE. That's a very long time. The British and Irish neolithic and bronze age cultures ran in parallel with other Old World cultures of the time in Crete, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Harappa (Pakistan) and China. Cornwall's tin, copper and gold were traded as far as Germany, Spain, Syria and Gaza.

Knowledge and principles established in the megalithic era were known and emulated in the iron age (in Cornwall from roughly 800 BCE to around CE 100), and these principles, mainly mathematical and

geomantic, were later incorporated into the building of medieval churches up to the 1300s, surviving only amongst esotericists and freemasons in the centuries after that.

In its heyday, West Penwith had around ten stone circles. Many of its menhirs have been destroyed by farmers, landowners and miners, and half of its quoits are nowadays in a poor state. Many cairns and barrows have melted into the landscape through weather erosion or they've been removed by landowners. The cliff sanctuaries, hilltop enclosures and hill camps (hillforts) are all still there, protected by the wildness of their locations.

Even so, Penwith has around 250 cairns and barrows, nearly 200 known or suspected menhirs and stones (roughly half of them no longer in existence) and 250ish other sites. Those that survive are well worth a visit. If you like walking, you can cover a number of them in one walking trip, and if you're not so good at walking, some sites can be visited with but a little legwork, but wheelchair access is difficult since there are stiles to climb, rough ground to cross and muddy patches in wet weather. Amenable sites for the disabled (depending on your ability) are the Merry Maidens stone circle, Ballowall Barrow, Lanyon Quoit, Cape Cornwall, Pendeen Watch, St Ives' Head and St Michael's Mount.

Welcome to Belerion – 'the shining land' – a name given it by Greek historian Diodorus Siculus in 60 BCE and still rather pertinent today. It's the oldest known place-name in Britain.

Alignments

So what is all this about alignments? Much criticised, disregarded and discredited, this phenomenon, dubbed *leylines* and popularised in the late 1960s by John Michell, is not just a fancy or spurious idea. Sorry about that. All of the alignments marked on the maps made for this research, with some exceptions detailed later, are accurate to within just three metres, on alignments stretching a long way. They are easy to check on maps and they're solidly evidential. Their crucial importance in the design and location of ancient sites is wilfully overlooked, even though their capacity to shed light on the purpose and meaning of megalithic sites is enormous.

You can find the various ancient site and alignments maps of West Cornwall online here: www.ancientpenwith.org/maps.html. The maps are in two online formats: one is on Google Maps – the most regularly updated, zoomable and informative version – and the other is in the form of JPG images you can download and keep for easy reference. Both are free to access online.

The ancients deliberately aligned their prehistoric sites with each other – not every site to every other site, but selectively. These alignments are *exact*. They are *not* lines across the landscape: the lines we draw are modern mapping devices simply to show where ancient sites are aligned with each other. We mark them as lines to indicate their presence and test their accuracy. The sites located on them are like objects lined up on a table with nothing connecting them. In Penwith alignments have no relation to ancient trackways or old roads, so please suspend the incorrect idea that they are trackways. They aren't *energy-lines* either, of the kind that dowsers pick up.

These alignments form a complete system covering Penwith, with some extending to the Scillies, the Lizard, the rest of Cornwall and further afield. Specific alignments often stretch between sites with some sort of connection with each other, if we judge them by type of site, age of construction or other commonalities. With some alignments, certain kinds of site such as menhirs or barrows predominate. In some cases it is also clear that newer sites, built in the iron age or later, were deliberately located on pre-existing alignments.

The foundation of the alignments network was laid down in the mid-neolithic around 3700 BCE and, from the very beginning, the ancients thought big, establishing key backbone alignments over quite long distances. How they worked these out is anybody's guess. The backbone alignments (marked in yellow on the maps) signify a burst of genius, suggesting that there was a caucus of brainy people working on this idea. It might come from elsewhere (except no one has discovered them elsewhere yet), or it might

have been indigenous or a fusion. The backbones formed a neolithic substructure onto which the more complex bronze age alignments system, involving stone circles, menhirs and barrows, was later grafted. Most bronze age sites were placed on an ever more complex array of more local alignments (marked on the maps in red).

The location of Chûn Quoit on the slope below Chûn Castle makes little logical sense, yet it was placed on top of the upwelling subtle energy vortex of a blind spring – and this is the main reason for its location. It was also positioned so that the summer solstice sun set neatly behind a nick in the outline of Carn Kenidjack a mile away. Brilliant. A few alignments pass to or through it, from St Ives Head, Bosigran Castle, Carn Galva, Zennor Quoit, Bosiliack Barrow, Carfury menhir and Lanyon Quoit – some of these alignments will have been established at the time of building Chûn Quoit and some would have come afterwards.

