

Field Test Report

Minelab X-Terra 705

Just as we had secured permission to search a new farm, I was asked by this magazine to conduct a field test on the Minelab X-TERRA 705 (using the 10.5 inch "Double D" 7.5kHz coil). This was a perfect fusion of events in my opinion. The X-TERRA 705 duly arrived and was unpacked with anticipation (Fig.1).

As always I checked that all parts required were present (page 4 on the manual should be consulted to assist with this). A few moments later I had assembled the detector (Fig.2.) and then decided to have a quick look through the remainder of the manual. I must say that in the latter stages of assembly the combination of quality spring-loaded pins and twist-locks makes for a very secure shaft....there was not the slightest hint of a wobble here! For me this created real confidence in that a rugged and sturdy machine has been provided.



Fig.1. Appearance of the packaged product when first opened.



Fig.2. The X-TERRA 705 assembled.

Concerning the Instruction Manual I noted that a very interesting and informative section can be found on page 45 regarding "Battery Behaviour". I definitely recommend a quick consultation of this section before buying or inserting any batteries. Overall the Instruction Manual is easy to read and digest and it contains useful information for the beginner as well as the more experienced user. The product went through all my close scrutiny checks of seals, seams, cables, properly fitting screws, appearance and first impressions on packaging layout. I'm happy to report it passed on all accounts.

I know readers might say I've mentioned this before, but there could be a new beginner or prospective purchaser out there who has not read my comments before, so I will say them again. I love fine detail and the small plug of grip material that Minelab supply to cover up the control box screw, once tightened, really impressed me.

Unable to resist a few trial sweeps in the lounge I found the machine was perfectly balanced and – as inherent with all the X-TERRA range – remarkably light.

The farm chosen for testing had been widely searched in the 1970s and 80s but had been neglected for about 21 years.

However, rumours persisted of good hot spots and some marvellous finds. So if these stories were true, why had the site not been searched for so long? It turned out the recently-deceased landowner, who obtained the premises in about 1990, for some reason had simply not wanted anyone detecting there.

Although Steve and I could never know what had been found here in the past we were determined to see what still remained.

So one Wednesday morning, after dropping the boys off at school, Steve and I parked up and surveyed our new land. Much was under crop as it was February, but the extensive grassland and woodland looked tempting. Part of the grassland was a triangular pond base from which, it was alleged, had come numerous Celtic objects and coins (Fig.3.). It certainly looked ancient.

On examination the grassland was composed of rich dark gravely alluvial soils in the valley and river flood plains; but higher up consisted of chalky loam and heavy clays. The surrounding fields (Fig.4.) were all now sadly seeded, and unavailable, but had also yielded a copious quantity of Celtic, Roman and several Saxon coins in the past.

Although somewhat restricted for

Fig.3. The alleged Celtic votive site.



Fig.4. The X-TERRA 705 against a back drop of fields that have all yielded Celtic, Roman and some Saxon coins.



searching in February, this site seemed to offer a pretty good variety of soils and ideal for a field test.

I've always considered it an honour to be asked to field test Minelab products and have also made it a goal to give factual data. I like to put the products through their paces as best as I am able. With a background in quality assurance management I'm always a bit finicky about the fine details of products and take delight in reporting things when I feel the manufacturer has excelled in quality provision to the customer.

The well-established X-TERRA range operates the sophisticated VFLEX technology which has often delivered some astounding results and finds. I have heard the X-TERRA 705 referred to as the "Big Daddy of the X-TERRA family". So with thoughts reflecting back to a famous 1970s wrestler, I wanted to see if this product really did pack a punch in today's demanding world of metal detecting.

Pasture does not have the luxury of being ploughed each year so finds rates can reduce on constantly searched pasture sites. I therefore wondered what would be revealed here. In my experience also, however, some pasture sites if left for a few years seem to "replenish" their stocks of finds. Many detectorists

assume this must be down to earthworm activity and varying moisture levels.

It was time to see what the X-TERRA 705 could do. Steve asked if he could have a go as well and I reluctantly agreed. Much as I value his opinion, every time I've done this before on a field test he went on to find something superb.

