

DOWSING THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

By Susan Meeker-Lowry

Sig Lonegren, M.A. is a dowser living in Glastonbury, England. Before moving "across the big pond" he lived in Vermont where he served as Selectman for Greensboro in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, trustee of the American Society of Dowsers (ASD), and former head of their dowsing school. He also founded the ASD's first Earth Mysteries Group. Currently, Sig teaches workshops and classes in geomancy, sacred geometry, dowsing, and related topics both in the U.S. and Britain. He is the founder of The School of Mid-Atlantic Geomancy which offers an intensive, eight month certification program in Modern European Geomancy, and the author of several books, including **The Pendulum Kit**, **Spiritual Dowsing**, and **Labyrinths: Ancient Myths & Modern Uses**. He is a trustee of The Chalice Well in Glastonbury and a council member of the British Society of Dowsers.

Sig was first exposed to dowsing by his mother forty years ago when she taught him to dowse with wire coat hangers using his home's underground water pipe as a target. But it wasn't until the summer solstice of 1970 that he realized dowsing was his life work. His mother had taken him to see the sunrise over a standing stone in Central Vermont. The previous evening Sig had listened to master dowser Terry Ross and archeo-astronomer Byron Dix talking about energy leys, megalithic astronomy, and the like, all of which were new concepts. The next morning, instead of watching the sunrise with everyone else, Sig found himself repeatedly drawn to an Earth-covered stone chamber on the site. He gave into the compulsion and sat against the back wall, looking out the door.

Sig recounts: "Suddenly there were twenty-two other people inside the chamber with me. They had just simply materialized. They had white skin and some had beards; they wore white toga-like garments. and they were sitting cross-legged on the floor in a regular pattern." To Sig's astonishment, he found he was sharing the same space with one of the men. "I was he. I felt literally at one with these beings." Just as he was thinking how cool the vision was, it vanished. But it left him with the deep knowing that those chambers, and ultimately geomancy, were to be his path.

I spoke with Sig in April at his home on Bove Town Road in Glastonbury. His house is aptly named "Sunny Bank." It is painted bright, sunny yellow and has a fantastic hillside garden in its small, walled backyard complete with a replica of The Chalice Well's fountain. Although it was early spring, the garden was graced with flowers and vines already in bloom. Bove Town (so named because it is a "bove" town) is narrow and steep. From the back garden you can see the town of Glastonbury nestled at the base of the Tor. It is an ideal location. We talked for a couple of hours, interrupted occasionally by family and friends. Sig's cat, Edna, kept the energy in the room just right.

As luck would have it, Dr. Patrick MacManaway, Sig's certification training teaching partner was visiting and offered comment throughout our interview. Patrick is a practicing professional geomancer. His father, Bruce MacManaway, was a famous healer in Britain, and a founder in bringing forth the principles of Earth energies in modern European geomancy. In addition to working with Bruce (and later, Sig), Patrick trained in medicine at Edinburgh University. He now practices geomancy on both sides of the Atlantic.

Dowsing for the Spirit of Place

Susan Meeker-Lowry: What is the difference between dowsing and geomancy?



Sig Lonegren: Dowsing is best known as a tool for locating underground veins of water, oil, lost objects, missing persons, etc. It is also a tool for spiritual growth and intuition. Geomancy comes from "geo" - Gaia, the Earth, - and "mancy" - divination of. Geomancy - divination of the Earth. As with astrology, which works with power points in time, geomancy works with power points of place. The purpose of a geomancer is to work for harmony in the Earth, fertility of the Earth, and to create spaces that enhance the possibility that whatever you're trying to do there happens. Geomancers are, in essence, what I would call spiritual ecologists.

Susan: The energy you work with is already there or not?

Sig: I've been involved in geomancy for thirty-five years. For the first thirty of those I would have said the energy was there first. I'm not so sure anymore. What we're finding in the latest work with labyrinths, which are single-pathed magical tools, is that if you put it in the best place you can find, given the limitations of the site - a backyard for instance - water will come to it.

Susan: Really?

