

Field Test Report

Garrett AT Gold

The Garrett AT Gold is a metal detector designed for the more experienced user. It was initially promoted in America as a gold hunting tool for prospecting, particularly in the search for tiny nuggets. It also has a clever waterproof control box that enables it to be used in shallow streams and rivers.

Despite the advanced settings facility, the AT Gold can also be used for normal coinshooting or farm field searches. It incorporates Automatic Fast Track as well as Manual Ground Adjust for coping with heavily mineralised ground.

The detector offers three search modes: All Metal, Disc 1 (European), and Disc 2 (USA). You can set the discrimination levels to your own choice, and it also incorporates "Iron Audio" whereby you can switch on a function that allows you, if you so wish, to hear any iron signals that the detector registers.

As with many other microprocessor driven LCD metal detectors, you are provided with a variety of display information read outs. These include soil conditions, when you are adjusting the ground settings, and likely Target ID numbering for the various targets as the detector's search coil picks them up.

LCD Display Panel & Touch Pads

The control box is larger than some of the other models in the current Garrett range, but of similar shape.

The speaker is positioned underneath the box and the battery compartment at the tapered end. There are two sockets of the Din plug style at each side – one to accept the search coil cable plug and the other to accept the headphone plug.

The screen offers the user a variety of operating information. At the top is Target ID Legend laid out in increments with IRON, FOIL (THIN underneath) then SILVER, GOLD, BRONZE and the word THICK at the tail end.

Under the metal tags there is the ID Numbering listed as 10 to 90.

There are 12 blackened Lower Scale notches which is the discrimination pattern. This is used in conjunction with the

Target ID Cursor and corresponds with the non-ferrous legend tags above and the ID numbering, 40 through to 90.

This tapers to the left hand side with a blank section for the ferrous IRON readouts (generally 0 to 40 on the ID numbering scale).

When the detector is on and you are searching a Target ID Cursor will appear in between the Lower Scale and the ID Numbering, which in turn corresponds with the ID Legend above as and when you receive a target signal. This in turn will relay a Target ID Number on the middle of the LCD Display.

On the far right hand side you have the DEPTH markers laid out from 2 inches to 10 inches + (it is also laid out in centimetres). A likely depth will be indicated as you find a target and will be more effective as you use the Pinpoint Button.

To the far left hand side you have the search MODE selection column that is marked ALL METAL, DISC 1 and DISC 2. This works in conjunction with the MODE button.



Fig.1. Garrett AT Gold operator's manual cover.

Fig.2. Meter with the All Metal settings on.



Fig.3. Disc 1 set up, with discrimination set on 40.



Fig.4. Full view of Garrett AT Gold.



In the middle of the LCD display will be relayed information such as the discrimination setting, IRON AUDIO (switched on), Target ID Number, FREQ (should you use this function it will be read as F1, F2, F3, F4), and the Ground Balance number setting if using MANUAL GROUND BALANCE or the FAST TRACK (Automatic) function.

At the bottom middle you have the SENSITIVITY Bar Scale and next to this, on the right hand side, the BATTERY Bar level indicator.

The control panel besides the LCD Screen has eight touch pad buttons.

The first of these, at the bottom left, is marked MODE. This has three functions:-

1. The On/Off Power button which you hold for one second to turn power on or off.
2. MODE – press quickly to toggle through to the detection search mode of your choice.
3. RESET – hold for 5 seconds to restore factory settings.

Next is the IRON AUDIO – this push button will toggle the Iron Audio ON or OFF.

The middle button is the PINPOINT push button. You press and hold this down to pinpoint as you move the search coil over the target, which should be right in the centre of the coil.

Next you have a button marked FREQ. This push button allows you to switch between four different frequencies.

The final button in this row is marked GND BAL. This is the ground balance push button that you press and hold for setting fast tracking in automatic while pumping the search coil above the ground. Alternatively, you can manual ground adjust by pressing once and, while pumping as before, press the THRESHOLD button (+) or (-) until the detector settles quietly.

The first of the three upper level buttons is for the iron disc adjustment, which coincides with the number adjustment on the screen as you press the (+) or the (-). This allows you to set your discrimination level. Second is the SENSITIVITY adjustment button working with the sensitivity bar above

it. Finally, as just mentioned, is the THRESHOLD button, which allows you to set the level of threshold background noise from 33 levels (-9 up to +23) or to set the Manual Ground Adjust.

An inexperienced detectorist might be a little daunted with so many functions on offer. However, the instruction manual is very good and offers step by step guidance.

Initial Set Up

The first thing I did when I took the Garrett AT Gold out in the field was to set the machine to Disc 1 and to experiment with the various settings, including turning on the Iron Audio and setting the detector to the Automatic Fast Track ground adjust.

If working in the All Metal mode you can simply press the Mode button to go into Disc 1 at any time.

In the All Metal mode the detector will pick up all types of metal, good or "bad" (on some sites iron can include "wanted" targets or usefully indicate areas of habitation). You can also toggle between All Metal and Disc 1 to compare the signal differences, and – if you have Iron Audio On – will be able to hear a "raspberry" sounding low tone for Iron.

Changes made to the Iron discrimination settings will be retained when the detector is switched off. You can set the discrimination level setting from 0 to 40 for Iron.

In the Disc 1 setting you have three tones to react to differing types of metal – low, medium and high.

