

Field Test Garrett AT Pro International

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Fig.1. Face plate screen.

Fig.2. At full length against a bale.



I first became aware of the new Garrett AT Pro at a Weekend Wanderers rally at Wantage in 2010. It was 'top secret' and only revealed to the European network of distributors by the 'top brass' from Garrett who attended the event including Bob Podhrasky, the leading light behind Garrett's success for over 40 years. Steve Moore and Brent Weaver were also present, and it was Brent who was responsible for bringing the AT Pro to market.

I got to hold an AT Pro but didn't get to use it at the time. However, from my brief initial acquaintance with the machine I couldn't help but be impressed by what Garrett had achieved.

It is a mid-range detector with some really useful 'bells and whistles'. It runs on just 4 AA batteries and waterproof to a depth of 3 metres. Despite all this I never actually got to use an At Pro until 2016, and it's this detector which is the subject of this month's test.

Assembly and Instruction Manual

Putting the AT Pro together was straightforward, and it didn't take long at all. There were no issues with skid plates or cam locks! I had learned valuable lessons from my Ace 400i exercise.

I had been informed that the coil pins were fragile and could be easily damaged; however, they weren't. They were far sturdier than I was led to believe. Gentle pressure was all I required and I was then able to make sure the O ring was secured as it disappeared from view, and the collar nut could be easily rotated and locked.

The batteries were pre-installed and I must confess to having to look up the Instruction Manual to find out how to open the compartment! Ingenious!

The manual is very concise, has real photographs and is 120 pages split 50/50 into English and Spanish. It really is pocket sized too! There is also an excellent DVD included.

Various AT Pro Models

There are two variations of the AT Pro – the former being the American version and the latter a UK and European AT Pro 'International' with some subtle differences between them.

1. Labelling on the International version has US coins removed and a different legend at top, with a broader Ferrous range
2. Coins Mode on the International version has different discrimination patterns (less discrimination on the International) Coins Mode versus US Coins Mode; only one pixel of foil excluded
3. Depth is in centimetres rather than inches
4. Mid-Tone audio is heard for targets registering between 35 and 50, when Iron Audio is turned off. The mid-tone audio range is broader on the US AT Pro version

All other elements are the same.

Controls and Functions

At first glance the entire front panel (Fig.1) viewing area is small with tiny

icons and the buttons appear fragile. It's like looking at a black and white photograph with a definite lack of colour and uninteresting to the eye. It's all very drab. However, it is all very functional and the grey buttons are not fragile at all and are perfectly adept at the task of switching between modes and toggling between the various functions controlled by them.

Across the top is the 'legend' split into Ferrous and Non-Ferrous.

The Ferrous range has 40 points referred to as High Resolution Iron Discrimination. In use this can be set from anywhere between 0-40 and various size iron nails can identify with Target IDs anywhere in between (more on this later).

Modes can be seen left side of the face plate and these are:-

PRO	STD
CUSTOM	CUSTOM
COINS	COINS
ZERO	ZERO

Discrimination patterns shared are the same in either Mode with the audio being different from STD to PRO. Factory Default Mode is Coins.

Typically in STD Mode sound will be three tone while PRO Mode will provide the modulated audio that will provide the operator with a lot more 'raw' feedback that experienced operators prefer. (NB. Garrett recommend you start off for the first several sessions in STD Mode as you become used to the detector and I would wholeheartedly agree with that.)

The depth indicator is on the right hand side and is in 'cm' and the more

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black pixels illuminated the deeper the target. Next to it is the battery indication level. Middle bottom is the Sensitivity range to 8.

Above this is the Target ID, which ranges from 00-99. Above that and all across the viewing area, both the ferrous and non-ferrous ranges can be seen in blocks than can be randomly selected and deselected depending on what discrimination pattern you have created. A 'moving' black box cursor zips across this entire line to indicate the type of target found.

(NB. This cannot be moved into the ferrous range despite the Instruction Manual making it appear so on page 26

Fig.3. Top view of the AT Pro International.

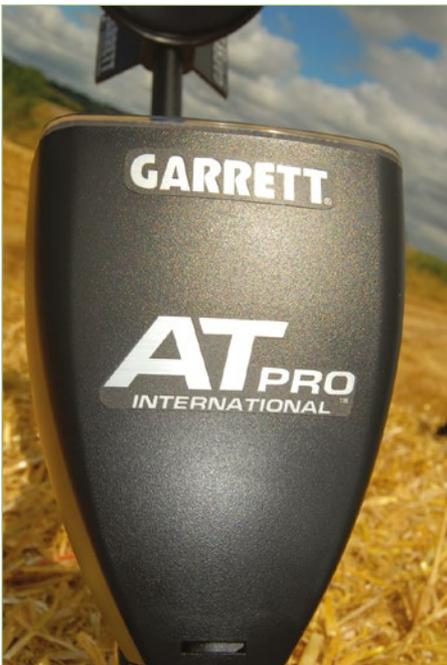


Fig.4. The arm rest.



