

XP HF Coil and MI-6 Pinpoint Probe

As an early convert, I think it's probably fair to say that the 2009 release of the XP Deus revolutionised detectors and detecting. I know it certainly did for me. Therefore any new release from XP that is claiming to further raise the bar is always likely to cause excitement. This time, however, it's not just one update upgrade but three! First is the new High Frequency (HF) 9 inch coil (Fig.1). This is designed to optimally work with the software update (the new Version 4 is free to download).

Together they are claimed to provide more sensitivity and flexibility of use; particularly on small targets in mineralised ground. In conjunction with the new software the coil can give you three main frequencies with seven sub-frequencies meaning that whatever the site or conditions an optimum frequency is always at hand.

The third of the new releases is XP's new MI-6 pinpoint probe (Fig.2). The key feature of this being that if you use a Deus you can choose to have its audio signal delivered through your headphones. It works by putting the Deus into a standby mode as soon as the pinpoint probe is switched on, and then the signal from the pinpoint probe – as you close in on your find – is delivered through your headphones. As soon as you have your find and turn off the pinpoint probe the Deus becomes 'alive' again and the headphones automatically connect back to it.

HF Coil and Set-Up

The coil arrived in the well-known, sturdy XP packaging (Fig.3). Inside is the coil, stem, small clear plastic bag of washers and nuts (as well as some very useful spares of each) the new lithium battery and a long red plastic tool for enabling the coil cable to be threaded within the stem.

A clear well drawn four part instruction manual shows you how to put it all together. Fitting the stem and coil together will be familiar to anyone who has used XP products before, but then comes the new part. Once stem and coil are connected the end of the coil cable



Fig.1. XP HF 9 inch coil.

Fig.2. XP MI-6 pinpoint probe.

is linked up to the threading tool which is then fed up inside the stem until the connector is visible protruding from the other end. Once there a simple threaded connector screws into the battery, which then fits snugly back into the stem with the tool remaining entombed within. While not tricky, it is a little fiddly, but within minutes you are set to go (Fig.4).

Once fitted, the next job is pairing the new coil to your machine and headphones. Obviously to gain the full benefit of the HF coil the new Version 4 software should first be downloaded. This is quickly and easily done via the XP website, then selecting the coil feature from the machine and headphones menu and adding the new serial number to both painlessly completes the process.

MI-6 Pinpoint Probe Set-Up

Next was the MI-6 pinpoint probe. Neatly packaged and with a small but

concise manual, pairing offered no frustrations even for a technophobe like myself.

Via the menu on your machine the new V4 software has 'Pinpointer' as an option. Once selected then choose 'Pairing' and turn on the MI-6 and keep the button depressed for eight seconds – job done. After this turn on the MI-6 and select programme seven (this is done by simply by selecting the programme changing setting and pressing button seven times).

You are now able to use the pinpoint probe with the audio coming through your Deus headphones. Alternatively, you can choose one of the other programmes and use it as a stand-alone item as per any other pinpoint probe on the market. I will confess to first thinking that although the technology of the audio coming through your headphones was rather clever, was it really necessary



Fig.3. On arrival the coil is neatly presented in the well-known style of XP packaging.