Sig: Yes. As I see it, water is one of the basic elements of sacred space. It's always there. The reality is that every dowser who dowses in sacred space for intangible targets finds different things even if they were trained by the same teacher. We are like the blind men and the elephant in that we all see it differently. This is actually a very okay thing. One of the major things I see is underground water which I like because it's one of the more touchable of the intangible targets we dowse for. No one's going to drill for water in the middle of Stonehenge but if you've dowsed enough water wells, you know what it feels like.

There are two kinds of underground water: "water table" water that hydrologists are interested in, and primary, or juvenile, water. Primary water doesn't come from rainwater. It is created down in our Mom's belly as a by-product of various chemical reactions. Then it is forced under great pressure towards the surface of the Earth, but most of the time it never gets there. Instead it comes up through a neck which dowsers in the U.S. call a dome, or a blind spring in Britain. When it reaches an impermeable layer of rock or clay the water goes out as veins at different depths. From above, this dome might look like a spider with an odd number of legs coming out of it. You find these dome features in sacred space and it is this water that is drawn to labyrinths.

Occasionally a vein of primary water does reach the surface. These places are considered sacred and are places of healing and contemplation. The water from the Chalice Well here in Glastonbury,

for instance, is primary water. The Well has been considered a sacred place by ancient people and Christians alike. It has never run dry, even in droughts, and the temperature and flow are constant year round. Chalice Well water is chalybeate in nature - rich in iron - which is why it was called the Blood Spring in ancient times. This is the result of the chemical process that created the water.

Susan: You were saying that it appears people have the ability to draw primary water to a place. I've seen ley line maps of Glastonbury that are amazing. There are so many lines coming directly into the area and leading to the Tor. Do you think ancient people had a role in that or do you think they were picking up on what was already there?

Sig: First some terminology. A ley is an alignment of sacred sites and is the result of our ancestors locating their holy sites over primary water, which is yin energy. Many, but not all, of these leys have energy leys flowing along them. Energy leys are straight beams of yang energy six to eight feet wide and, like a river, they have a direction of flow. A power center is a place where domes and veins of primary water and energy leys come together. They are where the yin and the yang, the female and male intersect. Sacred sites are not "hot," or at their peak performance all the time. It's a cyclical thing and this is where astrology and geomancy come together. For instance Stonehenge is hottest on the summer solstice sunrise.

Now to answer your question. I would go with John Michell's theory which is discussed in his book Earth Spirit. When we were hunter/gatherers following the animals from the valleys up into the mountains on a seasonal cycle, we were naturally at power places when they were at their hottest point. It wasn't something we had to think about. You could say Gaia led us to the right places at the right times. Then when we became farmers and settled in the valleys we needed to work with the energy centers where we were. We had to find ways to enhance the Earth energies when they weren't at their peak.

I think that's when geomancy got going. There does seem to be a solid connection between farming and the first permanent temples built on sacred space. And there's certainly evidence that culture after culture built on the same places. So power places can be enhanced and even created over time when people consciously work with the Earth energies. You don't just build a labyrinth, for instance; you have to walk it in a conscious manner. In fact, you don't have to physically construct it at all, just go out and walk the pattern and after a time, water will come. Creating the labyrinth brings the energy leys in, too.

Susan: What attracts it?

Sig: Well, (pats the ground) we're working with a living being who's real open to communication.

Susan: It's a very positive thing, when you think about it. You don't necessarily have to go to a sacred place that everyone recognizes as sacred. You can consciously create your own.

Sig: Yes. And that is my mission. To be the Johnny Appleseed of sacred spaces. And to encourage more and more people to build new ones.

Sig: There are many different elements that come into the construction of sacred space, but the basic three are the Earth energies, the astronomical relevance (like Stonehenge and the summer solstice), and the geometry of what you're building. I would encourage people who are interested in this to get in touch with the American Society of Dowsers and take a dowsing course (See resources).



