

Field Test Viking VK10+

Viking is an extremely appropriate name for a metal detector company! It immediately conjures up wonderful images of history and gets to the very essence of our hobby in a single word. Indeed, depending on which source one chooses to investigate the origins of the word, "Viking" means, "traveller" in the old Norse language, or "one that explores". Is that not exactly what we do? We travel from our homes and go exploring for "adventure" just as the Vikings did.

I'd hazard a guess that many of you reading this might well have set out in this hobby with a Viking and might still possess a working model stored in a cupboard.

This was exactly my introduction to metal detecting. I had a few different Viking detectors through the years and had considerable success with the original Viking TR.

The Viking company, based in Blackburn Lancashire, were originally known as "Sol Invictus". It has been around since the early 1970s and today employs around a dozen people recruited locally.

The Viking line up is quite impressive comprising eight hobby metal detectors, including the newest addition on test this month, the VK10+. This retails at just £24 more than the older VK10.

Viking also manufactures a few models for industrial use under the name "Wasp".

Chris Clark is the person responsible for the new model and I found him to be a wealth of information during the testing and research for this article.

What's New?

The new VK10+ is microprocessor controlled and is an advancement in current design leading to superior performance and stability.

There is no assembly as such to put the three-piece shaft system together as it is almost complete (lower rod excepted) when emerging from the large supportive cardboard inserts inside the large box. The coil is what's known as "hard wired" meaning there isn't any coil plug to connect – it is soldered directly into the circuitry. This might be a drawback to



The Viking VK10+.

some because it means no other coils can be used. The large 10 inch concentric coil is waterproof but the rest of the detector is not. A coil cover is provided.

The detector operates as a VLF system at 7kHz.

The VK10+ now has a manual ground control and details of how to go about the ground balancing are covered quite well in the somewhat brief instruction manual. It's just a few pages long and written in plain language so won't confuse anyone.

The detector now has push button pinpointing – the older VK10 did not.

When my testing began I found it wasn't comfortable to hold the VK10+. The curvature of the S bend in the shaft is a tad too severe and the rubber hand grip is too far back. The grip should be moved up a bit to take in the top of the S bend. Also, why not change with the times for a soft foam one as most other manufacturers have adopted? I had to use an arm strap borrowed from another detector to make it easy on my arm to sweep. The large coil tended to become floppy, as though too large for the more fragile lower stem.

The detector operates on a single 9

volt PP3 battery. I had to change batteries a few times during testing, but it only took a matter of seconds to do so. Volume will drop off when the battery is becoming depleted.

Controls

The other controls are the now familiar Sensitivity on the left side, a quarter inch headphone socket located middle top centre, and the reject or Discrimination control on the right. These are rotating knobs.

The Pinpoint acts as the Ground Balance control in conjunction with the Sensitivity.

To Ground Balance, lift the search head away from the ground and switch the detector off. Push the Pinpoint button and hold in, switch the detector on, and turn the sensitivity control to 12 o'clock. The detector will produce a high beep. Release the push button and lower the coil to the ground. The tone will either rise or fade away. Rotate the Sensitivity knob until the tone evens out to almost quiet. Then press and release the Pinpoint push button to store that particular GB setting.

Tip: The GB setting is independent

of the Sensitivity setting. Meaning, if the detector ground balances at a quarter to, it does not mean you cannot increase the sensitivity setting. You can. However, be aware the highest sensitivity settings might cause some false signals. Setting a lower level can also avoid chatter that might be interference of some kind.

It's not possible to ground balance the VK10+ over wet sand. It can be operated over it (albeit at reduced sensitivity), and to eliminate false signals another tip would be to increase discrimination.

Beach Use

A great place to start out with any new detector is the dry sand of a beach. That is precisely what I did at 8am one sunny morning of the first day. The previous evening I had met another detector user working with a Viking 5 and he had done very well searching an area now covered in stones that several months ago had been a grassed area. A storm had changed things around a bit.

It had been very warm and sunny for a few weeks and a few beaches had already been very generous to me. So

some return visits were planned with the VK10+.

Starting out I set the sensitivity to around ten past and didn't select any discrimination. I wanted to listen to what the detector was telling me. It began very quietly and the detector was a bit too floppy for my long swings. I stopped, shortened the detector and tightened the coil bolt and both the knurled locks. That was better; now it was firmer.

