Detector Field Test

Viking VK30 - Part 2

David Drummond

I n the first part of this field test I provided an insight into what the Viking VK30 looked like, and a run down on its controls. This was written up fairly quickly in September in order to meet the deadline for the December 2000 issue of the **Treasure Hunting**. However, I anticipated that by the time the deadline came around for the second part of the test I would have had time to put the detector through its paces out in the fields. During the months of October and November I think most detectorists were greatly hindered by the effects of the weather. The amount of rainfall was quite unbelievable in some places, and we all saw on television how many parts of the country were flooded out.

Fortunately, Scotland wasn't quite so badly hit by the weather as much as some parts of England and Wales; I therefore did manage to get out and do some detecting. However, a lot of places in my area were still waterlogged and I had to abandon the plans I had made to search some of my more productive sites. In fact, I was left with the option of searching land that I knew would produce very little in the way of finds (especially the older material) no matter what detector was employed.

Junky Fields

After some time spent using the VK30, I decided that my preferred search mode was that of non-motion selected by a toggle switch under the LCD screen. If the detector is set-up in this way you are working continually in all-metal and discrimination doesn't have to be adjusted; in fact, you can just leave it at "0". Even working in this way the LCD screen will still relay likely good targets by means of high ID numbers and blocks. You can therefore, to a reasonable degree, still differentiate between likely good or bad targets. However, if a signal is faint and comes from a deeper target, the object may be too deep for the detector to properly analyse. When this happens you may not get a target ID number appearing on the screen, and one or two blocks may or may not appear.

If this occurs and you are ever in any

doubt as to the nature of the target, dig a hole surrounding it big enough so that the loose soil can be dug up or taken out. After this, recheck the hole. If your find is a small object, such as a coin, you may have brought it closer to the surface (or removed enough surface soil to take the search head closer to the target). Thus, when scanning again, you should get a better response and an

David Drummond with the Viking VK30
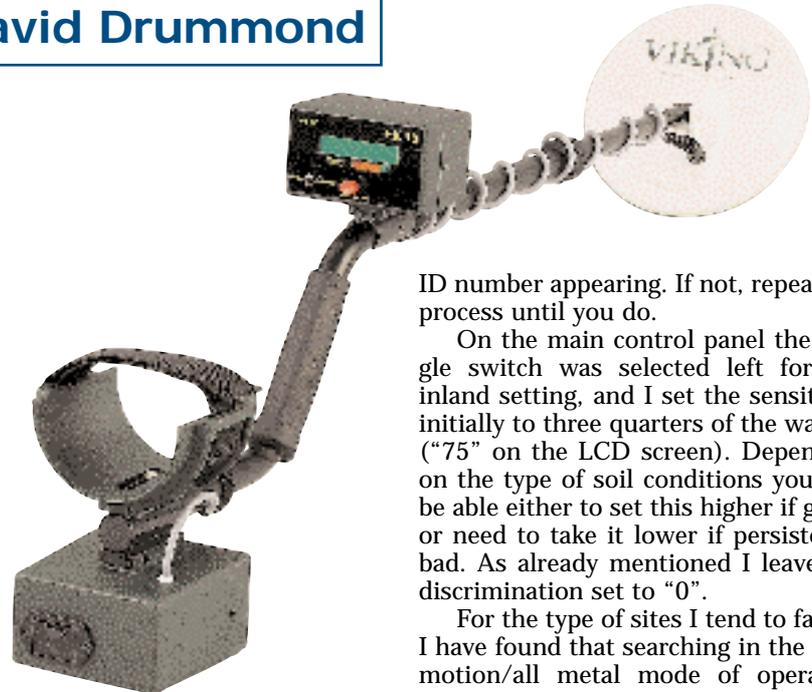
ID number appearing. If not, repeat the process until you do.

On the main control panel the toggle switch was selected left for the inland setting, and I set the sensitivity initially to three quarters of the way up ("75" on the LCD screen). Depending on the type of soil conditions you will be able either to set this higher if good, or need to take it lower if persistently bad. As already mentioned I leave the discrimination set to "0".

For the type of sites I tend to favour I have found that searching in the non-motion/all metal mode of operation gives me better depth, and is especially good for locating the small faint signals. If I was working in motion as my primary search mode, things might appear quieter, but I believe I would be losing a little depth on the faint, hard to locate targets. For sites infested with unwanted ferrous targets, of course, it would be better to use motion as the primary search mode.

