

Field Test Report

Viking 1

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The Viking 1 must be one of the best known metal detectors ever built. There cannot be many detectorists out there who have never seen or tried a Viking in operation, and if you have, you will know just how good it is. For those of you who are new to the hobby or have come in at the 'top end', then I hope that this field test will encourage you to add another machine to your collection.

The Viking 1 is very simple to set up. It has two control knobs, a fine and a coarse tuner and basically you move both knobs until you get a background noise and then move the fine tuner until it becomes just audible (faint). The machine is now ready to go. A lot of lower priced machines in the past have had a tendency to 'drift' (e.g. the sound would keep rising or disappearing altogether).

The Vikings have always tended to stay tuned and even with this model there were only a couple of times when I had to adjust it. For those of you that have only used the 'motion' style detectors, it is vital that the threshold is held as otherwise targets can and will be lost.

The Viking 1 is not aimed to be a deep-seeking metal detector, but it easily found pre-decimal pennies at 5 and 6 inches, giving a very positive blast through the headphones. It also found a hammered silver penny at 3 inches and a Roman Sestertius at 7 in. I must point out at this stage that the Viking 1 is pre-set to reject long thin pieces of ferrous, such as nails. It will pick up large pieces of iron such as plough shares and horseshoes.

With its standard 7-inch head, the Viking 1 is at its best when it is used in highly contaminated ground, which is why I took it along to a particularly difficult area of the River Thames in London. There are some areas along the Thames where you can use any machine, but not this particular part! I have tried all my machines in this section and most of them have failed dismally. Most were unable to find even a coin lying on the surface! Within seconds I knew that the Viking was going to out-perform most of them as my first signal was a lead token from 2 inches down. Two inches might not seem much to you, but on this site it was excellent. I only had two hours before the tide came in and forced me to back off but not before I had recovered 19 good non-ferrous targets including small buttons. A pewter whistle (bent and twisted) and a dozen coins, mostly 20th century but a couple were George I halfpennies. I also dug around 20 pieces of iron, but again, on this site that is very acceptable.

Most of my good sites are currently under crop and/or under grass, so I went back to one of my very productive sites and started work literally in the hedgerow between two very good fields. The farmer had sprayed the edges to keep the weeds at bay thereby giving me somewhere to search - if I was up to it! To be fair, the hedge was not THAT difficult (e.g. no thorns!) but it meant that I spent most of my time on hands and knees trying not to disappear down the labyrinth of rabbit holes that spread the whole length of the field. After three hours searching I dragged myself out of the undergrowth for a cold drink (the temperature was in the upper 80's) and also to empty out the finds apron. I first counted over

20 shotgun cartridges, but it felt as if I had dug up dozens of them as they were everywhere. More importantly I had seven really nice Roman bronze coins, all AE3's but all of them had a really nice patina. There were also an assortment of broken strap ends and broken buckles and two silver thimbles which were both squashed flat but are now restored and looking very nice in my collection. All of these targets would not have been found with either of my two main machines because they are both of the 'motion' sort and there was simply not enough room to be able to keep the machines moving and thereby working. The time I spent in the hedgerow also taught me a very good lesson! Whenever I go out searching and find a large piece of rubbish, I usually wait until I get to the end of a 'run' and then deposit it (throw it) in the hedge. After pulling it all back out again over the course of the day I am now aiming to try and take it all home with me next time!

The Viking 1 is a machine that everyone should consider buying, and I do mean everyone! At £75, it is very reasonably priced and its design enables it to be used by any age group. Young children like it because of its very clear signal. Adults will like it because it will work in areas where their conventional machines struggle. For example, put a nail on the ground and a small Roman coin. The Viking 1 will ignore the nail and pick up the coin. Put the nail on top of the coin and the Viking still sees the coin! Now try this test with any of your motion detectors and you will see why the Viking 1 metal detector does so well on badly contaminated sites. This machine is the ideal back-up machine that you are really going to use (and it's the ideal machine to lend out to a friend/child as it's so simple to operate).