

Field Test

Golden Mask 3+

During May 2009, having already field tested the Golden Mask GM1 and GM3 models (see **Treasure Hunting** July and August 2009 issues), I was given the chance to have a look at the GM3+ as well.

The GM3+ is basically identical to the standard GM3 model apart from the addition of two extra controls, which are fitted under the control box.

One is a rotary *Frequency Control* you can turn in a clockwise fashion to change frequencies when detecting.

The other control is another toggle switch called a *Turbo Boost*. When this is flicked forward towards the search coil it will boost your depth and sensitivity when you are searching.

The *Frequency Adjust* control is ideal to use to reduce the effects of electrical interference from overhead cables, electric fences etc, but it will also help get rid of the interference from other nearby detectors.

The *Turbo Boost* toggle switch when flicked forward towards the search coil will help you achieve better depth in the ground (as much as 30% more).

However, if you choose to search constantly using the *Turbo Boost* it will exhaust the rechargeable batteries more quickly, thus giving you only 10 hours of

use as opposed to the 40 hours searching time in the normal setting.

Ideally speaking, *Turbo Boost* should be used in moderation.

During my own testing I only used the boost function when I was making finds that could possibly lead to more in a concentrated area. It is ideal to use to get to the normally fainter signals.

For the testing of the GM3+ I am going to dispense with the normal description of controls and assembly of the machine as it is just the same as I have described in my initial reports for the GM1 and GM3.

Finding the Right Fields

One of the problems about field testing any metal detector is to have an adequate amount of land available.

When I received the GM3+ it was in May, and as all my usual favourite haunts were under crops I didn't think I'd be lucky to find anywhere to search.

Fortunately, while driving around the countryside I did find a number of large set-aside stubble fields that seemed more than adequate for my purpose. The fields in question belonged to a new contact from whom I had just gained permission.

The fields had no known past, although the whole of the surrounding parish was full of history.



Fig.1. Control box layout of the Golden Mask GM3+.



Fig.2. Frequency Adjust control and the Turbo Boost switch.



Fig.3. One of the large set-aside fields available to search.

After some research I found that local folklore records a number of ancient battles having taken place in the area. It also appears that a very large coin hoard was found in the early 1800s on a neighbouring property. The coins were recorded as being medieval in date, made from silver and gold, and being about the size of halfcrowns.

With their large open-ended search coils the Golden Masks can cope well with set-asides - especially if they are slightly overgrown in parts.

Setting up the Controls

I adjusted the GM3+ to my own preferred settings:

- GB to Auto
- AUDIO DISC toggle switch to Off
- VCO to Off
- DISC LEVEL on the red marked preset of 4
- Sensitivity to between 7 and 8.



Fig.4a & b. Obverse and reverse of Edward I penny from the first new field.



Fig.5. Some of the buttons found during testing.

Once the detector was switched On, I set the THRESHOLD to the edge of sound.

I have found that working with the Audio Disc left in the Off position works quite well for me, although the instruction manual recommends though that you should set the disc at the NORM position.

After time, once you have become accustomed to the settings, you will no doubt have your own preferred adjustments as well.

In my previous tests I mentioned that you could knock out coke on a high discrimination setting of over the 8 mark while still managing to pick up coins and artefacts.

I have since found out that one should still be quite cautious with the higher settings as some of the hammered copper coins and small silver ones could be knocked out or give weaker signals.

Successful Field Hunts

Over a number of weeks some friends and I managed plenty of expeditions to the new fields, as well as to the one I had already searched. Although we found the fields a little on the quiet side, I nevertheless received signals leading to some interesting finds, and the GM3+ did an excellent job.

From time to time I flicked the Turbo Boost switch on, but then decided the best way to use it was only after making interesting finds.

Even in the normal set up the GM3+ achieved some astonishing depth results.

In fact, to retrieve some targets meant having to put the detector down so that I could widen a hole to get the spade I was using deeper into it.

During a search of one of the quieter fields I was just thinking of heading back to the car for a cup of tea when the search coil swept over a target and gave a response. This sounded off as a crisp two-way signal so I checked it by turning discrimination up from 4 to 8. The signal still sounded okay, although just a tad weaker in strength. Interestingly enough, it sounded even better when I flicked the VCO on.

