

Archaeology Without the Digging

A listing of surveys conducted in South East Ireland.

Introduction.

The authors have been conducting archaeological surveys locally for twenty years as a retirement hobby. Our findings to date have been the subject of lectures to the **Old Carlow Society the Graignamanagh Historical Society and the Irish Society of Diviners**. Several articles have also been published in **Carloviana** and **Bagenalstown Parish Yearbook** over the years.

Archaeology as it is now practised is a scientific discipline applied to locating and interpreting remains from the past. This usually entails careful excavation on site, retrieval & examination of any ancient remains found. A full site examination may take a season or even several seasons to complete. Findings are analysed both on site and in a laboratory. Modern technology using electronic devices eg soil resistivity and ground radar testing enable relatively large areas to be searched fairly quickly for hidden traces of buildings, roads & tracks, ditches etc.

Metal detectors are only successful at shallow depths and of course only for metal objects.

Site Excavation License. According to Irish law at present; permission to excavate a site must be obtained in advance from the state. A site license is only granted to registered/professional archaeologists. All finds of value remain the property of the state, although a monetary reward may be given to the finders and landowner.

Divining. Our survey work uses a non intrusive technique known as divining or dowsing. Whereas divining for water is well known and dates back to our stone age ancestors, its application to finding remains of old buildings and structures is relatively unknown. We are aware of only one *published account of similar work in England conducted in the early 1980's. A team made up of professional archaeologists, diviners and an architectural draughtsman surveyed 45 churches in the North of England. Many of these buildings dated to Anglo-Saxon times, some dated back to Roman times. In most cases the existing building had been built over an existing structure.

Divining is a psychic ability which can be applied to a wide range of applications of which the authors' specialisation is archaeology. The technique gives rapid results for a small cost. However accuracy obtained may be questionable. Divining involves asking hundreds of questions in order to build up a mental picture of the past. It is also important to place oneself in the time at which the site was known to have been in use when tapping into the site memory. This data when combined with other information; eg known site history, topography, technology available at the time and large doses of common sense can produce a reasonably accurate and plausible picture in three dimensions. One of the disadvantages of divining is that answers are only obtained to the questions asked. However we have overcome this difficulty to some extent by a critical examination of results obtained and by rechecking on a return visit where necessary. A final point; the diviner must not attempt to *drive* the divining process ie by trying to confirm their personal preconceptions. Answers to questions should be recorded as they occur without demur. At no time have the authors actually excavated a site in order to validate our findings. Nevertheless many of our results have often been confirmed by the work of others, elsewhere. In many cases excavation is not possible eg the site is occupied by modern buildings, roads, a graveyard or is under water etc.

We trust our readers will find the following pages interesting and perhaps even controversial. However we leave validation to the experts of the future who will hopefully be better equipped for this task.

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* *Dowsing & Church Archaeology*. by R.N.Bailey

2005/ rev 2014

List of sites examined: <http://glasnost.itcarlow.ie/~feeleyjm/archaeology/index2.htm>