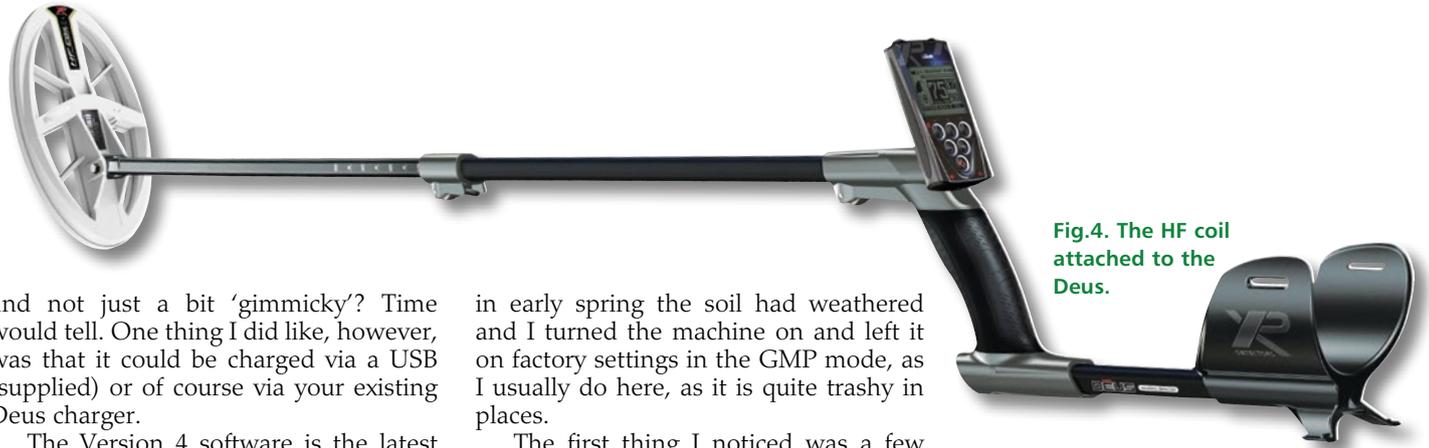


Fig.4. The HF coil attached to the Deus.

and not just a bit 'gimmicky'? Time would tell. One thing I did like, however, was that it could be charged via a USB (supplied) or of course via your existing Deus charger.

The Version 4 software is the latest in a number of free upgrades that have been released over the years, but is more substantial than some of the previous ones.

There are now on the menu 10 different programs; these include familiar favourites from previous versions such as 'GM POWER' (GMP) and 'DEUS FAST', but other new settings such as 'DEEP', 'HOT' and 'GOLD FIELD' offering more options for different kinds of detecting. Clearly with so many options, new frequencies, and hardware to try it was going to be beyond my scope to try combinations of everything, but I was keen to get out and about and see how it would perform.

Into the Fields

I decided the best plan to start with would be to run on simple settings that I would often use with my usual Version 3 software and 11 inch coil to make it easy to spot performance differences. I was also detecting alongside my usual detecting partner Dave, who was using a standard 9 inch coil and previous version of software, so we could cross check signals throughout the day. I also wanted to try as many different types of conditions, and also fields, where we know we are searching for specific items and where we have worked the field hard for years. Of course, with any search it's always going to be subjective as to what you would or wouldn't have found with another machine or set up, but it was the marginal and different sounding signals I was interested in checking out.

Field 1

The first field was one that we discovered a few years ago. A cut half, found on the very edge of what later proved to be the 'zone' gave us a sniff and eventually we located a very productive area that we now look forward to returning to every year. Last season on pea stubble we really bashed the field until signals were very scarce. During the winter it had been deep ploughed and left. Now

in early spring the soil had weathered and I turned the machine on and left it on factory settings in the GMP mode, as I usually do here, as it is quite trashy in places.

The first thing I noticed was a few more clicks in the trashy area and it was immediately obvious that the new coil is more sensitive than previous versions.

A few good signals that any machine would have found proved little, but a much fainter signal took my attention. A shovel full of mud and the signal was now clear, albeit still in the hole. A second shovel and it was out. It was time to bring in the MI-6 as the wet clay and small size of the signal were not an ideal combination.

Turning on the MI-6 the Deus fell silent so I tested it against my watch; however, a reassuring buzz proved all was working well, so into the muddy excavation it went.

I was immediately impressed with the MI-6. It gave an ever rising pitch of signal as you closed in on the target, and I found the item in seconds. It was a small hammered coin, an Edward I halfpenny, which was a pleasant surprise. This was more so as I know the normal pinpoint probe that I use would have struggled to find this coin at the bottom of a clod the way the MI-6 had done. The next

Fig.5. Clod shot of the Edward I penny that fell to the HF coil.



hour produced very little, so Dave and I decided it was time to move to a nearby smoother field.

Field 2

This nearby field is a rather peculiar one. It is perhaps the 'best looking' field that we search, with its churches, footpaths, thatched cottages and even a medieval hall bordering it. I still remember the disappointment after our first day on it, as we found nothing but junk. Then, out of desperation last year with nothing else to go on, we returned and for whatever reason it was like a different field and is now an annual firm favourite. Seeded back in September last year the crop was coming through, and we had after our last trip decided we had 'done it' for this year. So this would be a good test.