This is the first time I have used an X-TERRA 705 and I was really keen to understand and experience its performance. I checked my side pocket and felt the reassuring shape of the Instruction Manual. I always take this into the field when using a new machine. No matter how much of an "expert" you think you are it's very easy to be caught out by small silly things; but having the manual with you can put these problems to right.

Walking through the gateway we descended the grassy banks and took shelter beneath a sturdy oak tree while setting up. The wind had really picked up and it looked set to rain, but fortunately this held back. Beneath the tree was a layer of leaves and carefully placed the machine on these as I prepared myself (Fig.5.).

For this field test I used the Factory Presets on a variety of terrains. This avoids a selection of personal uses and opinions, and explaining them in some detail, where they may not be relevant



Fig.5. A temporary bed of fallen leaves for the X-TERRA 705 as I got ready to begin the field test.

Fig.6. The author in the base of the triangular pond Celtic site.



whatsoever to anyone else given the terrain variations and moisture levels that occur. The X-TERRA 705 has two Factory Preset options relating to two Modes. These are Coin and Treasure & Prospecting. Both of these modes will be utilised for each terrain tested, although at a later stage I will briefly list the other facilities and options that the X-TERRA offers the user.

For this field test three hours were spent on each terrain and in this case these terrains had all been extensively detected upon previously for some considerable years, although in some cases not recently.

Terrain 1

This was very moist meadowland with alluvial gravel pond base and surrounding boulder clay

Due to recently melted snow this area was quite moist. I decided to check out the base of the triangular pond (Fig.6.) and also work along some of the high raised embankments (Fig.7.). The first three signals produced old and corroded shotgun cartridge caps. These were followed by a large stainless steel dinner knife and the broken remains of a gilded propelling pencil. A small but crisp positive signal then produced a small Roman coin at a depth of about 3 inches. It seems

I had located something of a hotspot as more small coins followed at varying depths of 3 to 7 inches. Another signal revealed itself to be a small leaden token with a raised number "1" on one side. Most of these finds are shown in Fig.8.

The rumours had been of Celtic finds here, but the X-TERRA 705 was definitely in a Roman mode. Walking up the embankments the soil was dense grey/orange clay with numerous rounded glacial pebble inclusions. This was very hard to dig but a Georgian pewter spoon bowl and a button were found. Before I cleaned them, both were bright orange in colour, possibly indicating that the clay was iron bearing. This may well have been the case but if so it had no effects upon the X-TERRA 705's performance in either mode.

The banks contained numerous small pieces of lead, some zinc sheeting, more shotgun cartridge caps and a Harrington farthing. I had heard that the banks had been intensively searched, but the X-TERRA 705 had found the spoon bowl, button and farthing, and also registered over 20 bits of lead and shotgun caps. Nothing of real note was found, but that's of no importance here; what's noteworthy is the amount of targets located in an area that's been well detected on in the past. It may indicate that sites do refresh themselves to some degree, but what it definitely shows is that with the right

Fig.7. The author checking out the fairly steep slopes to the Celtic site.



Fig.8. A selection of the finds made at the Celtic site.

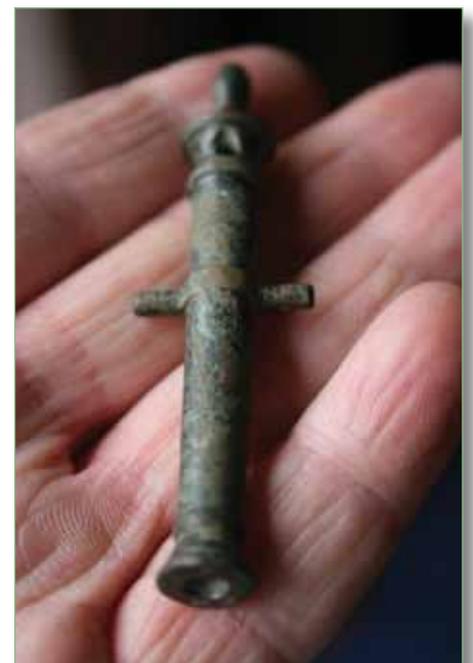


Fig.9. Delightful toy cannon.

detector you can find your fair share of them.