After digging up the first coin with the VK30 (an old Victorian penny), I reburied it in a clean piece of ground at a depth of around 6in. This was to see how the detector would cope in both its motion and non-motion modes. To my surprise I found that the penny was picked up very clearly and loudly in both these modes, and the target ID number was the same as well (80-85 in both cases).

In the first part of this test I finished by giving results of my "in air" tests (ie bench tests of various coins and objects). When I include these in a field test I always emphasise that you may, or may not, get similar results in the ground. As I continued testing the VK30 over one particular junky field it slowly became apparent that this could indeed be the case on some sites. Although the bench testing results are quite accurate in some respects, some of the "in ground" results (the actual ID numbers) may differ.

For example, in the junky field I

opted to search ("junky" in that it contains a lot of material such as coke, iron, scrap lead, brass, and copper) the only coin finds I made with the VK30 were three farthings. Two of these were wren farthings, while the third dated back to William IV. All of these three coins gave good responses through the VK30's audio and visual discrimination. However, on the latter the target ID numbers were noted as all being 40-45. But later, when I tested the detector again at home with the three farthings, the VK30 gave a different target ID number of between 70-80.

The best logical explanation I can suggest for such a difference in readings, is that the three coins were lying in the ground at such an awkward angle that the VK30 was only able to analyse the feedback coming from a limited amount of the coins' surface. Alternatively, perhaps the field's exceptionally high mineral content was someway affecting the target analysis.

Having only some junky (but non-waterlogged fields) available to search did give me an insight into the likely problems that may be encountered while conducting searches on such sites. I found that the VK30 operated quite well in the junky conditions, but as with many other detectors (regardless of make or model) you will still pick up the odd piece of iron (eg larger pieces with peculiar shapes to them or iron washers etc). If these are close to the surface they will give an overloaded target response, which is indicated on the LCD screen by two arrows pointing upwards. If such targets are deeper in the ground they will give a good audible response as well as a high number (perhaps as much as 90 on the ID scale).

If you do get a lot of overloaded signals caused by targets being big and close to the surface, don't always assume them to be iron. They may come from an object such as a large coin or a buckle just lying under the surface. By raising up and sweeping the


Fig.1. Musket balls and shotgun cartridge.

search coil above the target you can readjust the target ID number to a more accurate reading. Obviously, if it readjusts to "0" then the target is likely to be rubbish, but if it readjusts to a much higher number with blocks showing then it could be worth digging (ie target numbers of 40 or more).

One major annoyance that you can come across in junky sites is the presence of coke (ferrite oxide). When this is dug up it can resemble a lightweight piece of barbecue charcoal. It can give a good audible target response and - in the case of the VK30 - a good target ID response. Coke can affect most detectors, even the most expensive models, and can be very difficult to eliminate.

Fig.2. An unusual find that looks like a chess piece. It is 1.5in in length and about 0.75in in diameter. It is threaded on the underside.

When speaking to one of the technical wizards at Viking, I was told of a technique that VK30 owners can use to help counteract against coke. I have now tried this method and found that it works quite effectively. In fact, it will quickly tell you if the target is yet another piece of that dreaded material.

For farmland, pasture fields, commons etc the normal working setting will be the "Inland" mode selected by means of the toggle switch on the control panel. If, however, you are experiencing
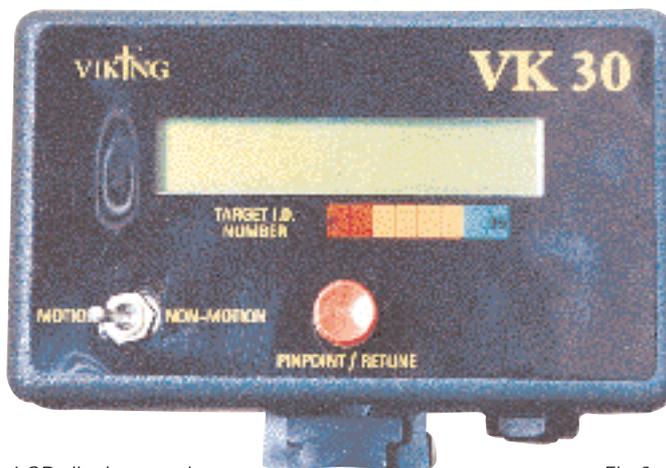
LCD display panel.

Fig.3. Part of a large brass butterfly bolt. This gave an incredible reading of 80-90 on the LCD display, and was 8in under the ground.

Fig.5. The coins found during the test.

suspected problems with coke just flick the "Inland" switch to the "Beach" mode position. If coke is the target there will be no reading on the LCD screen.

