VIKING
Metal Detectors

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Field Test Report

Viking 6

(Treasure Hunting, October 1998)

The Viking 6 metal detector, like its smaller brother the Viking 5, has gone through some minor changes over the years. These are most notable in the size, shape and colour of the control box. This is currently much smaller in size than that of earlier models. Like all detectors in the Viking Range, the 6 runs off a single PP3 battery.

The Viking 6 has a black, two-piece aluminium stem, with a locking collar in the middle. The stem is of the 'S' design with the control box mounted on the upper stem. The rubber hand grip is positioned immediately above the control panel and within easy reach of your fingers. The top of the stem incorporates a combined arm rest and detector stand. The detector is fitted with an 8 inch 2D search coil which is hard wired to the control box.

The battery compartment is located at the bottom of the control box and is of the snap in drawer type. This does away with all those annoying wires to which we used to have to clip the batteries.

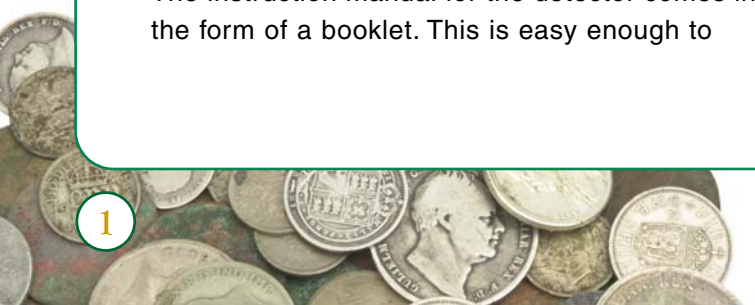
Next to the battery compartment is the built-in speaker that allows the metal detector, if required, to be used without headphones. The control panel is situated at the top end of the control box. On this there are two rotary controls with a red push-button in between them, plus a quarter inch headphone socket. The control box itself is made from tough plastic.

The instruction manual for the detector comes in the form of a booklet. This is easy enough to follow and includes a detailed explanation of what 'ground effect' is all about.

When unpacking the Viking 6 and putting it together for the first time, make sure that the locking collar on the stem is slackened off. Don't force the stems together, just ease them in gently. When you rotate the bottom stem to wrap the coil cable around both the lower and upper stems, make sure that you do not over-tighten the coil cable. Ensure there is enough slack left so that you can tilt the search coil up and down.

The control box panel features only two rotary controls and one push button. The Viking 6 is thus an easy metal detector to operate. On the left there is a rotary control that turns the detector on and off and allows you to set the threshold level. To the right of this is a red push button; this is the 'retune' control (or memory auto retune to be precise). To the right of this is the 'discrimination' rotary control. This allows you to select the desired amount of junk rejection. It is numbered from '0' to '10'.

The Viking 6 is comparatively easy to use. Once you have mastered the setting up procedure it really is straight-forward from that point. Before you do anything make sure that the search coil is around 2 inches off the ground and that you are in an area which is free from surface rubbish. When you turn on the Viking 6, you press the red 'retune' button in at the same time. You keep your finger pressed down on the button while setting threshold (the faint 'edge of sound' noise). Then you release the 'retune' button. You should now be ready to commence searching.



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When the discrimination control is on '0', the Viking 6 will pick up all metals. To become accustomed to the sound of signals and size of the signal targets, it is perhaps best if you initially search in this all-metal setting. Small coin-size signals will give a sharp tone whereas larger targets are much more intense and louder. Pinpointing is easily carried out by the 'crossing; method (i.e. moving the search head in a cross shape over the signal target, centring in on where it is the loudest).

If the threshold starts to drift (increase or decrease in sound), just press the 'retune' button. This puts the detector back to its initial threshold setting.

Drift will occur if you are searching a field that is mineralised. On some beaches a similar effect can be experienced caused by the presence of coke or black sand. In some cases on beaches the drift can be reduced by readjusting the threshold back a bit and/or turning the discrimination reject up a fraction to perhaps '2' or '3'. When adjusting the discrimination always press the retune button while this operation is carried out.

During 1998 the annual event known as 'summer' seemed to have been cancelled. Instead Mother Nature presented us with a British monsoon season with blustery winds thrown in for good measure. Where I live these conditions had a severe effect on my normal summer detecting jaunts to the beaches with my Viking 5.

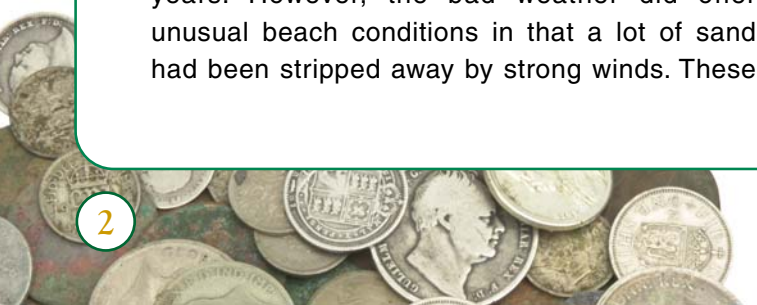
There was a noticeable difference in the amount of finds I was making compared with previous years. However, the bad weather did offer unusual beach conditions in that a lot of sand had been stripped away by strong winds. These are the sort of conditions you would normally only associate with winter.