But the basic process goes like this: First ask yourself, "Why am I building this? Do I want a lawn ornament or a place to do healing or meditate more effectively?" After your purpose is clear, decide the shape. Different shapes seem to enhance different energies. Then you need to identify where you can't build. For instance, if you want a thirty-five foot labyrinth, which is pretty standard, and you want it on your lawn there are only so many places it can go. Once you have identified the most appropriate place, it's time to dowse for the center. At this point I would find some way to communicate with the spirit of place. You might bring a gift, maybe something to tie on the branch of a nearby tree. Then take a moment to calm down and tell this spirit what you have in mind, and ask it to work with you to make this a place of meditation, healing, or whatever you have in mind.

Now, using a pendulum or an L-rod, stand somewhere on your lawn and ask, "What direction is the best place for me to put the center of this labyrinth?" It will show you a line. Then go somewhere else and ask the same question again and notice where the two lines cross. That's the center. It's called triangulation. Then go to that spot and ask, "Is this the spot?"

Susan: What about the astronomy?

Sig: Astronomy will tell you when it's going to be "hot." If you identify an energy ley, for example, you would orient what you're building along that ley so you would need to learn what that ley is oriented towards. If you don't find an energy ley, stand in the center and ask, "What's the best orientation?" You might even find an energy ley comes in that way, which is an interesting phenomena that does happen on occasion.

Susan: It sounds to me that you're saying every place has the potential to be sacred space.

Sig: That's true, although the reality seems to be that some places are more sacred than others, but every place has the potential to become sacred.

There's another phenomena I'd like to mention here. There are domes of water with no energy leys associated with them. These places have traditionally been considered negative and even harmful for humans. When dowsers in the U.S. started exploring them they were called "noxious zones" which, when you think about it, is a put-down of Mom. The reality is, these are places of yin or feminine energy. Many animals, such as cats and cloven-hoofed animals love them. Several years ago I decided to explore these yin areas myself. I discovered that they are like psychic vacuum cleaners,

places where Mom just sucks everything down. If you sleep over one of these places, she'll suck your life force so it's not a good place to sleep. On the other hand if you've got crap in your life, these are really good places to get rid of it. Mom takes that crap and breaks it down and takes it away. These are wonderful places for a compost pile, by the way.

Think of it like this: The wheel of life is creation and growth as well as death and decomposition. There's no good or bad, just parts of the whole. I like to call these places Kali centers. They restore balance and help you get rid of crap that hinders your spiritual growth.

Susan: Is there any relationship between Vermont and Glastonbury? I mean you used to live in Vermont and here you are now.

Sig: Yes, there is actually. Terry Ross, a master dowser who worked with British dowsers at sacred sites and brought his findings to the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, talked about three major trunk lines coming from Glastonbury into Northeastern U.S. One of them goes to a natural bridge in Virginia. Natural bridges are always power centers wherever you go. Another place is, as Terry put it, a little bit east of Allentown, Pennsylvania. And the third place is Cantilever Rock on the back of Mount Mansfield. This is a natural rock that fell out of a cliff and got caught in a position like this [demonstrates angular position]. It's held in a "C" just clamping it. To climb up to it you have to go behind the "C" through a little hole and back up on top. It's just like a cathedral. The rock sticks out thirty feet up and it is a very major, natural power center. Other people seem to feel the Glastonbury/Vermont connection, too. There are a number of folk who move back and forth between there and here.

Susan: What about New Hampshire?

Sig: I dowsed many of the stone chambers in the southern part of New Hampshire when I was working for my master's degree in sacred space, as well as chambers throughout New England. Then there's Mystery Hill, an exceptionally controversial site known as America's Stonehenge.

Susan: What's your opinion on that?

Sig: I think that the stone chambers were built by Native Americans since the white man got here. That's how recent I think they are. I think carbon dating would support that. Native Americans were spectacular stone masons. When you've been walking through the woods, have you ever come across a stone wall that runs in a straight line from low to high? From a swamp, for example, up to the top of a hill? Well, I believe these walls were built by Native Americans for astronomical purposes. Think about it. Why would colonists take the time to build a straight wall of stones? They built in squares to enclose something. I think Native Americans built the stone chambers, too. If you want to know what I think of the stone chambers in New England, read Byron Dix's book *Manitou*. It's published by Inner Traditions in Rochester, Vermont.