They did all this for good reasons. We must assume this. They had reasons good enough to justify going to all the sweat and bother of building a big stone quoit or, later, a stone circle – including sourcing and transporting the constituent rocks, erection and consecration – which probably took a few seasons' hard work for a team of people and their support network.

Bronze age geomancers applied a sophisticated kind of science, locating sites such as menhirs or cairns not solely because of the perceived significance the place itself – its *spirit of place* – but also because these sites networked well with others. Bronze-agers created a more integrated, logical system – *their* logic, not ours. Sites were located for carefully calculated reasons, with a mathematical, geometric, astronomical or subtle-energy logic to many of them. Good work on this subject has been done by many researchers over the decades, and we need to find out more.

A National System

The discovery of an integrated system covering Penwith has implications for our understanding of ancient sites across Britain, since similar systems likely existed in other regions. West Penwith has a concentration of sites of a kind found in only about fifteen areas across Britain. Two neighbouring concentrations are on Bodmin Moor and Dartmoor. Most of these areas are located in the west and north of Britain, though all parts of Britain and Ireland are variously covered with ancient sites and alignments, with a variety of densities.

Although the areas where each of these concentrations is found will have been enhanced, enchanted and upgraded by such landscape-engineering work, each area also contributed to a larger national network of megalithic regions, and there was a purpose to this. The people of the bronze age appear to have sought to participate proactively in the inner workings of nature, time and space, and this was their technological method for doing so.

It was a national project with commonalities across the country, though with many local uniquenesses too, and it suggests that a caucus of knowledge-holders and artisans travelled the land sharing their expertise. It also indicates a level of connectivity that rendered Britain, Ireland and Brittany into one culture-zone and proto-nation, albeit with regional variations.

How Alignments Work

To demonstrate how alignments affect the location of ancient sites, let's look at three alignments in the map here. [Map.] They define the positions of Lanyon Quoit, Boscawen-ûn and the Nine Maidens – three key sites in Penwith. Staking down these alignments are several coastal cliff sanctuaries: St Michael's Mount, Treryn Dinas, Maen Castle and Pendeen Watch.

These alignments suggest that cliff sanctuaries were neolithic in first use, around 3700-3500 BCE. They stand on natural coastal headlands, and the three backbone alignments shown on the map, plus others

like them, pass between the cliff sanctuaries and neolithic tor enclosures, thus associating both with each other. The importance in the earlier 3000s of these two kinds of sites lay in the fact that Britain was then mostly covered in endless forest and, in Penwith, these were places where people could get out of the wildwood – thus they were important sites.

These alignments define the position of key sites such as the stone circles and Lanyon Quoit, built around 3700-3500 BCE. Thus the cliff castles must be of a similar or greater antiquity to Lanyon Quoit, since their location defines its position. The stone circles were built later, around 2500-2200 BCE, though these alignments suggest that the sites of the stone circles might well have been known and revered in the neolithic, even though their building came much later.

An alignment from St Michael's Mount to Boscawen-ûn continues exactly through Maen Castle, extending to the Chapel Downs cairns on St Martin's, Scilly, ending at the prominent Samson Hill on Bryher, visible from the mainland. Meanwhile, an alignment from Treryn Dinas to Boscawen-ûn continues through Lanyon Quoit and the neolithic chambered cairn of Bosiliack Barrow, ending at a menhir (now just a stump) only yards NW of Nine Maidens stone circle. So Lanyon Quoit's position is defined by these alignments, and also by another from Carn Brea to Trencrom Hill (neolithic tors), then to Lanyon Quoit, then to the Botallack Common chambered cairn near Tregeseal stone circle.

Thus we can say that the bronze age stone circle complexes are positioned in relation to the neolithic tor enclosures and cliff castles. Backbone alignments are demonstrated to be neolithic in origin, and Lanyon Quoit's location verifies this. The backbone alignments are anchored in the cliff sanctuaries – thus they are neolithic. This bundle of major discoveries was made without an expensive research grant.

The alignments shown on the map demonstrate that there is no way they are accidental, as sceptics might assert. They involve key sites in Penwith. The chances of these key sites being accidentally aligned with each other are close to zero, however much sceptics might harrumph and claim otherwise. These alignments are deliberately built, accurate, verifiable and evidential.