I kept the same settings but pushed up the sensitivity a little as this field is less trashy. A few signals that started in the 40s on the display (and thus required digging) quickly turned into 26-29s when out of the ground. This target range is almost always coke and so it proved to be, and it seemed to me that the higher sensitivity was slightly confused by deeper coke in the wetter ground. Dave called me over for a dodgy signal that he was about to leave. The HF coil, however, confirmed it was definitely one to dig. About 8 inches down a small piece of lead in the side of the hole gave us the first indication that the HF coil could detect things the standard coil was not reading as clearly.

The next trip out was a return to the same field as we had been surprised by the amount of signals we had got. I decided to continue with the initial settings but start testing signals against the HOT program to get a feel for that, as the HF coil was supposed to excel in this program. The visual not only shows the normal numbers in top left corner but also an oscilloscope display assists in determining signals. A diagonal line rising is a definite dig, a falling one iron,

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vertical was usually coke, horizontal was generally a marginal signal and small squiggles tended to be tiny items or those at the extremes of detecting range. An early sharp signal was equally clear in HOT and GMP, and was a nice full flan Edward I penny shown in Fig.5 with the HF coil in the background (Fig.6). As signals came at a steady rate and each was checked a few things became clear. Firstly, was that the recovery speed was better and iffy signals on the older set up could be identified as two separate signals (often one good and one bad) with the new HF set up. Second, was that smaller item than you would not normally expect to be finding so regularly were a constant feature with the HF coil. While most of these the old settings would find when scanned directly overhead, stepping back and searching at a normal pace drastically reduced the number that were picked up. I was gaining in confidence with this set up and started running on the new settings and then checking them in GMP mode. One such find came in an area where I had found a potin earlier in the season and we had really worked it hard.

In the HOT program I got a double signal that I could now clearly identify as something good, next to something bad. A few spades out and a crisp signal now outside the hole turned out to be a second Celtic potin. The other signal turned out to be coke, which I still found on occasions caused the HF to register as a higher number than on the older settings, and thus making it worth a look. The finding of this and some other



Fig.6. The same clod but with the HF coil in the background.

nice finds including an Elizabeth hammered, a 17th century token, and a nice medieval Dutch jetton all from an area that we really had worked quite hard was a very positive outcome and led me to choose the next field to test it on.

An afternoon off work and some perfect weather led to the ideal opportunity to get a couple of hours on a field that was still in stubble from last year's harvest. This field we have done time and time again over the past 10 years but our last trip on it left us agreeing that we wouldn't go back until it was ploughed, as signals were so few and far between. This test would not be at all about the quality of finds but purely about the number of signals obtained. I set myself two hours and after our last trip here I thought 10 or more signals would be a good result for the latest set up.

I set the machine up in the HOT program and increased the sensitivity as this field is not a trashy one. I decided to dig anything that could possibly be a signal and check with GMP on all marginal ones. Almost immediately I got what can only be called a whisper of a signal. The GMP mode could not get the signal and I initially thought I was probably chasing a ghost signal. My earlier in air tests did not lead me to believe I would have much, if any of an advantage in depth, over the GMP mode. The visual screen initially backed up the whisper of the audio signal by offering only a tiny flat line. However, as I got deeper down the line started to slope upwards and the signal improved. The GMP mode also now agreed it was a worthy signal as I closed in on it.

The MI-6 came out to try and solve the mystery as the depth increased and immediately it located the find, which was a brass shield shaped object, most likely from a trophy. It's fair to say the depth (Fig.7) and that such an item coming from a really heavily worked field, not only surprised me but enthused me about the possibilities. With the sensitivity up I felt like the machine was literally straining to get me signals – it was giving more clicks and spits than I was used to on this field but I was happy to hear this as it just added to my confidence that the machine was working on the very edges of maximum performance. Throughout the tests I hadn't dug much iron at all, but by taking every minor whisper of a signal inevitably a few bits came up at depth. The end of the two hours came round and I had managed 36 signals, which was



Fig.7. The MI-6 demonstrating the depth from which the shield-shaped object mentioned in the text was recovered.