Dowsing for Health

Susan: What about using dowsing as a personal healing tool?

Patrick MacManaway: I first learned to dowse in a healing context as this was the primary focus of my parent's work. They learned to dowse after they knew how to heal and found that a tool like dowsing guides you to work much more effectively. You can achieve the same results in about a quarter of the time by focusing your intent very specifically in that way. Dowsing can support healing interventions whether you're working on the physical, mental or spiritual level. It can guide you in identifying problems like spinal subluxation, food sensitivities, or allergies, and it can guide you in identifying curative or preventative measures. The more you know about the system you're working with, the more useful your dowsing will be because your focus will be that much clearer.

Susan: Do all healers use a pendulum?

Patrick: Typically, yes, although whatever tool one uses, the longer one uses it, the less one needs it. In using the tool you're training your mind to work in a particular way to open the doorway between conscious and intuitive. Once you know the door you can pass more easily through it. The other thing dowsing is particularly valuable for in a healing context is to help you discover the source of the disease behind the outward expression.

Susan: The spiritual or emotional cause?

Patrick: Yes, or it may be quite physical. A lot of therapeutic diagnostic techniques - all of them actually - work from pattern recognition. So you're looking for patterns of expressed symptoms that will help you identify the nature of the manifestation. But behind that will exist a disease of a deeper nature and dowsing can help you get through to the source, which is very, very useful.

Susan: If you're a beginner and you have a pain in your stomach and you don't know that much about physiology, would dowsing be a useful tool?

Patrick: It depends on how bad the pain is. (Laughter) But seriously, even without specific knowledge you can ask specific questions of your dowsing. In a situation like this you might start with an assessment of how seriously you need to take the pain. Is this a stomach cramp that will go away in twenty minutes, or is this my appendix rupturing? Do I need to seek additional help? So you can ask general questions in a specific way.

Susan: What about fear? What role does fear play?

Sig: The less emotionally, psychologically, mentally, and spiritually involved you are with someone the better the chances are you're going to have accurate results. If you've got a pain in the gut and you're asking, "Is it time for me to go to the doctor's?" it's very hard to keep your need to have it go, "Yes, yes, yes!" out of there.

Susan: Or "No, no, no, no!" depending.

Sig: Exactly. Whatever you want to believe. Once you've asked the question you have to get out of there. If you're thinking, "Does my mother have cancer? God, let it be no!" - you're going to get a no every time. How do you step aside, Patrick?

Patrick: I think it's very difficult to step aside. It's easier to dowse when you're feeling centered and at ease. Dowsing is a valuable tool for therapists, but it's also perhaps the most valuable of all tools for people on their own maintaining their health. You can use a pendulum to dowse for the best diet, to identify supplements, or to find the best place to sleep. It's hard to dowse in crisis situations, but dowsing is an almost unmatched tool for helping you make healthy choices.

Susan: I've used it to pick Flower Essences because I wasn't necessarily attached to any particular essence.

Sig: I suggest that when you dowse for Bach Flower Remedies you do it twice. First use your left brain and notice what you're attracted to. Then use the pendulum. This way you have the best of both worlds. When you have chosen with both sides of your brain, the chances of them working are greatly enhanced. It's the functioning of both sides when the best stuff comes out.

In addition to things like picking flower essences and choosing a good diet or supplements, dowsing can be used to reveal a potential problem or illness before it manifests physically. It can also be used to balance the chakras and to channel healing energy. And don't make the mistake that healing and Earth energies are separate and unrelated. Healing is one of the major attributes of sacred space - they are part of the same package.

Dowsing as a Spiritual Practice

Susan: What is the dowsing state like? Is it like meditation?

Patrick: The dowsing state is a state of engaged non-attachment, and learning and holding that consciousness at all times is the spiritual path of the dowser. That's how the dowser grows.

Sig: Dowsing's brain wave activity resembles that of yogis and I am heretical enough to argue that dowsing brings the things that meditation brings to you only more quickly. Dowsing causes you to get to that brain wave point very quickly while meditation is a slower introduction into that space. So I think dowsing is meditation.