Terrain 2

This was a heavy clay meadow site containing the remains of two Georgian cottages. This field had been heavily searched in the 1980s, but it was new ground to us. I lent Steve the X-TERRA 705 for a few minutes and his first signal was a military cap badge found at a depth of 10 inches in the horse hoof compacted soil. As we approached the site of the cottages, which had been demolished around 1900, the ground was full of iron scraps and old nails.

While I was in the immediate area of the buildings, due to the iron contamination I stayed in Coin and Treasure Mode as this maintained the Sensitivity level. The X-TERRA 705 dealt with this well and winkled out a total of seven Georgian pennies, yet another Harrington farthing, and some very small pieces of lead. As I walked further away I alternated to Prospecting Mode. A series of well-defined signals turned out to be sections of zinc sheeting all of which was down at well over a foot in depth.

Another signal that was a little scratchy but definite was found to be a large iron nail that had a collet of lead around it. The collet was considerably smaller than the iron nail and we were

impressed with the X-TERRA 705 for having identified the desirable composition of a difficult target that may well have been a coin. As we progressed down to the river this became not the easiest of sites to search as it then consisted of some small flat areas amidst some tussocks of very coarse grass. Despite this a further two Georgian coins were extracted and several tombac buttons.

Terrain 3

Since a river was in close proximity to the above sites we tried the X-TERRA in both modes in shallow water. Due to the dense stone laden river bed it's impossible to dig in many areas of the central flow. However, there are numerous shallow water areas of gravel spars etc. Detecting over these revealed a total of two Roman coins and many shotgun caps as well as several small shards of aluminium from corroded drinks cans. (Remember immersion of the search coil in water is possible to a total depth of 20 inch or 0.5 metres. However, despite being weather resistant the control box structure must never be immersed underwater.)

Terrain 4

This was a chalk soil field that had been seeded. I was discussing the fact that I had a field test to do with Tim a

local farmer, who is very pro detecting, and he very kindly allowed Steve and I to search one of his chalky loam soil sloping fields. At the base of the slope seems to be a profusion of iron artefacts deriving, it seems from their condition, from several bonfires.

On this field I operated in Coin and Treasure Mode. Little of note was found in this area apart from a tiny corroded Roman coin. I therefore switched to Prospecting Mode and started walking up hill. Halfway up the slope Steve put down his Safari and asked if he could have a go with the X-TERRA 705.

I knew this could be a dangerous decision, as he is one of the luckiest detectorists that I know. However, I decided I'd like a rest so passed him the detector. He stayed in Prospecting Mode, and began searching very quickly. The X-TERRA 705 coped with his speed and, in fact, did a lot more. It wasn't long before one of those wonderful toy cannons was in his hands.

I have wanted to find one of these for a long time. It was a really fine example too, as shown in Fig.9. His next two finds were a Georgian lead seal showing a horse and rider (Fig.10.) and then a worn Elizabeth I sixpence dated 1580 (Fig.11.).

I took back the X-TERRA 705 and managed to offset this finds rate with an unusual *denarius*. True it was broken, but its condition was otherwise very good. Another thing was it came from Orbiana a Roman empress neither of us had ever found before (Figs.12a & b.). Orbiana was the wife of Severus Alexander of whom numerous examples of his *denarius* issues have turned up around this area.

The competitive qualities of us both were clearly coming out and proving great fun too. Taking it in turns to use and assess the machine, his next find was a small gold and platinum mounted diamond solitaire ring (Fig.13.). I then



Fig.10. Georgian lead seal showing horse and rider.



Fig.11. Elizabeth I (1558-1603) sixpence dated 1580.

Figs.12a & b. Scarce *denarius* of the Roman Empress Orbiana wife of Severus Alexander, AD 222-235. The reverse of *denarius* showing Concordia.



