

My first steps in dowsing – on road construction in Devon

Richard Sears (January 2014)



In the late 80s I was involved in the construction of the North Devon Link Road (A361) up from Tiverton to where I lived in Barnstaple. At that time John Bowers was running Dowsing classes and having done the course, like many others kept heckling him for more advanced courses, to which his response happily was to start up Devon Dowzers in late 1992, to which we all joined.

In the meantime at work, and in my leisure, I was out with my rods experimenting wherever I could. The North Devon Link (NDL) basically is a series of huge embankments and cuttings. Every so often where services are needed to cross the NDL to various villages or farms, plastic ducts are placed in trenches beneath where the blacktop road is later to go. However after the ravages of winter and other wet periods the pegs marking these duct ends are easily lost.

Having secretly being spied out and about in the previous Autumn by the General Foreman, one Spring morning out of the blue he comes and says “well Richard, we’ve lost 4 ducts in the formation at Crooked Oak – out you come and find them – I’ve got a JCB waiting!” Well to my surprise (and to the JCB driver’s also I think!) I did easily find them!

With that boost of confidence I moved onto the location of lost water pipes, existing sewers, and in particular I found that buried electric cables were easy to locate. (Nowadays a “CAT detector” would commonly be used. This is a hand held instrument sending a signal to the operator’s earpiece of metallic or electrical underground services, along with depth. But it wasn’t much used then).

As far as I know there were no “Badger Runs” placed beneath embankments crossing the NDL, but great emphasis was placed on migratory routes of the Red Deer herds of Exmoor. Prior to the project starting, various experts were called in to determine the movement of these herds, and to that end a new idea from Switzerland was employed. This was to place stakes every 50m at known crossing-points with reflectors attached that beamed the headlights out from passing cars at night by 90 degrees onto the moor to frighten/stop the deer crossing. (The deer react to red reflectors, and Otters are found to react to orange at river crossings).

Naturally I had to have a go at walking the boggy marshes alongside the Link Road at Hares Down, but in reality I don’t think that the deer when they want to cross a valley, or on high ground, follow any “narrow path” to restrict themselves to cross – but instead they cross a valley en masse in a wide band, and probably quite safely too, avoiding remote headlights anyway.

Of other interest halfway up the Link Road by the Picnic site was the ‘Knowlestone’. Placed by our forefathers some 4000 years ago, modern man had decided the need to move it to a new position to the top of the cut on the south side of the new road. The local papers at the time reported that should the standing stone be removed it would release a devil placed beneath it, but happily I wasn’t present when it was dug up! I do invite you though, if passing, to stop and stand with pendulum to detect where it once stood, and indeed to see if any energy has ‘reconnected’.

One of my last acts to do with the Link Road was at the office complex at Aller Cross near South Molton. Although closed and empty, South West Water was still charging vast amounts for water consumption. It was known some four years earlier that the connection was taken from the main road to Filliegh, and then crossed the field for ¼ mile up to where the office was (by the roundabout at Aller X), but the exact route was not known.

Happily with this info I went out with my rods, and remembering John Bower’s teaching of years earlier on water leaks, traced the path of the blue alkathene pipe through the fields to the leak where the rods crossed, and then on another 200 yds across the ploughed field to a point about 10 feet behind the road’s hedge where I found the connection. It was basically under an 8’ x 4’ sheet of ply that had been covered by successive years of ploughing.

It was here I bounced up and down on the earth on top of the hollow sheet and shouting “Yes dowsing does work!”



This stone marked the junction of three prehistoric trackways

Directions to the Knowstone:

From the North Devon Link road (A361) travelling from Tiverton to Barnstaple take the left hand turning to Rose Ash (approx. 10 miles) and you will find the stone 600m along by the Link road fence.

This excerpt from the Devon Wildlife Trust website gives some more information.

'The original Know-stone was once called the Cnoutston (c-nootstone). It was used as a site-line from high ground to high ground like a standing stone stood on the criss-cross medieval tracks between Dartmoor and Exmoor. It was believed to have stood in place for over 2000 years before being (moved) for the link road construction in 1988. To visit the original Knowstone in its new location take the Rose Ash turning off the link road. The local parishes celebrated 2000 years of Christianity by placing the huge millennium stone at the Knowstone Crossroads.'