

Field Test Report

Deeptech



Fig.1. Deeptech Vista Smart.



Fig.2. Battery housing and on/off switch.



Fig.3. Four rotary knobs.

In some ways the role of a “field tester” isn’t easy. One has to keep an open and unbiased mind. After all, if you have negative preconceptions, how can you provide an honest opinion on a device you are reviewing? This is especially the case if the detector concerned is one that you are only vaguely aware of.

The Vista Smart, developed by the Bulgarian manufacturers Deeptech, is a recent introduction to the UK market (Fig.1.). It is a two tone, 15.5kHz single frequency machine, powered by eight AA 1.5 volt batteries, which are housed under the arm cup. The battery housing is also where the on/off switch is located (Fig.2.).

The fascia of the control box has four rotary knobs (Fig.3.). These are used to set volume, sensitivity, discrimination and ground balance. There is also a small red push button in the lower middle of the panel that is used for operating the pinpoint facility. Finally, under the volume knob, there is an LED light used to show low batteries.

Beneath the control box there are two toggle type switches, the functions of which I’ll explain shortly. The search coils that came in the box comprised an 11 inch open frame DD, and a 7 x 11 inch elliptical (again open frame).

Putting the detector together was a breeze and took less than five minutes. The tubes fitted perfectly and the cam

locks held the stem secure, giving the machine a solid feel. The only concern I have is that the lower stem has a plastic insert which the coils bolt to...I have a feeling that this could snap.

Overall the build quality is pretty good; however, if you refer to my opening paragraph this surprised me somewhat. I had expected the control box to have an old-fashioned potentiometer.

Before I move on I must add that the machine isn’t supplied with printed manual. It comes with a computer disc. The disc has a brief set of instructions and a series of “grab links”. These, when you are online, take you to several videos (some of which I have to say aren’t in English). I found the videos interesting but – and I don’t think I’d be alone in saying this – I suspect one or more of them are just propaganda. I printed out the instructions for reference in case I should need them on site.

Putting all of that to one side, there’s nothing like experience in the field to test the merits of any metal detector. So, feeling less than optimistic, I chose the most difficult terrain I could think of.

On one of my farms there is an area of permanent pasture where the soil is what can only be described as “heavy clay”. What would exacerbate things for the Smart is that it was soaking wet too.... exactly the kind of conditions where even top end machines barely have an impact.

However, before moving on to my searches, there is the ground balance to discuss. The instructions on the disc are a little vague, due to what I think is termed “pigeon English”. However, achieving ground balance is, as I discovered, very easy. Here’s how I did it. With the sensitivity set to the ten o’clock position and the machine in full “All Metal” I gradually raised the ground knob to the one o’clock position while slowly pumping the coil over a clean (metal free) piece of ground. I then set the machine to my preferences. I found the best setting for the sensitivity to be between 35-40, I kept the ground knob to 1 o’clock and the discrimination to 12 o’clock.

Field Appraisal

To begin with I used the elliptical search coil, which in all honesty in

Vista Smart

my view, proved to be inadequate for the ground conditions I was searching. It seemed to lack the ability to “punch” through the grass and into the clay despite any adjustment of the sensitivity level. Only if a target was lying just under the centre of the coil did a signal come through.

Nonetheless, I resisted changing the coil just yet and concentrated on getting a feel of the Vista. What was becoming apparent, apart from how light the detector is, was the recovery speed. It is simply astonishing! What else became obvious was its target separation – that too was incredible. As already mentioned, the Vista is a two tone metal detector, giving a high tone for non ferrous and low tone for ferrous. Two tone notifications combined with a rapid recovery are a winner every time and, in the case of the Vista, it meant I could easily distinguish the good signals next to bad ones.

By mid morning I hadn't got much in my finds pouch to show for my efforts, so I changed over to the larger search coil (Fig.4.) balanced the machine and continued. The change made all the difference...depth being the main factor. The Vista now had the power it needed.

After the coil swap I spent the early afternoon recovering an interesting array of finds (Fig.5.), including the first complete medieval purse bar I've ever found (Fig.6.). The bar came from a crisp, loud and clear signal and a measured depth of 130mm. Another decent find was a small post Conquest bridle mount (Fig.7.), this time from a faint signal and a depth of 100mm. Not bad going considering the extreme ground conditions.

At this point I will explain the operation of the toggle switch under the lower left of the control housing. It is a two position booster switch. It's recommended that you search with the toggle clicked back and only use the forward position to boost a faint signal, which I had done when locating the mount. However, I ran the Vista with the switch in the forward position from then on with no discernable problems. The only downside I can think of is that continual use of the booster could shorten battery life.

