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| **THE PARANORMAL REVIEW****P28****LECTURE AND STUDY DAY REPORTS****Edited by CHRISTINE SIMMONDS****SPR Study Day 34: Psychical researchers look into dowsing**ALTHOUGH DOWSING IS OFTEN alluded to at SPR lecture evenings, and in its regular publications (indeed an entire issue of the SPR Journal was devoted to dowsing in 1931 — two years before the British Society of Dowsers came into being), April 25th last year marked the first time that a Study Day had been devoted to the subject. The occasion saw four leading experts inthe practical, experimental and theoretical aspects of dowsing come together to address a number of issues, with particular focus on the possible connection between dowsing and psychic ability. Acknowledging that dowsing takes many different forms (for example, on-site water dowsing, map dowsing and medical dowsing), several key questions were addressed: What is the quality of the evidence that it really works? If effective, what is the mechanism? If there is a direct response to some geophysical influence in |  |
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|  | on-site dowsing, what is the nature of the mediating field? If the dowsing/divining instrument responds to information already present in the mind of the dowser, as appears to be the case with remote dowsing, what psycho-physiological processes are involved in the reception of that information?The day started on an informative note with Clive Thompson, a former president of the British Society of Dowsers, speaking on and illustrating "Claims and Practical Applications of Dowsing". He drew on his long and wide experience in the field and also brought along an extensive range of dowsing aids. This was followed by Hans-Dieter Betz, Professor of Physics at the University of Munich, speaking on "Ten Years of Dowsing Research in Munich". After lunch, Professor Peter Stewart (on his 70th birthday) presented a detailed and wide-ranging paper on "Dowsing and Remote Perception". Anne Miller then skilfully drew the day's various strands together in speaking on the "Physical and Physiological Aspects of Dowsing". The day concluded with a lively general discussion, including thoughtful audience participation. All in all, it was an excellent occasion that should have helped to strengthen and widen the credibility of dowsing and its successful practitioners.This report can only hope to convey a few highlights and provide some pointers. The morning was devoted largely to physical, on-site dowsing. Clive Thompson's expertise in the subject is well known but what was particularly striking — besides his widespread practical experience — was his concept of the human body as a big 'meat machine' receiver, with the muscular system and tension in the arms being of prime importance, and the dowsing instrument acting as a leveraged amplifier.Hans-Dieter Betz provided clear and robust evidence that on-site dowsing for water, based upon the efforts of the best practitioners, works very successfully. He was originally won over by looking at the historical evidence for a post-war case in South-east Germany, brought to his attention through a friend's dowsing aunt. He had then gone on to examine with other scientists a series of projects carried out by the Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and the work, particularly in Sri Lanka, of GTZ-appointed dowser Hans Schroeter. The results were very impressive and should convince even the fiercest of sceptics, if only they would look at the evidence open-mindedly. (Extensive detail and statistical analysis is provided in two research articles by Professor Betz in the 1995 Spring and Summer issues of the Journal of Scientific Exploration). |  |  |

Throughout the day, a clear distinction was made between physical on-site dowsing and remote (mental or psychic) sensing of the map-dowsing kind, although it was acknowledged that there might be some overlap between the two. Principal proposed factors were electromagnetic and related forces on the one hand, and extrasensory perception on the other, especially when operating across time or great distance. Although remote viewing may be unfamiliar to some on-site dowsers, Professor Stewart emphasised the crucial relevance of this. For remote dowsing and remote viewing appear to have much in common, perhaps in some ways representing different facets of the same basic phenomenon or latent faculty.

It was felt by the afternoon speakers, in particular, that quantum physics and consciousness studies might provide some explanations, with notions such as non-locality, space-time fabric and imprints (to be compared, suggested Anne Miller, with the theory of homeopathy) all perhaps playing some part. At the end of the day Anne Miller raised the particularly intriguing concept of 'quantum entanglement', the unravelling of which — coupled with the need, as several speakers stressed, to work on improving the signal-to-noise-ratio — may provide key answers in more ways than one.

Peter Doye

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