– it is for illustration purposes only. It's also important to know that one Target ID cursor = 5 IDs. For example, a Target ID of 73 will light the cursor from 70-75.)

There are eight button selections and it is easy to use them and get to know their functions quickly. They are 'one touch/quick press' with the exception of the Pinpoint (and GB) buttons which are held in by the thumb.

The GB (Ground Balance) function has its own 'On' button but the finer points of finding a suitable manual GB point is controlled by the NOTCH DISC controls.

If you prefer, press and hold it for a fast Auto GB tuning with quick 'up, down' coil movements a few inches off the ground but without actually touching it.

The same applies to beach balancing: make sure the coil does not touch the wet sand. You don't have to do anything differently as there isn't a separate beach mode. Just ground balance, set a usable sensitivity level, adjust discrimination, and you're ready to hunt. Ground read values for my wet beach areas varied from 14-20, which is considered normal for 'conductive' conditions.

Typically my soils showed results varying from 60-80 indicating moderate mineral levels.



Fig.5. An Elizabeth I threehalfpence dated 1563.

My most challenging site showed around 89, which is considered tough.

The Pinpoint button doubles as a Frequency Adjust control that has four frequency settings. These are minute changes to block out other detectors or power lines.

The AT Pro's operating frequency is 15kHz and the 'sub channels' for switching are 'minute', 15465kHz for F1 and 15198kHz for F4, which is a shift of between 97Hz to 197Hz between the four channels. Not huge shifts at all.

The IRON AUDIO button can be easily pushed to verify 'iffy' targets but is best left OFF on open farmland; however, it is advisable to have it ON when beach hunting (in STD Mode). It's most effective for helping to identify bottle crown caps but beware as there are so many varieties of 'beers and sodas' available; sadly it can be a hit or miss affair. In the main if the cap is rusted it should provide a low tone before crossing it, a high tone as it's above it, and another low tone as it just clears it.



Fig.6. Common farm finds: a musket ball and buckle.



Fig.7. Larger items including a copper-alloy spoon.

In PRO Mode rusted caps can sound 'raspy' and 'buzzy'. The facility can also be handy on land – especially when used in PRO Mode. But leave it off and turn on only when it's required.

Bench Testing

With any detector I'd normally advise a new owner spend an hour or two familiarising themselves with it. However, you're going to be astounded by what I say next: don't spend too long at all bench testing the AT Pro International! Instead, get out there and just use it.

Why so? The AT Pro International is unlike any other detector I've ever used and is almost 'clinical' in its operation. It's hard to describe, but if you do as Garrett say and learn it in STD Mode then you should take to it like the proverbial duck to water! I was out with it 11 times ever before switching from STD to PRO Mode.

It instilled fast confidence in what it was doing, and what it was telling me. It was no fuss, no nonsense and provides fast signal interpretation with the clarity of signals from items so small they could hardly be found with the Pro Pointer AT. This meant that I quickly came to trust and love the machine!

Suffice to say, do spend a bit of time passing targets back and forth across the coil while making adjustments to IRON DISC, IRON AUDIO and switching between the two modes. You'll quickly see ferrous will deliver Target IDs in the 20s and 30s, foil in the 40s, small buttons and other low conductive stuff in the 50s and 60s while (the most common) finds

will deliver 60s. High content copper coins will be mid 80s and high content silver low 90s.

There isn't much tonal information in STD Mode and that's the major difference between it and PRO Modes. With the AT Pro the audio is 'electronic' and clinical and no subtle indicators jump out. However, in what Garrett call Tone Roll in PRO Mode there is some usable information to help identify flat iron objects, and bottle caps and washers. Similarly hot rocks can be identified easily enough and so too the 'ring pull' as the bell can ring multiple times as the coil passes over them with the modulated audio system.

Spend a few hours with your AT Pro International on a contaminated site and you will see (hear) what I'm trying to say. It's a very fast machine to learn. I have heard of some not liking it, but I expect these are people who want to run before they can walk and jump straight into 'PRO Mode' and the signal and ground noises might overwhelm and confuse them. Even the pinpoint mode sounds electronic as you can clearly hear the 'clock speed' of the processor.

(NB. Listen to Garrett's advice and start off on the STD Mode. I can't stress this enough.)

