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HAZEL TWIG HUNT TO SAVE A CHURCH

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A team of water diviners, equipped with hazel dowsing twigs, has been plotting the course of underground streams in a bid to save the foundations of Stroud parish church.

The church, which celebrates its centenary next year, could cave in if the water is not checked, says the vicar, the Rev. John Tillet.

"The site seems to conceal a huge marshy area fed by mysterious unmapped springs," he said last night.

Dowsers were called in after structural experts confirmed that stone foundations, columns and timberwork were being badly eroded.

The three-man dowsing team has also been using the latest electronic equipment—including sonar type devices—to follow the hidden water maze.

Hidden

"But you cannot trace the line of a stream with this apparatus," said Mr. G. M. Nixon-Eckersall, a Thornbury building preservation consultant.

"I have been using copper divining rods and hazel twigs for years and I think they are reliable.

"But not everyone can use them. The rods must be balanced delicately in the hands and a tense person could not do it.

"We believe the root of the church's trouble could be an ancient town culvert which has either broken or become porous.

Now the dowsers are preparing a map and report for the church's consultant architect so that boreholes can be dug for a visual inspection.

● Last word from the vicar:

"I neither believe nor disbelieve in water divining. As long as they can find the source of the trouble I don't care how it is done."