At the end of the day's session I can

safely say that I was very impressed with the Vista. I would add that I may have seriously underestimated it too (Fig.8.).

The next test site I chose was an area of maize stubble that had recently been combined. When this field is wet, which

Fig.4. The larger search coil.



Fig.5. Interesting array of finds.



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Fig.6. Complete medieval purse bar.



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Fig.7. Small post Conquest bridle mount.

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it was, the vast amount of iron becomes a real problem; again, only top end machines are used here.

I was keen to see how the Vista would perform in one particular spot, where besides the iron there is a lot of trash too. To help me I was joined by my detecting buddy Stuart (Fig.9.).

Keeping the larger coil fitted, I balanced the Vista before moving over the intended area. I kept the same settings as in the pasture and began metal detecting. Almost instantly, large pieces of iron fooled the circuitry, occasionally giving off positive signals and sometimes popping/positive signals. Raising the discrimination and lowering the sensitivity soon had the machine under control. Coke presented a problem too but I soon learned to distinguish a slight difference in signal tone. The coke tended to give off an extended "tiv" sound. Positive, desirable signals were absolutely definite! Besides any of that, the important factor was that Vista was getting in between the iron. I will add here that the discrimi-

nation feature on this machine is for iron only; it will not stop or "notch out" iron signals. Its purpose, in my opinion, is to help stabilise the machine....specially in iron infested areas.

At this point I will explain the functions of the toggle switch to the lower right of the fascia. The toggle has three positions. Click forward and you hear two tone notifications (high/low). Click back twice and you only hear positive notifications, the low tone is blanked out. Move the toggle to the central position and the Vista becomes a true "all metal" device, you will only hear high tones for metal, whatever it may be. For my review the switch remained mostly in the forward position.

Carrying on with detecting over the trashy area the Vista really came into its own. Admittedly, most of the finds were junk (Fig.10.) but that's not the point; the machine was finding the targets with ease. Remarkably, the Vista remained very stable too, even with a high sensitivity setting. Occasionally it would pick

up my digging spade if it was too close but other than that no spurious signals.

As I've already said, most of the finds were non-ferrous junk but not all them. The best from this spot was my third hammered silver coin of the year so far. It came from a very rapid two tone (high/low) signal. I checked the signal from various angles looking to see if doing so made any difference; it didn't. It was a definite, rapid two tone signal, indicating that there was a desirable target next to a piece of iron. Upon digging the signal this was exactly the case! The coin is a penny of Elizabeth I and is shown along with the piece of iron that was next to it (Fig.11.). Another very nice find was a small decorated spindle whorl (Fig.12.).

Moving away from the area and out into the open field the signals began to fade out and I began to get the feeling that depth was an issue for the Vista. Stuart suggested that we do a depth test. Digging a hole around 6 inches deep (Fig.13.) we placed the hammered coin



Fig.8.
Detecting
in the
pasture.



Fig.9. My
detecting
buddy
Stuart.

in and covered it up with soil, which we trod down to make the ground firm. Scanning over the spot the signal came through clearly. I tried the smaller elliptical coil also, and again the signal was there – even with the booster toggle in the back position

Conclusions

Forgive me if I ramble on about Vista Smart, but I have to say I absolutely love this machine. I had initially been dubious about it, thinking it was just another “cheap” European metal detector, which wouldn’t pull the skin off a rice pudding. I was wrong on both counts. The Smart is priced around £500, so it’s not “cheap”. But it is also very, very capable.

During my time with the machine I came to appreciate its qualities very quickly; however, this is not a machine for a beginner. It is a metal detector for somebody who has been through their learning curve and is looking to move up the ladder. It is also a metal detector which could be used for a specific type of metal detecting (i.e. as a specimen hunter, where you come across an ancient site infested with iron and want to seek out those hard-to-find targets).

The Vista Smart is, in my opinion, a brilliant metal detector and I love its

no nonsense, bare bones approach. It is indeed a lean, mean, artefact finding machine. I only have a few points that I’m unhappy with. One is the position of the switchgear. The toggles are easily caught by your fingers, especially if you are wearing gloves (which you should be). The other is the on/off switch. Often, when I rested the Vista on my spade, I accidentally switched the machine off, resulting in me wandering away later thinking, is this working? One other thing is the position of the jack plug socket; it is situated on the front of the control box (Fig.14.). Ideally it should be mounted near the battery housing.

I’ve no doubt that the Vista Smart will go on to be a cult metal detector. If not the Smart, then future machines from the DeepTech stables will be. TH



Fig.12.
Small
decorated
spindle
whorl.

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Fig.10. Non-ferrous junk.



Fig.14. Jackplug socket.



Fig.13. Test hole.



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Fig.11. Penny of
Elizabeth I and a
piece of iron.