Fig.13. Diamond solitaire ring.

Fig.14. Part of medieval buckle and belt fitting.



Figs.15a & b. Obverse and reverse of stunning Carolingian denier minted in AD 814-840 under the reign of Louis the Pious.

found part of a medieval buckle and belt fitting (Fig.14.). Then I got totally beaten by Steve and the X-TERRA 705 produced a find that put me definitely in second place that day. The find was a very first for him too, a Carolingian denier minted in AD 814-840 under the reign of Louis the Pious (Figs.15a & b.). At the time of writing the coin is still being researched.

Product Accessories

Head Phones

In my opinion these are essential. Not only do they reduce drastically the power consumption of your batteries, but also reduce external noise (not supplied).

Coils

A good selection of additional coils are available for this model in Concentric or Double D in differing sizes and frequencies.

Skid Plate (Coil Cover)

Another absolutely essential piece of your kit. This will be supplied as part of your purchase pack for the X-TERRA 705. However, regularly check it for wear and tear such as holes and cracks and replace as soon as such is evident.

Environmental Cover

This is another important consideration. These covers shroud your Control Box from environmental issues such as soil and rain.

Short Shaft

This is yet another superb consideration from the manufacturers. Although the shaft on the X-TERRA 705 is already highly adaptable for a person’s height sometimes a shorter shaft is still required. This would be ideal for example for a child to adapt the detector for their use.

Performance

We found that the X-TERRA 705 certainly carried on the tradition one expects and associates with the entire X-TERRA range. Its consistency in target evaluation and identification is extremely good. As

we have experienced the X-TERRA 705 also has the superb ability at winking out non-ferrous targets even in the most trash laden search zones.

The X-TERRA 705 has its two Factory Presets as the foundation base and a huge variety of adjustable variations to suit the user to modify performance to enable all conditions to be efficiently searched. This detector has an all metal pattern and four additional preset patterns (plus Iron Mask) all encompassing a wide permutation of customised settings. The X-TERRA tradition of consideration for the operator is extended to its ability to save edited patterns when switching off and even if changing batteries.

Conclusions & Overall Impressions

In my view this is a superb and very easy to interpret model of detector. Like all the X-TERRAs this upper range model not only operates beyond what one expects but also looks good.

It is an excellent machine to operate and once again reflects all the consideration from the research and development side of its manufacturers. When a detector such as this arrives in the market it creates a confidence in performance, which then becomes a benchmark for other detectors. Having confidence in

your metal detector is without doubt one of the most important aspects of metal detecting as a total beginner or experienced individual.

When assembled it has a sturdy appearance and a good solid feel to it; nothing here is going to crack, snap or break when you are out in the field. That, of course, is excellent but is in essence a user demand and prerequisite for any manufacturer of high quality metal detectors to uphold.

As with previous X-TERRA models the instruction manual is written in easy to understand English. I have mentioned this previously but I believe it’s a vitally important issue.

The detector’s keypad layout is both practical and very much ergonomic in its design considerations. After doing this field test I, too, am now among those who consider the X-TERRA 705 to be the “Big Daddy” of the range.

The entire range make great partners to be out in the field with and in my opinion this X-TERRA 705 is yet another formidable asset to assist us in finding, researching, conserving and above all sharing our buried metallic history.

I have great pleasure in recommending this detector to the hobby and hope that it brings continued success to detectorists as well as to its manufacturers. TH

Product Specifications

- Technology**
VFLEX
- Visual Display**
Transflective LCD with Backlight
- Search Mode**
Motion Detector
- Length Extended**
56 inches (1.42 metres)
- Length Collapsed**
48 inches (1.22 metres)
- Weight excluding batteries**
2.9lbs (1.3kg)

Functions

- Detecting Modes**
Coin and Treasure, and Prospecting
- Discrimination Patterns**
Four plus All Metal
- Iron Mask Discrimination**
(Prospecting Mode Only)
- Discrimination Scale Segments**
28 (Four Ferrous and 24 Non-Ferrous)
- Numeric Range (Target ID Numbers)**
-8 to 48