Susan: But you're starting in a different place?

Sig: Well, with dowsing you always start with your left brain. You always start with the "right question" which is a left brain function. There are four different kinds of brain activity: beta, which is ordinary consciousness; alpha, which is a light trance state; theta, the dream state and when rapid eye movement occurs; and delta, which is deep, deep sleep. That's basically how it divides out. So when you're dowsing what's happening is the left hemisphere is functioning in beta asking the right questions which is absolutely critical, and meanwhile there's a flare-up down in delta looking for the answer in the deep unconscious. It's a pattern that you can see both in dowsers and in yogis.

It's what I call "gnowing" [pronounced with a hard "g" as in gum.] Gnowing is honoring and using both hemispheres of the brain equally so that you do your rational best and your intuitive best. I believe this is the way forward. The thing about dowsing is that every time you want to ask a question on the other side, you have to come back here [using left brain] to ask it. It makes you work the path. Dowsing is a tool that can help you go very safely over to the other side and back.

Susan: Can you talk a bit about asking the right question?

Sig: Well, Susan's asked me to come to her house to locate water for a well. Where's the nearest water? Oh it's right over here, fifteen feet from the house. But it's nine hundred feet down, it goes dry from June to October every year, and it tastes like sulfur. I asked where's the nearest water and that's what I got. It wasn't the right question. Let's try again. We're using a backhoe with arms that only go nineteen feet or so down. So we're looking for water that's less than nineteen feet down. We're a typical American household, so we need five gallons a minute. We want good, potable water and we want it to run year round. Now we've got the right question: Where's the nearest water that's less than twenty feet down, runs year round at over five gallons a minute, and is good, potable water?

Susan: To me it's totally amazing that you can - or need to - ask questions that specific.

Sig: There's a very literal aspect to the unconscious.

Patrick: When you are in the dowsing state you're channeling spirit from a state of need so you're engaging with what's going on rather than simply holding yourself in a place of independent separateness. The dowsing state is a practitioners tool and by using it you'll deepen your craft whether you use your dowsing for healing, maintaining motor vehicles, or whatever. Dowsing engages you at a deeper level with whomever or whatever you're relating to. This is a particularly important point for geomantic work because it engages you with the spirit of place. None of the other ecological tools that we currently have engage you with the spirit of place.

Our current ecological paradigm looks at the Earth from a materialistic perspective. It is still based on a belief of separateness and relating to the environment as a resource. To engage geomantically you must engage with the spirit of place and all of the other spirits that are present in place. Dowsing - geomancy - actually offers a different paradigm. It's not contradictory, it simply adds the spiritual dimension to a field of mental energy that's already very well established.

Susan: To me it's the glue that holds everything together.

Patrick: It's the piece that is central for cultures that do in fact live in a sustainable fashion on the planet. It's the missing piece for all the cultures that don't.

Susan: I've been an environmentalist for years and even the most open are too often reluctant to bring the language of the spirit into the discussion, at least publicly. But if we don't make it clear that we're saving the Earth and our environment for spiritual reasons, then science will always come up

with a reason why it's okay to exploit it. We can talk about resources and economics if we need to but that can't be all. We must go deeper and challenge others to go deeper.

Patrick: Well, that's the shaman's job - to open doorways between worlds. And the geomancer's job is to open doorways between worlds also. And the doorway that one opens is the doorway that allows conscious engagement with the spirit of place.

Susan: What about all the destruction? Is there hope?

Sig: We need to say "no" to the destructive forces and at the same time we need to provide alternatives. This is very important. And I think this is the job of spiritual ecologists, of environmentally and spiritually aware people. We need to connect with Mom, and become open to the spirit of the place we call home. But it's simple arrogance to talk about saving the Earth - it's ourselves we're saving. So many people don't have a clue what nature is about. We have the job of waking people up which happens one person at a time. And geomancy is a very subversive tool in that it wakes you up to what we're talking about: that the Earth is alive.

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