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Location of Dowsed Water Veins Via Group Decision

W. H. Jack

Franklin Pierce College

Abstract. In an experiment held under field conditions, six relatively inexperienced dowsers attempted to determine the location of a water vein which had been previously located by several more experienced dowsers. The test course consisted of 26 two meter intervals. One of the two meter intervals contained the vein dowsed by the experienced dowsers. The novice dowsers were able to choose the correct two meter interval by majority decision ($p=.038$).

Dowsing, in its most general sense, is a self-directed attempt to find an answer to a specific question through use of psychical abilities. While dowsing is most often conducted through use of an "aid" such as the traditional "forked stick" or through use of a pendulum, some dowsers use their hands or other parts of their anatomy as indicators. A few dowsers use a mental impression or "hunch." Somehow they simply "feel" that the object to be located is at a given place. Those who are familiar with psychical research will no doubt realize that the process of dowsing might also be termed "clairvoyance." However, the term "dowsing" includes more than clairvoyance. Some dowsers maintain that the indicating instruments are moved through use of psychokinesis and that future events may be foretold through use of dowsing (precognition). In any case, dowsing is most certainly an ancient practice, performed by many cultures in a variety of ways (Barrett & Besterman, 1968).

In meetings with the author, experienced dowsers such as Norman Leighton (president of the American Society of Dowsers) and Gordon MacLean (trustee of the American Society of Dowsers) maintain that among other feats, dowsers may locate water, gas, oil, buried pipes, minerals, lost objects, and foretell future events. Most dowsers specialize on specific tasks such as water divination or the location of lost objects. MacLean and Leighton believe that there is a need for considerable research into the nature and mechanisms of dowsing.

Regrettably, many experienced dowsers are unwilling to participate in controlled experiments which test their dowsing ability (Scott-Elliott, 1975). Rather, dowsers tend to provide examples of specific successful wells they have dowsed and consider their successful results as being adequate proof of their abilities. Statistical evaluation of such anecdotal material is generally difficult. J. Scott-Elliott (an experienced British dowser) wrote an article entitled "Dowsers Under Test" (1975). Scott-Elliott related some of the problems faced by dowsers who are placed under controlled conditions. Elliott theorized that dowsers may become nervous and distracted and therefore, may not genuinely seek for the target object. MacLean (1971) has emphasized the importance of concentrating on the target object when attempting to determine its location. In conversations with the author, Gordon MacLean has also stressed that the percipient must have confidence that

dowsing actually works for him. Raymond Willey (1974) in his article entitled "Possible Psychic Elements In Dowsing" stated that an important aspect of dowsing success is the perception of a real practical need in order for the dowser to be successful. Willey also stated that: "Many dowsers have noted that, if one is working in front of a crowd of spectators, the presence of a skeptic may reach through to him without a word being spoken, diverting his attention and disturbing his routine (p. 142)."

Although many if not most dowsers have little experience with the scientific literature of parapsychology, many of the concepts relating to successful dowsing are quite similar to the basic attitudinal factors long noted in the literature of parapsychology. For example, personal confidence is an important variable for psychics and dowsers alike. Similarly, the attitudes of onlookers (whether they are bystanders or scientists) affect the results obtained for dowsers (Bird, 1975; Willey, 1974; Bosbach, 1975) and also affect results obtained by investigators of psychical phenomena (Rhine, L. no date; Schmeidler, 1969).

For those who are not familiar with the practice of dowsing, a dilemma of communication arises. Publications which provide basic instruction in the techniques of dowsing are available (MacLean, 1971; Bosbach, 1975). However, there is no substitute for actual training by a person who is able to dowse. In the experience of the author, eighty to ninety percent of those who have experienced about one hour of training are able to obtain a "dowsing reaction" to the presence of a supposed water vein. A dowsing reaction means that the student is able to perceive the presence of a water vein at a location where a more experienced dowser has also located a water vein. Students obtaining the "dowsing reaction" then proceed to dowse for water veins previously located by the author but unknown to the novice dowser. This "blind" dowsing is a much more difficult test as the novice must use his own abilities to locate the veins. Only about 60 percent of those who attend the one hour lecture on dowsing are able to successfully complete this phase of training. The remaining 40 percent may often be helped by additional training.