Tip: Use headphone with a volume control because the signal from this detector can be quite loud.

Very soon the first of many signals began to sound off. These were the ubiquitous euro coins, some spaced close together. I then increased the sensitivity and rechecked the area; in doing so I heard another signal that proved to be a further euro coin, deeper than the rest. Then silence followed for 20 paces.

Then came more signals which proved to be foil, so I turned up the Discrimination control to 4. After that signals from foil just cut out, so I left it at that. I also set the sensitivity to full. There were no false signals. Signals then

started to produce some copper clad euro coins – the small 1s, 2s and 5s. I found these all along the beaches.

This was interesting, as prior searches missed them, and they had been there a while because some were discoloured.

The VK10+ emits just one tone so all targets will sound the same. However, it's the output volume of the signal that will reveal crucial information and the size or "width" of the sound that will indicate whether the item is small or large. So it was I received a loud large signal and dug down. Digging and digging revealed nothing and the hole was getting deeper. At about a foot I caught the glimpse of yellow and became the proud new owner of a Ferrari! That was the first of many toy cars dug.

I couldn't believe it when a loud signal gave up a car headlight bulb, in a milky white colour, indicating it had been there a while. What if I hadn't found it? The pain it might have caused to a child's foot doesn't bear thinking about.

Over the next few days, I saw a fantastic variety of "stone circles" on the beach, a tribute to children's imaginations (see photo of just one example). By the way, I since found out how to get my smart phone photos onto my Mac – remove the memory card to a card reader.

Signals were solid and came regularly. To pinpoint some of the deeper ones was a breeze as the "non-motion" aspects of the Viking made it possible to hover over a hole and get the strongest indications as to where things were hiding. The "usual suspects" surfaced: beer



One of a fantastic variety of "stone circles" on the beach – a tribute to the imaginations of children.

A morning's euros.



bottle tops and aluminium pull tabs. Some of the bottle tops gave a broken sound indicating their partial ferrous make-up so it didn't have to be dug, but I did. I always aim to leave a beach cleaner than I find it!

Why didn't I employ more discrimination you might ask? It's because as one increases discrimination, sensitivity to valuable items like small rings decreases. So prudent use of a Discrimination control, while creating extra work for you, might pay off handsomely with jewellery.

Another reason was that last winter's storms had battered these beaches and while removing feet of sand had also thrown back many interesting items to find. So it was that I found some older items, some quite deep down in the damp sand. These were mostly small pieces of copper, large brass nuts, many older pre decimal coins (deeper than the more recent coins), spent ammunition (including a small .22 shell), and all

manner of shredded bits of metal ranging from iron to aluminium.

Over the course of several early morning forays I enriched my pockets with enough spendable cash to keep diesel in my tank! Some jewellery items were found – bangles, cheap rings, hair clips – but alas none of the precious metals variety.

Woodland

To escape the daytime heat I retreated to the coolness of a few different woodland sites. The leaf canopies blocked the ferocious rays of the sun, and were welcome havens from the oppressive heat.

I had researched and found a new

site for me, one that had military connections and it was with expectations of badges and munitions that saw my first excursion to this new place.

Making my way along a narrow trail next to a slow flowing stream provided an idyllic and very pleasant setting. I set up the VK10+ and tried to ground balance. It soon became clear the soil here was benign and there wasn't any real need to ground balance. Strangely, some of the soil was dry and flaky and other parts were a dark brown wet!

With expectations of some older pre decimal coinage I dialled in some discrimination, no more than "5", set sensitivity to three quarters and I was

Car headlight bulb. The pain it might have caused to a child's foot doesn't bear thinking about.



Escaping to the coolness of woodland sites.



Previously missed due to high discrimination.

Toy cars and junk.



away. Three or four signals sounded very quickly and were spaced close together; these turned out to be from modern jean buttons. Very soon the good signals came and the first target was indeed an unusual "shottie", so my hunch about military items was correct. Soon some more signals came and before digging I adjusted the discrimination.

Tip: A technique I use is something I call "Disc Roaming", and is a sure-fire method to ascertain a target's conductivity quickly. What you do is as you scan back and forth across a target adjust the disc level with your free hand. If the audio "drops off" quickly at a low setting then the target might be iron or foil or brass (low conductors in other words). The VK10+ operates by way of "motion" meaning the coil should be kept moving but a careful speed of movement helps you to get the most from this very able detector.

