

The October, 1982 issue of the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research contains a 20-page article 'Dowsing: A Review of Experimental Research' written by an American, George P. Hansen. This deals well with the various attempts there have been over the last 100 years to carry out experiments to investigate the dowsing faculty which will carry conviction in the minds of conventional scientists. The conclusion is perhaps inevitably inconclusive. Nonetheless this remains a most useful source of reference for the serious student. The article is followed by a list of 140 references mostly drawn from this century which, together with the many hundreds of references following the 1917 U.S. Geological Survey Report on dowsing (which covers the years 1556 to 1917), comprises a comprehensive reference source on the whole subject.

Further in the same issue by Denys Parsons is 'Dowsing—A Claim Refuted'. This describes the careful testing of a dowser's claim that he could detect whether the current in a wire was switched on or off when he traversed the field of influence. The dowser, Mr. A. Hopwood, failed to establish a performance any better than chance.

The February, 1983 issue of Popular Archaeology carries an article by Professor Richard Bailey of Newcastle University about his collaboration with a local dowser, Mr. D. Briggs, and the successful location of unknown crypts in churches etc.

Our member, Mr. George Applegate, successfully located an artesian supply providing 5,000 gallons of water per hour for a Shepton Mallet, Somerset, farm. Mr. Applegate comments that he was surprised by the artesian nature of the well in that geological formation. We hope to carry a full report later in the year.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Editor,

A friend and I recently became interested in dowsing. When we hold the pendulum over a biro or a coin or our left palm we get a strong reaction. So we bought several books on dowsing plus dowsing equipment. We carried out tests on about a dozen different parlour tricks described in the books that we had bought. The parlour tricks included the following:

Detecting the number and colour of playing cards (I practised this one for 1½ hours every day for 14 days).

Detecting the nature of an object wrapped in a box.

We took three glasses of water, had salt put in one glass and tried to detect the glass that had salt in it.

We put four 10 pence coins and one 2 pence coin under a sheet of newspaper and tried to detect the 2 pence coin.

We had an object hidden in a house and tried to locate it with the pendulum.

We had somebody write a word on a piece of paper and tried to detect what it was.

We carried out over a dozen tests over the space of about 2 weeks.

IN EVERY CASE WE FAILED TO GET THE INFORMATION WE WANTED. These parlour tricks just didn't work.

We did not go out looking for things under the ground as what we might discover would not be of any use to us. We are interested in using dowsing to solve problems connected with our homes and careers.

My family are farmers. Suppose I tried to discover if an animal were sick or well, where it is vital to get the vet on time to treat the animal. If I used the pendulum we could lose an animal worth thousands of pounds! I have a cousin in the police. Suppose I offered to help the police find a missing person? They could prosecute me for wasting police time!

We have also written to several dowisers who have published books about dowsing, but none of them have been able to tell us how to do these parlour tricks.

We think that authors when they write books about dowsing only mention the success they have with dowsing—because that is what sells the books. They don't tell their readers that they have far more failures than successes.

We told our friends and relatives about what dowisers can do. Now everybody is laughing at us. All we have done is to make fools out of ourselves.

The reason why dowsing is rejected and ridiculed by scientists is because it is basically a very inefficient way of doing anything.

We bought several books on dowsing, also equipment, and we are very angry that we have been conned out of over £30.

I CHALLENGE ANY DOWSER IN ENGLAND TO MEET ME IN PERSON AND PERFORM 6 PARLOUR TRICKS AND THEN SHOW ME HOW TO DO IT!

I bet I don't get a single reply to this challenge!

S. Gunning, London.

Editor's note.—I shall be pleased to receive comments and replies to this letter for publication.