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In a previous field test (**Treasure Hunting** April 2003) I mentioned some field trials I had been carrying out using the Laser Rapier fitted with the standard 8in concentric coil. Later I sent the detector to Pentechnic for a slight modification to be carried out so that I could fit a 8.5in widescan coil. I felt that this might give slightly better performance on the differing local field conditions (eg stubble, plough, and pasture).

In the event I did not notice any great difference between the two coils - I found depth and discrimination to be about the same regardless of the site I was visiting. One advantage I did notice with the larger coil was that, being slightly heavier, it was easier to sweep through thick grass or stubble. Against this, I found pinpointing to be very slightly off-centre with the widescan coil, but bang on target with the concentric coil.

Like any other enthusiast I avidly study the field tests published in this magazine. However, I think it a great shame that most trials are carried out on farmland, which is often available only at certain times of the year, to the neglect of sandy beaches or river foreshore that can be searched all year round.

Over the years I have found that most of the motion type metal detectors (with the exception of one or two) do not work particularly well on the wet sand of beaches. Their performance is often erratic, and this is not just because they are being used over wet sand but also the type of sand (ie black sand). However, when it comes to beach searching motion detectors

should not be written off as a total dead loss as the majority will perform very well on the dry sand of beaches.

As there is a good beach quite near to where I live and I do not own a car, beach detecting accounts for quite a fair amount of my search time. It was therefore with some interest that I heard a rumour during a telephone conversation that the Laser Scout - because of its smaller and slimmer 7in coil - had the edge over the Laser Rapier when it came to beach work, and would perform comparatively well both on wet and dry sand. This was something I wanted to assess for myself, and I ordered a Scout at short notice so that I could compare the two detectors together to see which machine I liked the best.

Unfortunately, up here in Scotland detector retailers are very thin on the ground, and it is not possible to simply pop along to the nearest to "try before you buy" on their test beds or

makeshift sandpits. Hence, I have to rely heavily on the postal service, and speaking to dealers who, thankfully, appear to have an understanding nature.

Brief Description

The Laser Scout is currently the next model down in the range from the Laser Rapiers. It offers less controls, lacking the pinpoint button facility and threshold adjust. It is fitted with a 7in concentric (non-polo) coil as standard, but still retains the facility to take optional coils of different types and sizes.

Apart from the above, the Scout is very similar to the Rapier having the same colour scheme, Micromax control box, and single PP3 battery operation.

The manual for the Scout is just a two-page affair, and - although easy enough to follow - does not compare to that provided with the Rapier, which contains lots of good tips and advice.



The Laser Scout fitted with the famous Predator headphones.

There are just two rotary controls situated on the control panel: On/Off-Sensitivity, and Discrimination adjust. The area immediately around the Discrimination control is marked out in the categories of: "Iron, Foil, 5 Cent, Pull Tab, 1 Cent ZN, Max" rather than the Rapier's "Min, 1-10, Max".

The Sensitivity is marked out in the same way as the Rapier: "Min, 1-10" and then a red area labelled "Max". The Sensitivity control on the Scout also acts as a battery test in exactly the same "turn on and listen" fashion as the Rapier.

Having only two controls the Scout is easy to operate in the true "turn on and go" sense, and with the smaller 7in coil attached is slightly lighter than the Rapier.

Putting the Scout together is carried out in exactly the same fashion as the Rapier. The three-piece stem is joined together and the coil cable is then wrapped around the stem and plugged into the socket on the control box. As always, the cable shouldn't hang in loose coils, but there should be enough slack to allow for changes in position of the coil.

Out & About

During my tests on a local beach with both detectors I found surprisingly little difference between them in performance. They both worked



Beach oddments including a bullet, a lead washer, a dog tag, and what looks like a piece of a reproduction gun.

extremely well over dry sand, and both picked up signals at very good depths. I tried the two detectors on different days and when I compared the results later I was astonished to find that the amount of coins found for each day was exactly the same. Both machines had recovered 33 coins, which amounted to just over a fiver in change each day.

On the first day that I took the Scout out I found myself searching an area of sand that had been used for a beach party the previous night. As a result the Scout began to pick up buried and half-buried beer cans. When I began to remove these to the nearest



Close-up of the Laser Scout control panel.

rubbish bin, I was pleased to find that two cans had been forgotten about and remained unopened; these found a new home in my fridge.

On my first outing with the Scout I tried some experiments with the discrimination settings. Initially, I set the dial to foil as beaches can be very junk contaminated. It wasn't until I started to take account of the "broken" signals I was hearing that I realised that this setting was a faction too high. In fact, one of the broken signals proved to come from a decimal penny laying flat on the surface.

One of the bonuses of coinshooting on beaches is that you often come across "wee hoards" of modern coins. These small clusters of coins result from when people have been sitting or lying on the beach and have lost the contents of their pockets without realising it. On my first day out with the

Scout I found three such "hoards". However, I did notice that individually the Scout was finding the 10ps and £1 coins, but not the 5ps, 1ps, or even 2ps.

I carried out some further experiments, and realised that even just under the "foil" marker (which was where I had set the control after initially starting out with it set on "foil" itself), the discrimination was still too high and that I would have to reduce it to pick up the smaller or less conductive coins.