My Best Site

As luck would have it, when starting this field test I drove by my best site and saw the barley crop had been cut and the machinery was busy wrapping the bales of straw. I hadn't even intended detecting this day (Fig.2) but I just had to give it a go and got 'the nod' from the manager.

This was my very first time using the AT Pro International (Figs.3 & 4) and I set it up in STD Mode, ground balanced, set my sensitivity, and discrimination; then off I went not knowing what to expect.

In the first two hours I had a small square copper token (ID 48), and a broken fragment of a medieval ring. ID and audio varied from 48 medium tone to 55 bell tone as I 'walked the target'. A Target ID 66 bell tone produced a nice surprise in the form of a small hammered three-pence of Elizabeth I dated 1563 (Fig.5). This was the first hammered coin to come from this site in a year. I had found none here the previous season with a variety of detectors tested.

Several other coins surfaced along with the usual musket balls, buckles (Fig.6), buttons, bits of scrap lead and so forth (Figs.7 & 8). Just a single iron piece surfaced; this was a round holed piece that drove the bell tone but with a Target ID of 80. Further testing proved that targets with 'jumping' numbers (e.g. 43 to 56 and 80) were holed iron pieces (Fig.9).

I was therefore well pleased with the ATP on this first foray, and I felt very confident that for the first time in a long time this detector would be the one to find me a piece of gold. Signals were so sharp and easily defined that I didn't doubt or hesitate at all about what the machine was telling me.

What struck me about the detector was how quiet it was and then it dawned there wasn't a threshold control. This suited me fine for the types of sites I searched for the duration of the tests.

For example, I dug a piece of coke but there were several 'tell-tale' clues present that I had to learn to ignore them in future. These were: a bell tone just as the centre line of the coil's windings crossed the rock and a ferrous sound right after and then a bell tone again. This mightn't repeat on the second re-sweep.



Fig.8. Smaller items from stubble field.



Fig.9. Iron rings.

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The ferrous tone would dominate and the Target IDs jumped from 37, 39, 45 and then a bell tone 53. I couldn't 'zoom in' on them. Then in pinpoint mode the return audio was weak and vague. I soon ignored these 'mismatch' signals.

One thing I did note was how the coil's 'footprint' area appeared to interpret targets in different ways. Whether this is intentional on Garrett's part I don't know.

For example, if the exact middle of the coil passes across a buried target you might hear an 'iffy' signal comprising of two audio parts, a ferrous signal and a medium one. This could repeat for as many times as you crossed back and forth. But, if you moved the coil forwards or backwards an inch or two (and this was better pulled backwards) then it readily reacted with a ferrous tone as long as you repeated the motions. Similarly, another way the AT Pro interpreted rejected signals was to first give a bell tone and then nothing. So there were no doubts then that the internal processing deemed it a dud.

Beach

I had already taken the AT Pro International for a quick run at the beach to see how it would cope with the wet sand and other things. It had done exceptionally well.

So at a regular test beach the last spring tide presented a late opportunity to get out further than I was used to. As it happened the tide didn't drop that much and the sand was too soft; however, as it

was a glorious day I gave it a few hours.

Ground Balancing (beach balancing) was easy at full sensitivity in Pro Custom.

My final GB number was 14 and I rebalanced several times as I walked the vast sand flats. Rogue waves travelled in several times and the detector sounded off when it detected the fast moving water beneath the coil as it also did when the coil hit large brown seaweed that had come in on an overnight storm.

Occasionally the Target ID 39 would flash on with an accompanying noise to indicate a false signal but these were rare.

When signals were heard they were what I can only describe as 'sharp'.

No coins or rings were heard but plenty of tops and ends from cans some which had been deep.

Up on the dry sands (Fig.10) the detector whizzed along and picked off many small euro coins that had been missed by others – perhaps using a bit more discrimination than I?

When I referred earlier to the AT Pro being my best shot for a long time in finding a gold item it didn't disappoint. Early one Monday morning I left the mobile home park, walked onto the pristine beach and began scanning the white sands.

'Umpteen' signals into the hunt (many from beer bottle tops and coins) a clear bell tone produced '57' on the Target ID. Chasing the target with the pinpointer became futile as the target eluded me by slipping through the dry sand. I therefore used my hand to feel for the find and on a third grab felt something heavy. I looked

at the most gorgeous ring I had found in quite a while (Fig.11) and on closer inspection it appeared to be of a higher carat than your typical 9ct band. Attempts are on-going to trace the owner but if it's not claimed within a year and a day then it becomes my property. (It's currently with the local police).

On the dry sands I found the AT Pro International to be best in STD Custom with Iron Audio on to help make fast decisions on those aforementioned beer crown caps. The audio became scratchy and I was able to positively identify them.