Low Tone – will sound off for ferrous targets such as nails, iron, steel etc (but the "raspberry" low tone is only heard during the use of the Iron Audio On feature to indicate discriminated iron targets).

Medium Tone – non-ferrous targets with low to medium conductivity, including small jewellery, small coins, foil, thin targets, etc., and ferrous targets that ID above the Iron Disc setting.

High Tone – non-ferrous targets with medium to high conductivity including large coins, jewellery, and other desired targets. Increase the Iron Discrimination setting as necessary to eliminate unwanted iron items from being detected.

Unlike some detectors the notch side

of discrimination is preset and no other notches can be accepted or rejected; however, the Iron Discrimination can be adjusted and will be retained in memory.

Field Appraisal

I tried the Garrett AT Gold over a variety of field conditions. However, it was March at the time of the test and many of the fields I normally search were already in crop.

My detecting was therefore restricted to what was left available, with some time to go before the farmers were due to plough and seed.

However, I was lucky to find some pasture, stubble, and heavy ploughed fields.

The AT Gold was supplied with two different sizes of search coil. The larger of the two was okay for general searching over pasture and some of the stubble, but it was the smaller coil that I found the best for the sites I had available. It could negotiate the stubble that had gaps in between the rows of stalks, and also worked fine on the ploughed.

During one of the first searches I

managed to pull up a halfcrown dated 1922, which gave a good high tone and registered at 86 on the ID scale; the depth was quite good at 5 inches. During the rest of the searches other various non-ferrous objects came to light with good resounding mid to high tones when I was searching in the Disc 1 mode. Some of the fields I searched didn't have a great deal coming up from them, but they were sites I wouldn't



Fig.6. One of my first targets – silver halfcrown dated 1922.

Fig.5. Rough ploughed terrain.



have been on if anything better was available.

The AT Gold did pick up a considerable amount of bits and pieces while I was searching other fields. Also, with summer just around the corner, if I had more time for the field test I would have taken advantage of the All-Terrain aspect of the model.

By this I mean trying out different types of detecting such as the shallow fresh water burns and streams that are available in my part of the country.

Another site I visited was very quiet although the AT Gold did produce an early spur buckle, musket balls and lead seals all coming through as mid to high tones and coming from depths approaching 7 to 8 inches. Once again I found that the smaller of the two coils produced good results; despite its size it was a good coinshooter especially on the smaller finds.

Pinpointing was also a little harder at first with the larger coil, but the more I used the detector with this coil configu-

ration the better I became. As with all things, practice makes perfect.

I took the AT Gold to the beach as well. Although it's not promoted as a beach detector as such or intended to cope with wet sand, it will still work well on dry sand.

Summary

In my view the Garrett AT Gold is a detector that will have especial appeal to the experienced detectorist who likes to achieve just that little bit extra from their machine. It has a lot going for it, but needs plenty of "in the field" time to get the best out of it.

That said, it is simple enough to use in its basic functions. It is well balanced and the waterproof feature is a great plus point as you don't have to use a control box cover.

There isn't a facility, though, whereby you can create your own custom program with only three search modes to work with, and you cannot play around with notches on and off.

Although Garrett have provided headphones that have a Din type plug (as part of the control box waterproofing) an adaptor with a quarter inch jack socket is available that provides the user with the option to use their own



Fig.7. Some finds made with the AT Gold.



Fig.8. Interesting small finds made with the AT Gold including lead seals and musket balls.

preferred headphones. As an accessory, Garrett waterproof headphones with a Din plug to match the AT Gold can also be purchased.

Both the large 9 by 12 inch and the 5 by 8 inch Proformance Double "D" Elliptical search coils are very effective, although pinpointing with the larger coil does take some getting used to.

As a recent introduction to the UK market, I am sure that the Garrett All-Terrain Gold model will have a dedicated following before long.

Specifications

Manufacturer: Garrett Metal Detectors, 1881 W State Street, Garland, Texas 750042, USA (www.garrett.com)

UK Importers: Regton Ltd, 32 Clive-land Street, Birmingham, B19 3SN. Tel: 0121 3592379 Fax: 0121 3597975 Email: sales@regton.com

Model: Garrett AT Gold

Type: Deep Seeking, All-Terrain, Weather and Dust Proof, Prospecting and General Detecting facilities, with Computerised LCD Display and Touch Pad. Controls, Graphic Target Analyser that relay target ID numbering and Ground Balance settings as well as Discrimination settings.

Features Include: Three Search Modes including the True All-Metal mode, Digital Target ID Numbering, Adjustable Threshold and Sensitivity settings, with Iron Audio, Pro Mode Audio, Automatic Fast Track and Manual Ground Adjust, Electronic Pinpointing, One Touch Treasure Hunting.

Battery Life: 20 Hours (with battery display down to half the bars)

Battery Type: 2 AAs (alkaline or rechargeable)

Search Coil: 9 by 12 Inch and 5 by 8 Inch (Double "D" Proformance Coils)

Weight: 3.03 lbs

Recommended Price: £649.00

Guarantee: Two Years, Limited Parts/Labour

Accessories: Variable sized search coils are available and alternative water proofed Garrett headphones, as well as an adaptor plug that can be used to accommodate preferred headphones with quarter inch plugs.

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Fig.9. Finds from an Iron Age site including spur buckle.



Fig.10. Searching a field with the Garrett AT Gold.