Fig.8. The author using HF set up on a well-worked stubble field.

way above what I was expecting. Most were small or even tiny targets, many of which the MI-6 had been indispensable in locating. While no finds of note were made, I was becoming very impressed with the new set up and had one last field to pitch it up against.

Field 3

The final test field was a Roman site (Fig.8) that is highly mineralised. The bottom end of the field in a strip some 100 yards wide, and is what we have always seen as the 'zone'. Finds die off as you go up the field and it becomes unworkable as you go down the field into a crashed aircraft area. Dave was with me again this day using the standard Deus set up.

Usually on this field we end up with a similar amount of grots, which I intended to use as a rough guide of the day's performance. In the highly mineralised area I was finding the HOT setting too sensitive for my limited experience with it, so I went back to GMP mode which, I have to say, felt unwieldy and almost 'clunky' compared to the sensitivity of the HOT/HF coil set up. Having done line after line I was 2-1 up in grots and we both decided then to move up the slope where last year I had found a solitary stray battered *denarius*. As the field quietened down I went back to HOT and increased the sensitivity. This so-called quiet area of the field yielded me 16 grots and a Roman buckle (Fig.9), and is definitely a new area for us to concentrate on in future years. Dave managed only four grots and as we



Fig.9. Sixteen Roman coins and a Roman buckle plate from the Roman site.

usually end up close on finds no matter where we go, such a disparity (16-4) I can only put down to the machine picking up these tiny grots with more regularity. Several finds made during these tests can be seen in Fig.10 and more, including the hammered coinage, in Fig.11.

Conclusions

When I first started detecting I was told "You need at least 100 hours use of a machine before you even begin to understand it." Whether that's true or not with XP claiming that the new software and HF coil give you "six new detectors in one" means with the timescales I had it was always going to be impossible to try everything, learn the pros and cons and give a definitive report on them all.

The MI-6 Pinpoint Probe

Pinpoint probes have their fans and detractors. I know some people feel almost naked without theirs, while other long time detectorists refuse to see the need for one. For years I didn't use one but having purchased a top of the range one around six years ago (and others since) I now wouldn't be without one. I can honestly say, however, is that the MI-6 is a major step up. It wasn't until I stopped getting the interference I used to get sometimes in my Deus headphones from my previous pinpoint probe that I realise how annoying it was! The seamless cutting in and out with your headphones when it's switched on and off is not only clever but incredibly user friendly, as is the charging it rather than

having to replace batteries. The sensitivity and range of the MI-6 in real ground conditions is far better than any I have previously used, and if you are not using or don't have a Deus you can use it just as any other pinpoint probe with audio and/or vibrate mode. If you use a pinpoint probe and particularly if you use a Deus as well, and are looking to update/upgrade, then look no further as you will struggle to top this with anything currently on the market.

The HF Coil

For me the HF coil in use with V4 software is going to give you an edge – and in certain conditions with time, patience and practice perhaps quite a significant one. Although I used it as much as I could in the time available, there are so many new settings, frequencies, reactivity levels, and negative discrimination, that finding the perfect setting for each circumstance will take time.

If you already use a Deus don't expect to switch over and triple your finds rate, but with experience it will bring you extra rewards. I would certainly choose to use the HF set up for any fields that have been worked out and with the Deus always having a liking for small hammered I'm sure some would again produce more finds. While the introduction of a new coil is never going to be as revolutionary as the introduction of the detector itself, this is certainly another welcome tool in the XP armoury that will appeal to and improve the chances of maximising finds for the serious detectorist. TH



Fig.10. George III sixpence and 1st century BC Celtic potin (top left to right); 17th century William Osborne of Braintree token and jetton of Mathilda de Gueldre Duchy of Guelders 1371-79 (bottom left to right).



Fig.11. Medieval buckle and 61st South Gloucestershire Regiment of Foot 1855-81 issue (left); Edward penny, Edward halfpenny and Elizabeth I halfgroat (right).