In the following experiment, there was an attempt to determine if group decisions by relatively inexperienced dowsers would result in the location of a vein

previously dowsed by more experienced dowzers. Note that a vein which has been dowsed may or may not contain water. The presence or absence of water in the vein is of secondary importance for the purposes of this study. Rather, if subjects obtain a dowsing reaction at the same point as more experienced dowzers, there is the implication that the results obtained are extra-chance.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were six college students. Three students had approximately four months of dowsing experience and two students had little dowsing experience but stated that they had rather exceptional psychic abilities.

Apparatus. "L" shaped dowsing rods with metal or plastic handles were used by the subjects. The two subjects with little dowsing experience did not use the dowsing rods.

Procedure. The location of the vein was ascertained by use of map dowsing performed by Norman Leighton and was further defined by several other dowzers at the site. Several hours before the subjects arrived at the test site, 27 stakes were placed along a dirt logging road at two meter intervals. As soon as the subjects arrived at the site, the subjects attempted to locate the water vein. All subjects were informed that there would be a group decision and that the group (by majority decision) would decide the location of the vein. They were informed that there was only one vein within thirty feet of the surface and that the vein was located between two of the stakes and ran perpendicular to the line of the stakes. Several techniques were used to motivate the subjects: a) The subjects were told that the location of the vein had been previously determined and that after they had confirmed the location that a well would be dug at the appropriate spot. b) All subjects were encouraged to visit the site during the Summer as the well was dug or in the Fall so that they would see if our attempts were successful. c) The subjects were informed that the Experimenter planned to build a home and needed a well. d) Upon completion of the dowsing, experimenter, subjects, and a visitor had a picnic at the site. In numerous other ways an attempt was made to provide a psi conducive environment for the subjects.

Results

The subjects found three locations where they perceived that there were water veins. As the experimental design required that only one location could be selected by the group, there was a "run-off" election. One location was discarded as only one subject obtained a dowsing reaction at that two meter interval. The second location was discarded as the target because a majority vote (four out of six) chose the third location. The location selected by the majority decision of the subjects was the two meter interval where the previously dowsed vein was located. Since there were 26 two meter intervals, the probability of choosing the correct interval was $1/26$ ($p=.038$). Four subjects attempted to determine the depth of the vein. Depth to the vein was perceived by the subjects as follows: 14 feet, 17-18 feet, 17-18 feet, and 18 feet. Prior to the arrival of the students, the Experimenter had dowsed the depth from the surface to the vein as being between 17.25 feet and 17.5 feet deep.

The subjects were then asked to determine the flow rate of the water vein. Three subjects (including the two subjects not using dowsing rods) perceived that the flow rate was between 8 and 9 gallons per minute. One subject perceived that 11.5 gallons per minute were flowing while the last subject perceived that 19 gallons per minute were flowing. The Experimenter had previously dowsed a flow rate of 12.5 to 13 gallons per minute.

Discussion

The depth and gallonage information was requested of the students in order to further train their skills and no attempt was made to statistically evaluate the results. The well itself will be dug during the Fall of 1976 and the subjects will be encouraged to see the results (whether they are positive or negative). This experiment does not prove that the subjects were able to find an active vein of water. Rather, the only statistical evidence is that the odds of the group choosing the same two meter interval as the author (and several other dowsers) are supportive of the main hypothesis.

The successful results obtained under field conditions should be of particular interest to those wishing to duplicate this study. The members of the group were relaxed and enjoyed working together. The subjects

were actively helping the Experimenter to choose a site for a well. The process of dowsing (which took approximately three-quarters of an hour) was tiring toward the end for the subjects but they knew that a picnic (and a nice warm fire for a cold day) would ensue. For knowledgeable dowzers and parapsychologists alike, there has long been the realization that the attitude of the percipient is vital. Subjects who enjoy themselves while attempting to produce psi phenomena are more likely to be successful than those who do not.

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