If the audio remains beyond 6, 7 and 8, then you can be fairly confident that it is a high conductive target (e.g. a copper or silver coin). The Viking made it easy to use this technique and I was able to guess ahead of time what the targets

were going to be. Almost all the targets audio responses stayed at a disc level of 8 and higher and the majority of the targets when recovered were indeed coins, both modern euros and older ones.

One target was an old military button, crushed, proving again my expectations of what the ground was going to offer up. Some small shell cartridges came up and almost all the finds were shallow involving removing some soil and lifting a little to dislodge the targets. A few were deeper and frustrated me because there were some sinewy roots that made it difficult to make progress.

One signal was memorable – not for the item but for what transpired. I used the discrimination roaming technique and was assured a positive ID at high discrimination. Digging in dislodged the target and the audio response stopped. I couldn't find it. So I turned on my pinpointer and got a feeble "blip" from the dirt pile just once. So I grabbed fistfuls of soil and began waving the dirt across the coil. The third pass produced a sound and I examined the debris in my open palm to reveal a very small nut. That amazed me as I wasn't expecting

the VK10+ to signal something so small, and the detector produced an even better signal response than the pinpointer! Usually it's vice versa.

Tip: when using the Disc Roaming function, be careful because if a target is a bit deeper or a lower than expected conductivity, repeated passes can lose the signal and fool you into discriminating out quicker. To prevent this happening don't make wide sweeps across the target (with a 10 inch coil that can happen easily) but make very short even sweeps of not more than an inch either side of the target's centre. It might take a while to train the wrist for this but it is of benefit.

Tip: Another tip to ascertain the target centre, especially as the VK10+ produces a "wide/longer" audio is to push the pinpoint button and bit by bit narrow the sweeps. However, an even better method is to place the coil on the ground on top of the target and press the pinpoint, then lift and scan. This can



A variety of copper coins and buttons.



Tiny nut retrieved from footpath.

Low grade footpath finds.



narrow the signal very effectively. This method will take a bit of practice to get it right but keep at it, it does work.

Again, I was a bit surprised that no older pre decimal or Victorian coinage surfaced. A few days later I returned. Dropping to the leaf floor of the woods I unzipped the detector carry bag and put it together. Again, there wasn't a need to ground balance and I turned the sensitivity to full. Discrimination was set to 5 at this point.

It was a good few feet before hearing the first signal. It checked positive beyond 8 on the reject level so I bent to dig. I broke the surface with my Black Ada foot assisted digger and then popped in the pinpointer. I had to remove some more soil and it proved hard going as a layer of stones was preventing my Wilcox trowel going deeper. Eventually I broke through and soon had the back half of a button in my hands. It was old, probably 1800s, and I ferreted around for the top of it; however, it wasn't to be found.

Very soon a few more targets were dug and it was exactly the same procedure: break surface, pinpoint, dig more, pinpoint, dig more; it was tough going, even at this early stage.

Then, there was a signal and around 7 inches down, and in between dozens of stones, a button with ornate crisscross pattern came up. It appeared to be Georgian. Soon after that several nails that looked Georgian were dug, including some small examples. At least the VK10+ was doing a thorough job of it.

It was time to leave for the day. I was hot and sweaty and the flies were begin-

ning to bother me. A trip to another of one of my usual good sites was in order, and that was what I did next.

Pasture

The grass on this site turned out to be a bit long. The farmer tries to get a few cuts of grass every year from these fields, and on this occasion the grass was a bit longer than usual; this meant that I couldn't get the coil close to the soil. But I walked around a bit, and at the edges of the fields – closer to hedges – I was able to scoot along and make the best from a very sunny and hot day. The major drawback of this strategy was that, being closer to the hedges, meant that I was closer to the roadside and junk items that had been thrown in from passing inconsiderate motorists might be encountered.

That was exactly what happened as the first dozen or so signals consisted of modern soda cans, foil, pull tabs, ring pulls and bottle tops. Interspersed among these targets I found some lead and the ubiquitous iron.