As a result of the above my Viking 5 performed extraordinarily well in places you wouldn't have thought possible (e.g. on wet sand and stony beaches). I won't go into all the details but during the months of June and July I managed to recover 180 pre-decimal coins with my Viking 5 as well as bullets, musket balls, and other artefacts. Upon receiving the Viking 6, one of the first things I did was take it to a wet sand beach. It was here that my Viking 5 had just found thirty coins, two copper alloy finger rings, twenty-five musket balls, and ten other bullets. All of these finds had been made in the course of a Sunday morning.

Using the Viking 6 on this particular beach the first thing I did was to check out a prevalent rumour about these detectors; that they didn't like wet sand. I had already found (to my astonishment) that the Viking 5 could cope and hold its own in the wet sand due to its 'Fine' and 'Course' tuning controls.

With the Viking 6 it was a slightly different story. Once I had set the threshold level and commenced searching, I noticed that there was a slight drift or noise increase in the signal. However, the retune button kept this at bay and I could still hear signals coming through the drifting. I didn't use any discrimination and left the control at '0'. After a three to four hour search I had managed to recover fourteen coins, three musket balls, four other bullets, and a load of scrap brass and lead. Among the coins were two silver examples: a 1917 threepenny piece and a 1889 sixpence.

To sum up, on this particular stretch of beach the Viking 6 seemed to cope well enough. The 6



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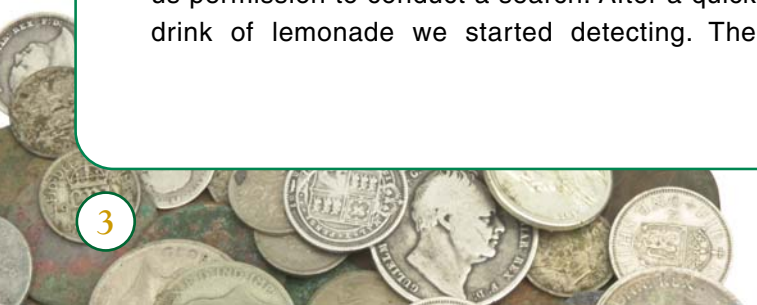
hates thick black sand though. An area of dry black sand I tried on this particular beach was just that and any attempt at using the detector caused an increase in signal noise that I could not reduce or do anything about. A test dig showed me there was a layer of black sand measuring between 8 and 9 inches in depth, and under this there was a layer of what looked like a crushed shell deposit. The only detectors I have seen that will work well in the black sand are the Pulse Induction types (and perhaps one or two motion types).

One thing I would suggest to anyone searching the beaches with a Viking metal detector, regardless of the model, is to ensure adequate waterproofing is provided. In particular the control box needs protecting from sand and water. A simple carrier bag would be sufficient, although I personally wish I could buy a proper box cover similar to those available for other detectors.

On Saturday, the first day of August, the rains stopped and held off until Monday. A friend and I drove about looking at the fields to see if any had been cut and left in stubble. It was a stubble field where I expected the Viking 6 to perform at its best. We eventually found such a field on the outskirts of a small town. The area had a lot of history attached to it, ranging from Roman to medieval. The field concerned wasn't exactly in stubble, but a crop of peas had been lifted from it a week or two before. This had left a large area showing tractor ruts, some overgrown vegetation, and a few bald patches... a good enough testing ground for the Viking 6.

The farmer, whom I know very well, readily gave us permission to conduct a search. After a quick drink of lemonade we started detecting. The Viking 6 worked well with the discrimination at '0'. Testing higher settings later on I found that sensitivity would be lost. The reject setting I therefore left it on was '0' and this helped greatly in picking up the deeper fainter signals. Despite this minimum reject setting the only real junk coming up consisted of large pieces of iron and some pieces of coke. During the search the Viking 6 picked up four coins: a modern 2p, a Victorian halfpenny, a George III halfpenny (with a hole pierced in it) and an extremely large bronze coin which I thought at first to be a Cartwheel twopence (I later found out that this was in actual fact a Russian coin dated 1941). The latter was the deepest coin found and came up from a depth of around 6 inches. I also found a possible lead deal of medieval origin and musket ball. One of the larger finds was a Royal Highlanders Black Watch badge. However, the most intriguing and unexpected find to come up was a large fragment of what looks like a bronze axe from the Bronze Age period. At first I was dubious about this, until I consulted Ross Whitehead's article on such fragments in a recent back issue of Treasure Hunting. This find will now be reported to my local museum.

In summing up my feelings about the Viking 6 I would like to say that I found nothing to fault this fine machine. It appeared to me to be a good metal detector for beach and inland sites alike, and I hope I have managed to dispel the story I had heard about its poor performance on wet sand. I personally think this may have come about through a lack of patience and understanding on the part of the user concerned. The only sand I had any real problems with was that of the black variety.



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One of the best ways I found to use the Viking 6 was with the discrimination set at minimum. If a dubious signal is received, simply increase the reject level and retune. Once the signal has been checked go back to the lower setting.

The Viking 6 is ideal for the beginner or for the more experienced user even as a back-up machine. It's a good coinshooter and is simple to use. The single PP3 giving good battery life means that this metal detector is very economical in its running costs.