

We examine
Divining
sometimes referred to as
Dowsing



The practice of seeking knowledge of the unknown by supernatural means

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at the North Mayo Heritage Centre

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Dowsing, The Ancient Art of Water Divining

Dowsing originated in ancient times when it was treated as a form of divination (the practice of seeking knowledge of the unknown by supernatural means), hence the term divining is often used.

The Catholic Church banned the practice completely. The Reformer, Martin Luther, perpetuated the Catholic ban in 1518 listing divining for metals as an act that broke the First Commandment (occultism). Dowsing is a type of divination employed in attempting to locate underground water, buried metals, gemstones or oil. It is also known as water divining.

Traditionally, the most common method used is the dowsing twig, a forked (Y shaped) branch from a tree or bush. The two ends on the forked side are held one in each hand with the stem of the Y pointing straight ahead. The dowser then walks slowly over the places where he suspects the water may be and the dowsing rod is expected to dip, incline or twitch when a discovery is made.

Today, many dowsers use a pair of L shaped metal rods. One rod is held in each hand, with the short arm of the L held upright and the long arm pointing forward. When something is found the rods move in synchrony, they may also cross over or swing apart. Water divining still survives today in Irish society and is sometimes used by the building profession to locate the best location on the land to drill for water.

Most diviners are found by word of mouth rather than on a website or directory.

The practice of water divining has also been used by ten of the twelve water companies in the UK, despite the lack of scientific evidence for its effectiveness. This disclosure prompted calls for the regulator to stop these companies passing the cost of a discredited medieval practice on to their customers.

Some water companies, however, insisted the practice could be as effective as modern methods.

Gerry Cremin, Chairman of the Irish Society of Diviners, has been dowsing for forty years and first learnt to use the rods in the 1970s.

He confirmed that dowsing is still practised in the UK, US and Australia, particularly in the drought stricken areas of Australia where it is the preferred method of finding water for many people.

There are several theories on how dowsing works. One possibility is that the dowsers pick up on tiny changes in the earth's magnetic field caused by the presence of water or other materials under the ground.

Another explanation, put forward by sceptics, is what happens when someone points a dowsing rod.

They describe the user's ideomotor movements, these are the unconscious movements our bodies make based on what we expect to happen.

It may be that dowsing is a phenomenon that escapes human understanding but interest in this ancient practice is still popular in Ireland with enthusiasts gathering regularly at events held by the Irish Society of Diviners.

Resources:

Old Moore's Almanac
Wikipedia
Theguardian.com



Right:

Image from www.oldmooresalmanac.com



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Santa!**

Santa & Christmas Market

at the
North Mayo Heritage Centre

Counting down to two fantastic weekends –
 Sat 9th & Sun 10th,
 Sat 16th & Sun 17th,
 10am to 5pm each day.

Lots of vendors confirmed for the market for both of the weekends.

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- Time-slot booking.
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- Free parking

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northmayogenealogy.com/events.