Some of the lead was deep; in fact, deeper than I had dug previously with the VK10+. This field is full of iron. However, I persevered and just as I was about to stop for a drink of water a weak signal sounded. Turning up the sensitivity to full the signal didn't increase in sound; therefore I switched to pinpoint and that was also weak in volume. I thought it sounded like a coin. Digging wasn't a problem and soon the pinpointer was in

the hole and sounded off loudly at the edge of the hole. Prising more soil out dislodged a brown disc and on closer inspection it was a Young Head Victoria halfpenny, although I couldn't make out the date.

Later, a similar experience occurred, but this time the pinpoint volume was louder and I therefore suspected rubbish. It wasn't. At around 7 inches a large button turned up. Sadly, it was corroded but I could see that it depicted a crown atop an animal with a long tail, probably a dragon, and most likely a common enough find.

Then something with a really small and sharp signal sounded, revealing a silver sixpence at the 6 inch level.

Soon afterwards, a series of pre decimal copper pennies turned up all with beautifully dark brown patinas. These came up close to a farm gate where farm labourers might have stopped to rest and in the process lost their small change.

Foreshore

The first excursion to my usual foreshore area found the tide a bit too high and there wasn't much exposed mud. Later at home I downloaded an app onto my Android smart phone, "UK Tides". My next visit was timed perfectly thanks to the "app" and a large amount of foreshore lay exposed.

Foreshores can be difficult to work due to the large volume of ferrous junk lying all around and buried in the mud

Post storm beach finds.

Mixed coins.



out of sight. With the VK10+ I was at another disadvantage due to not having a target ID meter to look at and not having any form of tone ID. All signals sounded the same regardless whether they were good or bad. Scanning the mud I set discrimination to 6 but soon had to increase it as the amount of signals became too much to bear. That meant I wouldn't locate many low conductive targets. Lead became a bit of a problem as many pieces of it were recovered.

However, there was a bit of a silver lining because some nice non-ferrous collectibles turned up including a halfpenny from 1899, one from 1862, a possible farthing (but worn flat), and several lead buttons. I have always wondered why make buttons from lead? Or, perhaps they were not buttons at all but some other items lost to our modern knowledge?

A very black musket ball was next,

followed by a 20 centimes coin from 1965, another unidentified copper coin, bigger than a halfpenny but dated sometime to the 18th century. There were also some bottle tops and pull tabs (courtesy of a pub nearby).

The next day found me back again, and this time some buckles and buckle fragments were found.

The tide grades metal items and appears to sort by weight; so one area might give up just buckles and another area might give up copper coins. That is the beauty of working a tidal foreshore because as you get to know it you could in theory hand pick your chosen finds. But this wasn't possible with the VK10+ for reasons outlined earlier and the 10 inch coil was also a bit big to get in amongst the iron and other junk that is so dominant here. A smaller coil would be better and again coils are not interchangeable on this model.

Conclusion

Viking detectors have been around for a long time. While not possessing the "bells and whistles" of some of the current crop of machines they remain the choice of many who start out in this great hobby with a Viking model from the very affordable line-up that they offer.

The new VK10+ is a perfect example of a reliable detector that puts in an extremely enjoyable detecting experience. Within their

price range Viking machines are every bit as good as anything sold from the USA or Australia.

Viking machines are British made and should in general be an excellent choice for conditions prevailing here and at a fraction of the price.

While being a turn on and go machine adjusting it to suit the different areas you are searching should maximise your finds. It's a perfectly capable detector and is at home on most sites, although especially suited to dry sand, woodlands, riverbanks, parks and commons.

With the Viking VK10+, in the right locations, used smartly and cleverly you should see your initial investment returned in no time!

My thanks to the people at Viking for allowing me to test their new machine in what turned out to be a very enjoyable experience. It rekindled my emotions to when I first set out with a detector so many years ago, and also found me back at a few sites where I had begun my detecting career. An added bonus was the great weather enjoyed during those summer months enabling me to look for sites that might normally not be considered.

I look forward to Viking's next offerings. To see a video of some of my test experiences with the VK10+ go to YouTube and type in "Viking VK10+ Field Tests by Desi Dunne".

Viking detectors are widely available from detector shops nationwide or direct from Viking at:-

www.metaldetectors.co.uk

Tel: 01254 55887

E-Mail: viking@metaldetectors.co.uk **TH**



Pull tabs and other junk – straight to a bin.



Silver and cupro plus musket ball.

Another view of the Viking VK10+ control box.