Reducing the discrimination to the "Iron" mark did the trick, and the detector now gave a good response even on the 1ps and 5ps. If you are a beach hunter and don't like these low value coins, it is worth remembering that if you set the discrimination high enough to reject them, you might also be losing the odd gold ring or other piece of jewellery. Sometimes it is a case of putting up with the bad to enjoy the good, and if you don't want to be bothered with these coins you can always give them away to charity.

An alternative way of searching is setting the discrimination high and, accepting that a lot of jewellery will be lost, just go for the "chubbies" (£1

Looking along the sand dunes at Broughty Ferry in the direction of Broughty Castle.



FIELD TEST

coins) and “super chubbies” (£2 coins). But you could be in for a boring outing and you might still be finding bottle tops and ring pulls.

Having tried both detectors on the dry sand, my next experiment was to see how they would cope on the wet sand down at the low water mark. To do this I used each detector on a different day. I started off with the Scout. It certainly seemed to work well enough on the wet sand and I didn't notice the erratic “chatter” that many motion detectors give out in such conditions. However, I did notice a small change towards instability when I swapped over the standard 7in coil for an 8in one.

There was a marked increase in erratic behaviour when I used the Rapier on wet sand fitted with the standard 8in coil, and the larger 8.5in coil. It seemed that the rumours I had heard concerning the good performance of the Scout and wet sand might have some truth in them.

Finds at low water were nothing fantastic with the odd coin or two coming up as well as the ubiquitous ring pulls. Some of the post-1982 1ps and 2ps actually came up rusty where their thin copper coating had worn or corroded away allowing the sea water to get at their iron core. These seemed to give a more “crackly” response than normal.

Following my beach experiments I changed locations and tried two mud-covered foreshores up on the Tay Estuary. One of these foreshores was next to an old harbour and was absolutely strewn with rubble. It proved a total “no go” area for both machines because of the nature of the rubble. Both gave erratic responses sounding like good signals with each

Rings and other jewellery found during the summer on beaches including a dummy sovereign ring.



Finds made on the River Tay foreshore - mainly fishing weights some of which may actually be musket balls.

sweep of the coil. This was caused by hundreds of metal objects - iron nails, splinters of copper, slithers of aluminium - all laying close to each other on the surface. Add to all that the fragments of old bricks, which from their mineral content also gave a response, and you can see that this stretch of foreshore was a junk yard and a total waste of time to search. In truth, I would say that no detector has yet been invented that could come anywhere near to coping with such conditions.

Obverse and reverse of two small Chinese pendants found among a scattered “pocket hoard” of modern coins.



Finding a much cleaner area was my next project, and this was quite easily achieved. I found what I was looking for three miles up the estuary with the water still low enough to carry out a quick search. Both machines performed well on this stretch of foreshore. I also located a small harbour area that did not suffer from the same contamination as the first one that I tried. Once again both Scout and Rapier worked well on this patch without any erratic or false signals.

The mud only presented a problem when it stuck to the search coils, or when it caused me to lose my balance and slip over!

The area concerned is renowned for fishing and I came up with plenty of small round fishing weights. Some of them are about the same size and bore as musket or pistol balls, and I had a problem in deciding whether they were weights or bullets. In some cases I am still unsure. In the space of an afternoon I had recovered two coat pockets full of them along with about half-a-dozen coins. I felt this proof enough

A photograph of just some of the many coins the Laser Scout managed to find during the summer.



Manufacturer: Tesoro Electronics Incorporated, Arizona, USA

Sole UK Importers: Treasure World, 192 Albany Street, London NW1 4AP (0207 387 3142)

Operating Frequency: 12 kHz
Search Coil: 7in slim line concentric (non-polo) removable

Battery: One PP3 alkaline recommended

Battery life: 10-20 hours

Guarantee: One year parts and labour

Footnote

I have no idea how many coins I have managed to find on beaches since I took up metal detecting all those years ago, and to some degree it is regrettable that I didn't keep a more thorough record down on paper, as no doubt it would have been a pretty impressive amount.

However, I have managed to keep a record of my finds from beaches in the period 1994 to 2003.

Number of coins found on beaches - 4055

Number of visits to beaches - 99

Total amount in coinage since 1994 - £696.56 **TH**

Another unusual kind of find that I come across these days - dozens of lost tent pegs.



that both detectors could perform well on selected areas of tidal river foreshores.

Summing Up

As my financial circumstances are such that I really couldn't justify owning what were (for me) two quite expensive detectors, I decided to keep the Scout and sell my Rapier. Of course, other readers may have chosen to go in the opposite direction.

I like the performance the Scout provides and its compact, easy-to-use design. It has also proved itself to be a great all-rounder, and I hope to report back on how it performs on farmland

when the fields become available again (I am writing this in June 2003).

When I tried the Scout out on another sandy beach just the other day, it proved once again just what a good little performer it can be. In just one session I managed to find 53 modern coins, amounting to just over £16 (10 of these were £1 coins). The same outing also produced three rings, two of which were silver, and two Chinese pendants buried together in the same hole.

Specifications

Model: Laser Scout

Type: Silent Search Variable Discrimination