

# Archaeology today

## Weird Women's Wands unearthed as tundra melts

It has long been known that ancient Nordic seeresses used 'magical wands' to read the future and fates of people, but few of these artefacts have ever been found until now.



These are some of the wands that have been recovered in Svalbard.  
CREDIT: Jane Fairhurst.

A research team led by Professor Judith MacNeish of Belfast University working with archaeologists from the Svalbaard Extreme Research Team (SERT) recently discovered ancient burial sites, revealed as the tundra melts, in the far north of Norway. Confirmed as burials of females of great importance to their culture, the grave goods contain almost perfectly preserved staves or 'wands'. Ancient texts reveal the wands to be similar to those described as 'carried by the Norns, the handmaidens of the goddess Fryr and used to weave the fates of humankind'. (*Handmaidens of Fryr – Ancient Goddess of the North, Madeleine Belgrave-Wiston, 1995 ISBN A465-287-98*) Excitement has been mounting as archaeologists from the two teams begin the quest to understand and interpret the collection of artefacts attached to the cloth wrapped, ash staves many of which appear to have come from across the ancient world.