Other Findings

During my field trials I found the VK30 responded well on the types of fields that were available to search (stubble and muddy ploughed and rolled). My own preference of using the non-motion/all-metal setting as the primary search mode worked extremely well, giving very good depth capabilities. In this mode there is a faint, factory-set threshold tone, and I noted no problems with drift. However, if you do experience drift simply press the red pinpoint/retune button and that should take care of it.

With the VK30 the target number does not reset back to zero after it has registered a signal (unlike some other computerised detectors I have used). It only changes when the next target is picked up.

Conclusions

I believe that Viking have added some splendid new additions to their range with the VK models. I am more than happy with the VK30's performance. It has style, it has user "turn on and go" friendly controls, and it is capable of achieving excellent depths. For the first time in their range, Viking have added accurate computerised "Target Identification".

With its low running costs, one PP3 battery operation, I believe the VK30 offers excellent value for money. I would describe the VK30 as an "anybody" detector as I believe that anybody can easily master it. This detector should appeal to beginner and professional alike, and has a great deal to offer for all round detecting.
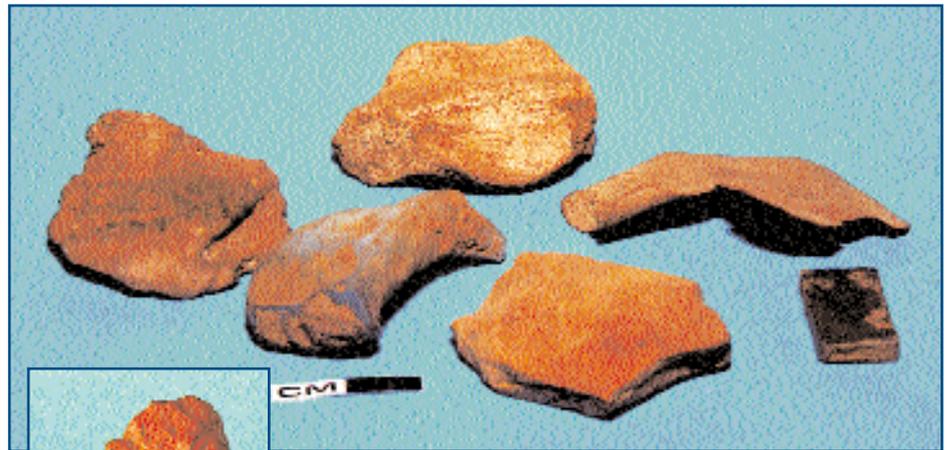
Although a number of sites were
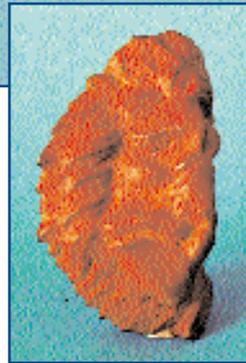

Fig.6. The lead and pewter fragments found.

Fig.4. The face of a lion made in copper or brass. Is this some type of badge?

Photos by Peter John Field

unavailable (due to the elements) for my trials, on the dry fields I did have available the VK30 performed well enough. During my tests (as expected from past experience) these sites didn't offer anything in the way of Roman or medieval finds to grace the pages of this magazine. Nevertheless, the VK30 still found coins, buttons, lead seals and musket balls very easily at average depths of between 4 and 6in. My experience is that when working in the non-motion/all-metal as much as 2 to 4in more can be achieved on coin sized targets. Obviously, bigger targets will be registered at more depth.

I have not, as yet, been able to take advantage of the Beach mode for its specific purpose but, if given the

chance, I will endeavour to report back on this.

I must apologise most profusely to Viking and readers alike for the lengthy delay in getting part two of this test published. Bad weather has been the major thorn in my side, as I am sure is the case with many other readers.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Viking VK30
Type: Microprocessor controlled, motion/non-motion, target identification LCD, plus variable discrimination and sensitivity controls.
Manufacturer: Viking Metal Detectors, 1 Angela Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn, Lancs BB2 4DJ. Tel: 01254 55887 Fax: (01254) 676901.
E-mail: viking@metaldetectors.co.uk
Web site: www.metaldetectors.co.uk
Batteries: 1 x PP3.
Battery Life: 12-14 hours using alkaline PP3.
Search Coil: 8in widescan.
Accessories: Coil covers, headphones and control box covers are all available (the latter have just been introduced for the VK20 and VK30 models priced at £13.95).
Price: £249.00 (inc VAT)
Guarantee: Two years.