This responded with a loud high pitch squeal when the search coil passed over the target, making it easy to pinpoint.

Flicking the VCO back off again, and turning the discrimination back down to 4, I set about retrieving the target.

Having dug down to approximately 6 inches and after having dumped a spade full of loose soil on the ground surface, I checked the hole again. Now there was silence.

I swept the search coil over the loose soil and the detector responded with a loud two-way signal. I then repeated turning up the discrimination to see if there was any difference. This time round it was just the same with no weak edge to it, and in VCO I was still getting a loud high pitch squeal.

The slight difference in signal strength may have been caused by the position the object was lying at in the ground - perhaps on edge or at an angle.



Fig.6. The strange iron object that came up from over a foot in depth.

Fingering the loose soil I soon found the target - a small round coin-sized disc which I discovered, when rubbing some of the soil from it, was my first hammered silver from the field. A cross and pellets were now staring me in the face.

Turning the coin over revealed the portrait of Edward I.

I then spent the best part of two hours carrying out a systematic search around the find spot. On this occasion using the Turbo Boost didn't produce any more silver pennies. However, the area of the find spot did yield a worn 17th century copper halfpenny, two buttons, a musket ball, and an enormous piece of shaped iron.

The iron object came up from a depth of about 12 inches and took me ages to extract as it was very heavy.

My mind started to run away with thinking about the battles that had once taken place in the neighbourhood, and I started to wonder if my find could be medieval - perhaps even part of some kind of weapon such as a giant catapult.

In another separate outing I went back to a stubble field where I had conducted tests with the GM1.

I was surprised to see the field still in stubble as it was supposed to have been ploughed and sown two weeks earlier. However, I found that there had been some kind of delay in the ploughing.

This meant I could get in yet another search. This field has produced a vast amount of musket balls in the past and every time we go back we find more. There had perhaps been a shooting range

here in either the 17th or 18th centuries.

While testing the GM1 here I had found a hammered penny and a brooch fragment that looked to be Roman.

The friend I was with wasn't too enthusiastic about the search as he thought the site had been already "done to death". Nevertheless, he set up and had a go, while I headed straight back to the area where the hammered had been found last time round with the GM1.

With the Turbo Boost switched on, it wasn't too long into the search when I received a good signal near the previous hammered find spot. From a depth of around 6 inches the target proved to be another hammered penny.

From a field that my friend thought had been cleaned out, I eventually managed to locate and recover over 20 targets from a variety of depths well over the 5 inch mark.

It is fair to say that due to GM3+ being a deep seeker, a lot of the finds I was getting were probably out of other detectors' ranges including my friend's.

The finds the Golden Mask 3+ managed to locate as well as the hammered penny included: a worn Georgian halfpenny, three small copper hammered coins (all worn), and 14 more musket balls.

For the final test of the GM3+ I returned to one of the new fields. Here the detector, as well as achieving good depths, located some artefacts that I least expected to find.

At one stage I received a faint "iffy" signal that I was going to ignore but then

changed my mind and decided to investigate. It's just as well that I did!

The reason the signal was faint and iffy was because of the target's very long and narrow shape. From a depth of 5 inches I was pleasantly surprised to recover an ancient pin. This was green in colour and therefore made from copper alloy or bronze. It is an object the like of which I have never found before. I believe it to be a hairpin or cloak pin, and it has a terminal that reminds me of a club as seen in a deck of cards.

With regards to its age, I can only speculate that it could be Viking or medieval. Any suggestions from readers would be appreciated.

I was over the moon with this find for although pins may be fairly common recoveries elsewhere in the country, where I live they are very rare.

I began to wonder whether the pin

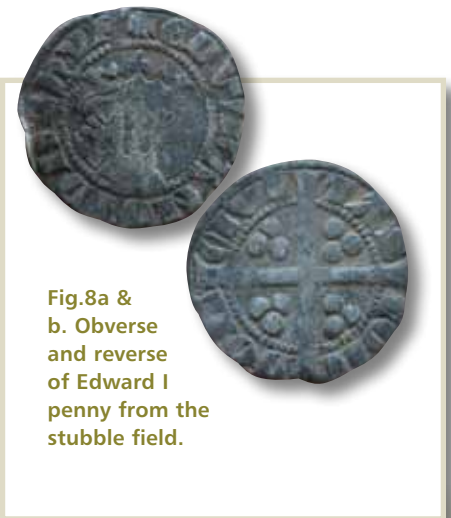


Fig.8a & b. Obverse and reverse of Edward I penny from the stubble field.