Water Hunting

As the AT Pro is waterproof to a depth of 10 feet, it is perfectly suited to wading comfortably waist high in either fresh or salt water. But how many people will avail of this? I'd hazard a bet AT Pro owners will be more comfortable knowing their prize possession is rain proof and wouldn't dream of intentionally subjecting it to feet of immersion in the sea! But you'd be missing a trick here if you don't.

The detector is surprisingly easy to use for water hunting but it might require some additional investment in waders and a suitable water scoop.

The supplied headphones aren't waterproof although the connection is, so you won't be able to submerge the supplied headset. A Garrett accessory waterproof headphones are available so check with your dealer about that.

Make sure the coil plug is very secure and refer to the Assembly and Instruction Manual paragraph to see how that is done. If you're not going to use headphones in very shallow water for example, then make sure the black locking nut (supplied) is threaded securely into the headphone socket area to prevent water ingress.

My first foray into the water with the ATP was by way of a friend's request to search a stream running through his property (Fig.12). Allegedly coins are tossed into the stream from a bridge and



Fig.10. Coil on dry sand.



Fig.11. Gold ring beach find.

this is quite a common practice going back to Roman days when they threw coins into rivers for 'good luck' before crossing.

The stream was shallow enough for waders and I had a cheap scoop to help with the recoveries. It turned out to be a fair enough day as some coins (Figs.13 & 14) and other items were located, some being harder to find than others due to the 'kick down angle' on the scoop being completely wrong. However it was enjoyable as it had been a while since I had done any shallow water hunting.

The detector was perfectly stable and dare I say, perfectly at home in the water with the same settings as I had used both inland and on the beach!

That's the beauty of the AT Pro, it's just so versatile and comfortable to use.

When the detector was fully submerged the meter became difficult to see but most of us hunt by audio anyway, so it really didn't matter. If two hands were needed to dig through the river bottom the detector could be let go and floated next to me and was easily retrieved when ready (a bungee cable is handy here). Getting back to the scoop I used, I thought the holes were too large as thin items would slip through the holes and it took ages to find them (i.e. bullets were a good example of difficult recoveries).

Conclusion

The AT Pro International defines this 'all terrain' label really well and is equally at home inland, in a river, or on a wet sand beach.

The only snag in my opinion is you're stuck with the choice of headphones. If you want to use your own you will have to buy an adaptor.

I believe it is most at home working the difficult inland sites with ease. By

this I mean the ones we keep going back to year after year as we know there are more finds to be found, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to winkle them out.

Battery life is good and I easily got over 30 hours per set from Duracell 'copper tops'.

There is also comfort knowing that in our rather unpredictable weather (that some experts would have us believe is going to get worse over time) you have a detector than can take a splashing in a deluge. It is that one less thing to worry about.

Suitably attired one could ignore the heavy weather, and just keep detecting thus increasing your potential for finds.

Get it as muddy as you want and then hose it down back at home!

It seems the AT Pro International works even better when the iron contamination is thick. It excelled on one of my test patches where the iron contamination is appalling. I didn't take it to a coinshooting area as I had run an Ace 400i over it recently, and if the AT Pro is anything like the Ace then it should eat a park or common for lunch.

The best thing for me was that it suited my mood and hunting style. As luck would have it, some of my good sites became available during my field test

and it was good to have such a 'no fuss no nonsense' machine to use. Unlike the Ace 400i, I was able to work in PRO Mode and not have to listen to that bell tone.

I'm sorry I didn't come to the AT Pro International sooner as I was aware of it in 2010

However, I am aware now and have to say, that I could have found my 'desert island' detector.

This detector is yet further evidence that the Texas company has it in spades when it comes to delivering cost effective, practical and – in this case smashing performance – at a price few others can manage.

Small things like that make life – and detecting – a lot easier to bear.

Technical Specifications

- Operating Frequency** 15 kHz
- Sensitivity** 8 steps
- Search Modes** 6
- Tones** 3 (Low, Medium, High)
- Search Coil** PROformance 8.5 x 11 inch Double D
- Length** 42-51 inch
- Weight** 3.03lbs
- Battery** 4 AA (up to 40 hours depending on type)
- Warranty** 2 Years
- Accessories** 4.5 inch coil, 9 inch coil, 12 inch coil, waterproof headphones, coil covers

Regton Ltd. are the Sole Importer for Garrett Detectors in the U.K. Order and Enquiry Hotline 0121 359 2379 www.regton.com

Check out my YouTube Channel DesDunne1 to see some video footage from the testing of the machine. TH



Fig.13. Hard to find farthings.

Fig.14. The usual modern coinage.



Fig.12. The AT Pro International being used in a small stream.