Fig.7. Finds from the "cleaned out" stubble field.



Fig.9. Hair pin or cloak pin?

could be a hint of an early settlement having once been here. There were also other signs emerging that the field had some history, with plenty of potshard fragments - dating Bronze Age to medieval - turning up.

After finding the pin I did my normal intensive search of the immediate area but nothing further came to light. I therefore moved on to a part of the field where my friends were searching. Here we found around 30 small hammered copper coins between us, all dating from the 17th century.

These coins unfortunately always seem to come up worn or corroded. The GM3+ found its share of these, being responsible for the finding of 10 of them.

We were then caught up in a freak storm. One minute the sky was pure

black and then the next we were in a white out caused by hailstones the size of small marbles.

Everyone ran back to the cars, but by the time I arrived I was soaked through to the skin.

When the storm finally abated we ventured out again for about 40 minutes before the weather turned on us again. But in that space of time I managed to find yet another hammered silver coin and a worn crooked sixpence. The hammered coin was a silver sixpence of James VI which is rather buckled; however the date of 1605 can still be clearly seen.

The targets I managed to locate in this field showed that the GM3+ is perfectly in tune even with the limited field conditions we had for the time of year. The amount of deep digging I had to do surprised me, but the end results proved that the elbow grease used in the dig paid off.

Summary

Like the GM1 and GM3, the GM3+ is a detector that doesn't let you down. It does have its iron moments - especially on big and oddly shaped pieces - but it will locate the good finds as well.

Finding three hammered silver coins during a test, and artefacts like the pin, is quite unique for me - especially given the conditions and time of year.

Like the other models in the range the GM3+ is a very reasonably priced

detector. I couldn't find any fault with it. Initially, I did have some reservations about the rechargeable battery system used on the entire range but didn't encounter any problems with it.

No doubt there will still be those wanting the facility to use both plain alkalines and rechargeables; perhaps this will be addressed by the manufacturer at some stage.

I only had to use the Frequency Adjust control once during the tests to cut out the interference of a friend's detector; apart from this I didn't need to use it.

The Turbo Boost function was only used when I thought it appropriate to do so. It would certainly come into its own when hoard hunting.

All in all, I found the GM3+ a very good, well balanced, robust, deep-seeking detector. It has plenty of control power and offers terrific value for money.

Specifications

Manufacturer: GM Metal Detectors Ltd, Bulgaria

UK Importers: Evergreen Metal Detectors, The Cann Barn, Church Stoke, Mellington, Montgomery, SY15 6TQ Tel: 01588 620259

www.uk-metal-detectors.co.uk

Model: Golden Mask GM3+

Type: Ultra High Power transmitter with VLF working frequency



Fig.10. James VI hammered silver sixpence.



Fig.11. Medieval potshards found "eyes only".



Fig.12. Miscellaneous finds.

Features:

- VLF/TR Technology
- Variable Transmit Receive - 8kHz (6.kHz, 7kHz)
- Multi Tone Discriminator
- Manual Ground Balance
- Automatic Ground Balance
- Fully Screened Control Box
- Low Battery Light Indicator
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- Turbo Switch for 30% more power
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Battery Life: 40 hours continuous use
Batteries: 12 volt Ni-MH rechargeable battery pack and charger included
Search Coil: 10.5 inch DD Wide Scan coil as standard on all models
Weight: 3lb 11oz (1.4 kg)
Price: £599.00
Guarantee: 5 year warranty on electronics on all models
Accessories: Additional larger 12.5 inch search coil, coil covers and control box covers available. TH



Fig.13. Corroded and worn copper and bronze coins.



Fig.14. Another large set-aside field.

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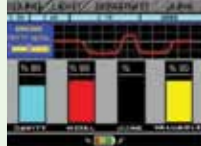
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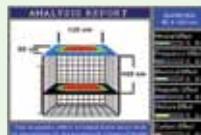
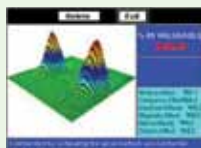


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